



SEP-OCT 2025

# almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT



As harvest progresses, so does  
the next season of *Blue Diamond*

Resilient Roots, Bold Future  
with Steve Van Duyn

An Update from  
Almond Alliance

Field Notes with  
Mel Machado



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Although summer shipments were down, we expect a fall rebound (Pg. 12)

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In this President's Corner, along with 2024 crop return overview, Kai discusses how the Co-op is navigating a transformative year marked by shifting markets, weather impacts, and operational changes. With streamlined production, refreshed branding, and new product innovations, *Blue Diamond* is positioned for stronger growth and improved returns in 2026.

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This new Almond Facts section features insights, market updates and orchard news from *Blue Diamond's* chief agricultural officer, Mel Machado.

#### ON THE COVER:

Harvest is in full swing in the *Blue Diamond* orchards.



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*Blue Diamond*, the world's largest processor and marketer of almonds, exports to over 100 countries.

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Kai Bockmann  
President & CEO



*Harvest season is upon us, and we can always count on the transition from summer to fall to keep us on our toes. This harvest has brought us a mix of weather conditions with hot days, cooler mornings, and a few surprise rainstorms. Mel tells me that growers hit hardest by the rain have been dealing with harvest delays as they work to dry out almonds sitting in the orchards.*

As many of you will have read in my letter outlining our crop return data, this has been a tough but transformational year for *Blue Diamond*. On a global and national scale, we have seen it all—from market disruptions, tariffs, inflation and decreased consumer spending across almost every industry. For almonds, specifically, the non-dairy and snack nut categories continue to trend downwards. Despite all this, *Blue Diamond* continues to gain a greater share of each category.

In Sacramento, we are winding down plant operations and have said goodbye to the first group of departing team members. Transitioning our operations to our Turlock and Salida plants, along with our co-manufacturing partners, is already well underway. We are starting to see initial returns taking shape, but the long-term impact of more focused, streamlined operations will be even greater in the years to come. This transition is critical to building a stronger foundation that not only supports our operational efficiency but drives our brand forward.

If you've caught a glimpse of the *Blue Diamond* brand logo refresh, you know it's hard to miss! You can expect to see our updated logo and vibrant packaging ready to capture attention starting this fall. At the same time, we're building a stronger fanbase through flavor expansions and limited editions, featuring fan-favorite brands that resonate with our audiences.

We broke new ground in the snack aisle with the launch of Almonds & More, our first venture into the mixed nuts category. It's no secret that we know flavor, and retailers quickly took notice, confirming there's an appetite for premium and protein-packed flavor options. Our produce debut has also generated real progress, demonstrated by strong retailer acceptance and sales performance. With millennials now holding up to 28% of spending power in the U.S., we're focused on delivering new products that will captivate and build brand loyalty among new consumers.

As we keep momentum going on the customer front, we're also staying focused on the numbers that matter. The chart on the next page shows the final return for the 2024 crop. While the final return is considerably greater than that paid in the previous year, I must admit that I am not satisfied with our performance, and we are working hard to achieve a more competitive return next year. I will provide more details of the actions we are taking to return us to our industry-leading position at the upcoming Annual Grower Meeting in Modesto on November 19.



## Final Return for the 2024 Crop

Variety	Overall Average	Average of High Quality	Maximum Possible
Nonpareil & Sonora Inshell	\$2.38	\$2.42	\$2.45
Nonpareil /Supareil	\$2.34	\$2.39	\$2.44
Sonora	\$2.30	\$2.37	\$2.40
Independence Inshell	\$2.12	\$2.16	\$2.19
Independence	\$2.10	\$2.15	\$2.18
Carmel & Winters	\$2.12	\$2.17	\$2.20
Monterey /Neplus	\$2.12	\$2.16	\$2.20
California /Price /Fritz /Wood Colony	\$2.07	\$2.11	\$2.14
Butte & Padre	\$2.14	\$2.17	\$2.20
Mission	\$1.95	\$1.97	\$1.99
Mixed	\$1.73	\$1.73	\$1.78

Note: The above rates do not include Volume Premiums, OSIP Sustainability Incentives, Domestic Production Activities Deduction (DPAD) or IC-DISC advantages.

The rates displayed on the chart do not include Volume Premiums, Sustainability Incentives, Domestic Production Activities Deduction (DPAD) or IC-DISC advantages. Your actual crop earnings, including those applicable premium additions, are shown in the box on the last page of your personal grower's statement.

2025 pushed our boundaries, and now we're driving for greater growth as we head into 2026. Our brand is evolving, our products continue to scale and expand, and our team is more determined than ever. We are intentionally investing in Blue Diamond now and focusing on what matters the most to build a stronger tomorrow. Our priority is always to maximize the return you earn as growers and to secure the future of the cooperative.

Steve and I look forward to seeing you at the Annual Grower Meeting, and I am eager to share more with you about our plans for 2026. The momentum we have built has set the stage for our growth and is fully driving us into the year ahead. Thank you for being part of the journey! ♦



Kai Bockmann  
President & CEO



Stephen Van Duyn  
Chairman of the Board



### My Fellow *Blue Diamond* Member-Growers,

*As I think back on the two years I've spent as your board chairman, I can't help but feel incredibly proud of all we've accomplished during some of the most challenging times we've faced in the almond industry. From extreme weather situations impacting our trees to economic and geopolitical difficulties, we are still standing strong and advancing into new territory together. We've all learned to do more with fewer resources and it's that very innovative spirit that keeps us grounded through uncertain times.*

This is your cooperative and it has always been rooted in family, and we care for each other. We are committed to supporting you and keeping the *Blue Diamond* cooperative blazing the trail for another 115 years. When my father, Neil Van Duyn and the rest of the *Blue Diamond* board served back in the late 90s, going into the new millennium the Cooperative was facing similar challenges to what we're facing now, including water scarcity and almond pricing below farming costs. What's encouraging is that, back then, we walked through those tough times and into better ones, and I am certain that will be the case for us now. What keeps us strong is each other and I feel deep pride in the camaraderie we share. As farmers, we are tough, and we will get through this as we always do. What's more, the challenges back in that time were temporary, just as the ones we face now. So, as we move forward through difficulty, remember that hard times don't last forever. Though we may be pressed, we will not be overcome.

The key to navigating through a difficult season is having the right people in the right seats. I am honored to work alongside Kai and our leadership team as they continue to unfold the strategic plan, which has already yielded favorable results. Kai brings a fresh perspective and a different set of experiences that are vital for success in this next season of our co-op.

The strategic plan is working; our efforts have allowed us to break into new markets and earn the business of new customers. And I am witnessing our excellent leaders work tirelessly to elevate *Blue Diamond's* stance as a major player in an increasingly competitive market. I also know we're all excited to welcome our new CFO, Fred Steunou, whose diverse experience is certain to bolster *Blue Diamond's* financial future. Our board of directors is a healthy mix of new and seasoned members who each bring balance and a host of innovative ideas to the table. It's an honor to serve as the chair of such a devoted group of individuals who represent each of you.

I know that the announcement of the Sacramento manufacturing plant closure has brought a mix of emotions. While it was a difficult decision to make, we believe it was the right one, and one with our growers' best interest in mind. This decision was made in alignment with our strategic plan and is intended to contribute to the long-term strength of our *Blue Diamond* cooperative. Our Salida and Turlock facilities are much better equipped to handle your almonds, and the team is offering a vast array of support for effected employees, including help in securing new positions within and outside of *Blue Diamond*.



As harvest continues, I know we're all anxious to learn the outcome of this year's crop. It has certainly been on everyone's minds. I look forward to a turn in the economy and for us all to enjoy good times once again. I also look forward to seeing all of you at our annual meeting in Modesto on November 19. It will be a pleasure to catch up with you and share even more updates on what *Blue Diamond* is doing to maximize your return. ♦

Stephen Van Duyn  
*Chairman of the Board*

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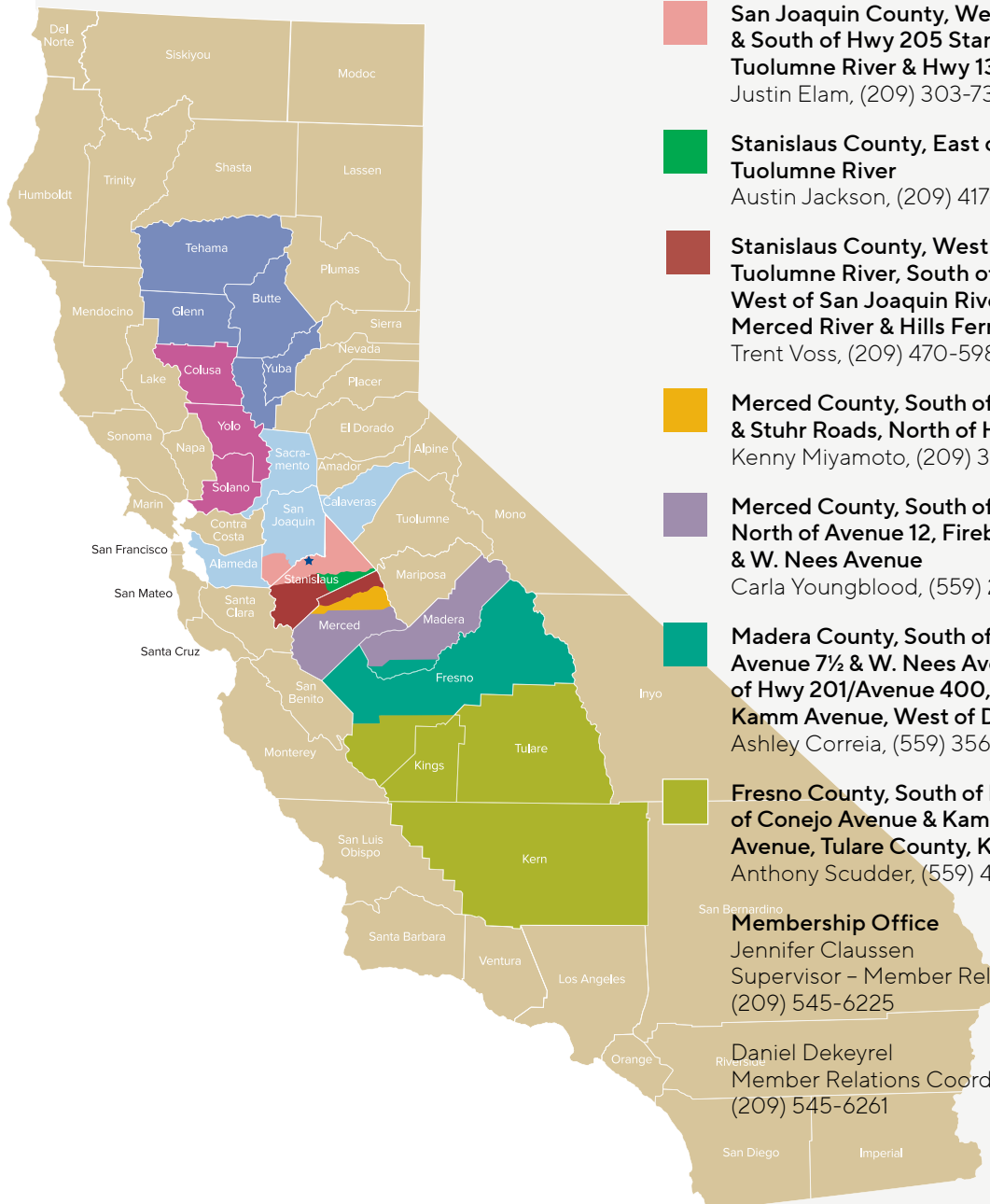
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Director

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Appointed (Member-at-Large)

For Grower Liaison contact information, please contact your regional manager.

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2025 11

## ALMOND MARKET UPDATE



### *Blue Diamond Almond Market Update – September 15, 2025*

#### OVERVIEW

The California Almond industry opened the 2025 crop year with August shipments totaling 158 million pounds, down 6.2% year over year. Exports saw a modest increase reaching 109 million pounds, a 2.9% rise compared to last August, while domestic shipments started the year with a double-digit decline. Overall, shipments fell short of industry expectations with tight inventories at the end of the 2024 crop. With new crop inventories now available, we anticipate September shipments to rebound.

#### SHIPMENTS

##### **India:**

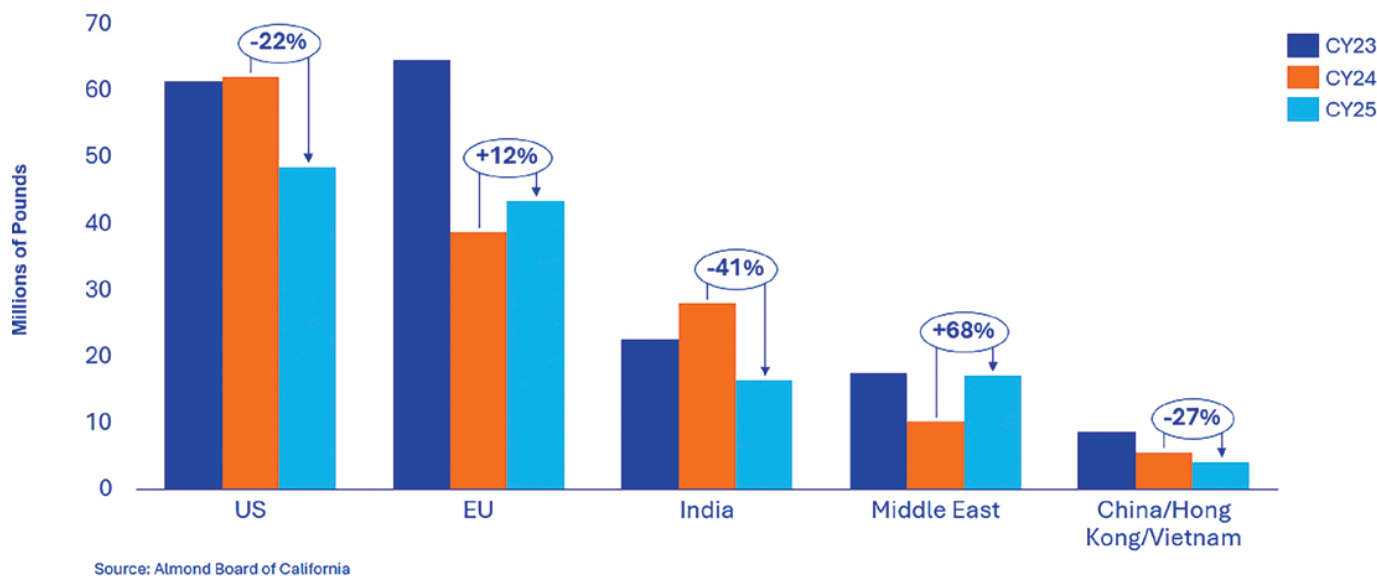
August almond shipments to India totaled 16.4 million pounds, marking a 41% decline year over year. This softer start to the 2025 crop year was anticipated, following the exceptionally strong July shipments and a slightly delayed harvest.

Despite the dip in August, India remains largely uncovered for September, positioning the market for a meaningful rebound in the upcoming shipment report. As we move past the initial phase of the crop year, attention will turn to covering any remaining Diwali demand through local supply, while post-Diwali needs are expected to drive renewed interest in California almonds.

##### **China/Hong Kong/Vietnam:**

Shipments to the region totaled over 4 million pounds, marking a 27% decrease compared to the same month last year. In the coming weeks, it should be expected that activity will pick up as buyers seek coverage for Chinese New Year.

## Year-Over-Year Shipments Aug



### Europe:

The European market showed modest strength in August with shipments totaling just over 43 million pounds, which is 12% above last year. European buyers are keeping a disciplined pace, stepping in only when needed, continuing a hand-to-mouth approach. The recent suspension of EU tariff measures provides some comfort for forward cover, but it has not created urgency. Sellers are releasing volume selectively, preserving the ability to capture better values once harvest clarity improves.

### Middle East:

The Middle East has been very active to open the 2025 crop year. Shipments reached more than 17 million pounds in August, up almost 68% versus the prior year. The earlier Ramadan in 2026 is already shaping buying behavior, with importers advancing coverage well before the November shipment cutoff. Despite the activity, many have remained sidelined awaiting the August shipment report hoping to gain more clarity on the incoming crop, so activity levels are expected to remain high post release. After the region's strong performance in crop year 2024, it will be worth monitoring to see if it is repeatable.

### Domestic:

August shipments totaled 48.45 million pounds, down 21.9% from the same period last year. This was the tenth straight month of negative year-over-year shipments. We continue to see sharp declines year over year, despite the July results, which painted a more optimistic picture. New sales for the month were 55 million, a decline of 7.11% year over year. Strong domestic sales for the month were a bright spot, however there is ample demand still to be covered. Given last year's performance, demand in the domestic market will continue to be monitored closely for signs of further declines.

## COMMITMENTS

Total commitments for the year start at 526.6 million pounds, a 13.2% decrease from last year. New sales for the month totaled 184.1 million pounds with the domestic market layering in an additional 55 million pounds and export locking in 129.1 million pounds of new coverage. In total, commitments for the domestic market now stand at 170.9 million pounds and exports stand at 355.7 million pounds

## CROP

Crop receipts for the year begin at 259 million pounds, reflecting a 10.7% decline compared to the previous crop year. Recent concerns have emerged regarding lower yields from the central and southern region of the valley, particularly in the early varieties such as nonpareil which account for approximately 40% of the total crop. Many in the industry doubt the feasibility of the 3.0-billion-pound Objective Estimate and some are even speculating that the final yield could even fall below the 2.8-billion-pound Subjective Estimate. Consequently, California packers are adopting a cautious stance, limiting offers until there is greater clarity on the new crop's potential. ♦

### Market Perspective

The carry-in figure was the most notable surprise of this position report. The carry out from July's position report was adjusted with an actual loss and exempt percentage of 3.14%. This puts the official carry in at 483.8 million pounds. Additionally, this year the Almond Board of California conducted a voluntary survey regarding the edible portion of the 2025/26 carry-in inventory. Based on those results, only 92.4% of the total carry in is estimated to be edible, bringing the number down further to an estimated 447 million pounds. With the anticipated carry in and skepticism around the 3.0-billion-pound Objective Estimate, California is exercising caution with offered volumes. Prices have risen sharply over the last month and are expected to remain strong as buying continues in the weeks ahead. Harvest is underway, and clarity on the 2025 crop will emerge as receipts are assessed for quality, size, and overall supply potential.

If you plan on attending Anuga Food Fair 2025, please stop by **Hall 10.2 Stand G068**. The *Blue Diamond* Team would be glad to connect!



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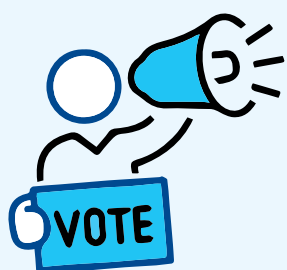


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## Blue Diamond Growers Annual Meeting Voting

### What is a Proxy & Why is a Quorum Needed at Annual Meeting?

*The Blue Diamond Annual Meeting is more than a luncheon or a social gathering; it is a required business meeting that is defined in the Cooperative's bylaws. To be valid, a quorum of the membership must be present, either in person or by proxy. Since it is a business meeting, the quorum is required if a motion is made from the floor and a vote of the membership is required.*

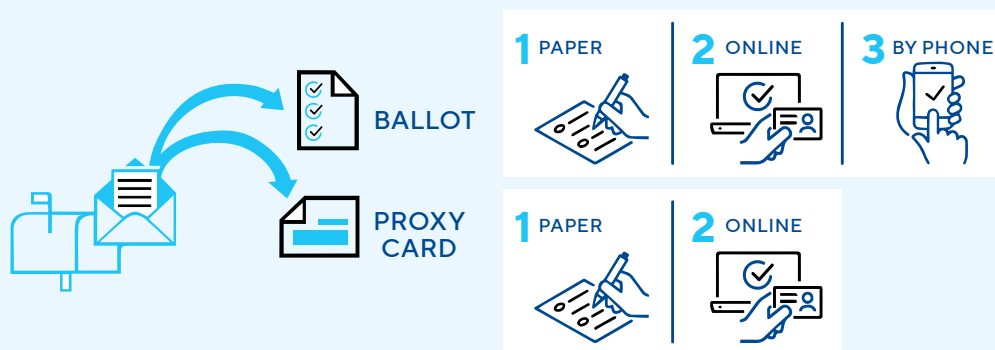


### Annual General Election

It is time for the *Blue Diamond* annual general elections. This is a great opportunity for you to exercise one of your fundamental rights as a voting member to shape the future of your *Blue Diamond Growers* cooperative: electing members of the Board of Directors and Grower Liaison Committees. This year, you can vote for District Directors in districts 2, 8 and 9. You also have the chance to vote for Grower Liaisons in each of the nine districts. Ballots will be mailed the week of October 6, 2025 to voting members with Crop Agency Agreements. Voting will close on November 10, 2025. Only ballots received by this date will be counted. Your vote matters! Be sure to submit your ballot in plenty of time so your vote is received before this deadline.

### How to Vote

Like last year, there are three ways to vote: paper ballot, online, or by phone. Your election packet will include the paper ballot, return envelope and instructions for online and phone voting. This year, if you choose to vote by proxy, you will be able to return the Proxy Card by mail or assign a proxy online.



*Like last year, you will be able to vote by paper ballot, online or by phone.*

*This year, you will be able to return the proxy card by mail or assign a proxy online.*

### Make Sure You Are Represented — Return the Proxy Card!

Not sure if you can attend the annual meeting? You may assign your vote to a proxy—another voting member—to vote on your behalf. This year, you will be able to return the Proxy Card by mail or assign a proxy online. Mail in your Proxy Card (separate from the ballot) and rest assured that you are represented in the election and annual meeting, even if you can't directly participate. If you do decide to attend the meeting yourself, know that your presence always comes first. The Proxy Card is a backup plan for if you can't attend. ♦

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### Blue Diamond Rolls into Two Festivals with Flavor and Fun

#### ReWired Fest

*Blue Diamond* Almonds returned as a Gold-level sponsor at this year's ReWired Fest in Bentonville, Arkansas, on September 18. The annual festival joined the energy of Gen Z, e-sports, and top creators, making it a natural stage for *Blue Diamond* to connect in fresh, interactive ways.

For the second year in a row, *Blue Diamond* stood alongside sponsors like Liquid I.V., Lego, Secret, Chips Ahoy!, and Keebler, delivering engaging experiences both in person and online. Highlights included:

- A 75-location Walmart tour, where festivalgoers tried their hand at interactive activations like the *Blue Diamond* claw machine and got to experience the Nutty Cruiser.™
- Creator integrations, with influencers like Rebecca Zamolo and Nick DiGiovanni, product-themed mini games like the almond toss challenge to shout outs and direct online shopping opportunities during live e-games.
- A national merchandising program, featuring *Blue Diamond* half pallets in 1,000 Walmart stores across the U.S.

With an estimated 50,000+ attendees across the event, ReWired Fest was a great opportunity for *Blue Diamond* to showcase how almonds fuel fun and the fast-paced world of gaming and creator culture.



#### Kroger Wellness Festival

Cincinnati's riverfront buzzed with activity as over 200,000 people gathered at the Kroger Wellness Festival at the end of September. The two-day celebration of health, flavor, and inspiration is one of the largest events of its kind, and drew national brands, industry experts, and families to enjoy the festivities. *Blue Diamond* was proud to be the Ruby Sponsor, supporting this key retail partner and sharing almond goodness with attendees.

Even the iconic Nutty Cruiser™ showed up and turned heads. Fresh off its kickoff at the Walmart ReWired Tour in Bentonville, Arkansas, and a football-season stop in Lincoln, Nebraska, the Cruiser's third destination was the festival in Cincinnati.

The Kroger Wellness Festival itself is built around a mission that resonates deeply with *Blue Diamond*: Kroger's vision of physical and mental health. Colleen Lindholz, president, Kroger Health said in a statement, "The Kroger Wellness Festival is designed to meet people where they are - whether that's learning how to eat healthier, finding new ways to manage stress or looking for fun ways to incorporate wellness into their everyday routine."





Attendees explored better-for-you options, sampled products from leading brands, and sat in on inspiring panels featuring Kroger leaders and industry experts. Between the energy of the Nutty Cruiser™ the excitement of the festival, and appearances from celebrities like The All-American Rejects, Rob Lowe, Chef Alex Guarnaschelli, and Alex Rodriguez, almond enthusiasts had plenty to smile about. ♦

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## Limited-Time Flavor Texas BBQ is Smokin' Good!

Blue Diamond is celebrating the launch of its latest flavor innovation: **Texas BBQ** almonds, a bold and smoky snack now available in **6-ounce cans at Walmart stores nationwide**. This zesty flavor, which rolled out in September, will be available through May. This limited-time offering is perfect for fans looking to bring a taste of the Lone Star State to their snacking routine. ♦

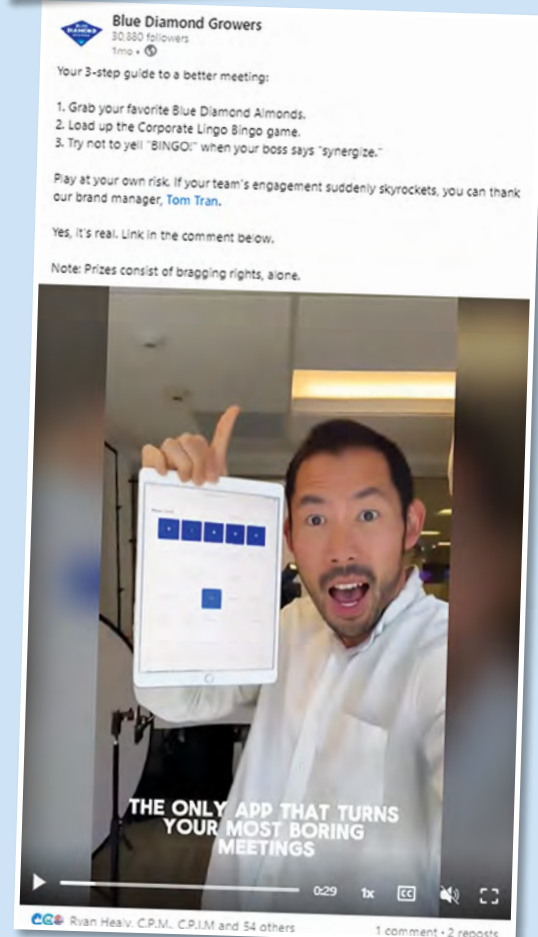


## #WeAreBlueDiamond Social Media Activity



This month, *Blue Diamond* celebrated the rebrand being featured in *AdAge* magazine! We played some office bingo while enjoying a bit of fun at the employee town hall meeting. We applauded a new partnership with Pachamama Coffee who selected *Blue Diamond* Barista Blend as their official almondmilk.

Finally, we all took a moment to remember and honor the Americans who lost their lives 24 years ago on that tragic September 11. ♦





**Blue Diamond Growers**  
30,880 followers  
1h • 🌐

Great design is born from great collaboration. We're raising a glass to our partners at **Turner Duckworth** for their incredible work on our brand refresh which was recently featured in Ad Age.

The redesign sharpens the brand's diamond shape while introducing crisp typography, vibrant colors and confident messaging to position almonds as the ultimate superfood.

Link to the full story in the comments.

Eric Tinson, Lorena Nuñez, Laura Heckenlively, Maya Erwin, RoGena Loveland, FMP

2 comments • 1 repost

Tom Tran and 14 others


**Blue Diamond Growers**  
30,880 followers  
2w • 🌐

Blue Diamond's Barista Blend Almondmilk is celebrating a new partnership with **Pachamama Coffee** as their official almondmilk!

Pachamama's 100% farmer-owned coffee now meets the creamy perfection of our Barista Blend—made possible by **Troia Foods** distribution.

Stop by Pachamama for your morning (or afternoon) coffee to enjoy the highest quality coffee paired with the best almondmilk formulated specifically for coffee.

Thank you to **Chris Bolton**, our sales director, for making this exciting partnership possible!



2 comments • 4 reposts

Jennifer Harris and 93 others

## BLUE DIAMOND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

Current Investment Rates available as of October 1, 2025

**Blue Diamond Growers offers members short-term and long-term investment programs.**

The objective of these programs is to serve as a competitive investment alternative for our members and provide *Blue Diamond Growers* with a steady source of funds. The interest rates effective October 1, 2025, for the program are listed here:

	Short-Term Investment Certificate (STIC)	Long-Term Investment Certificate (LTIC) (Maturity Date of 6/30/2028)
Initial Investment Required	\$1,000	\$50,000
Interest Rate	5.00%	4.00%
	(Variable, subject to change)	(Fixed rate)

For more information, contact your local Regional Manager, or Member Services at (209) 545-6225.

*This summary does not constitute an offer to sell or a solicitation to purchase investment certificates. We will provide a package of documents for the programs to those members who are California residents and who express an interest in participating in the program.*

## Cinnamon Apple Bread

Prep Time: 60 minutes   Bake Time: 60 minutes   Difficulty: Easy   Serves up to: 11



### Ingredients

- 1½ cups apples, peeled and cut into ¾" pieces
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon, divided
- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup unsalted butter, softened
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- ⅓ cup unsweetened applesauce, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup *Almond Breeze*® Unsweetened Vanilla Almondmilk

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Prepare a 9"x 5" loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray.
2. In a small bowl, combine apples, brown sugar and 1 teaspoon cinnamon. Set aside.
3. In a small bowl, whisk flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt together. Set aside.
4. In a large bowl using an electric hand mixer, beat butter and sugar together until light and creamy. Add eggs and beat until combined. Beat in applesauce and vanilla.
5. On low speed, beat in flour mixture, then slowly add in almondmilk. Pour batter into prepared loaf pan. Spoon apples and juice evenly on top. Use a knife to swirl apple mixture into batter.
6. Bake 60-75 minutes. Cover with aluminum foil if browning too quickly. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
7. Remove from oven and allow to cool slightly, then remove from pan and allow to cool completely on a wire rack.
8. Serve!

# Pumpkin Spice Dirty Chai Latte

Prep Time: 10 minutes   Cook Time: 10 minutes   Difficulty: Easy   Serves up to: 2

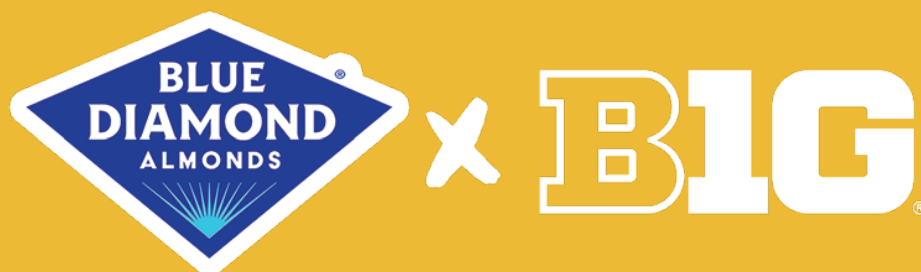
## Ingredients

¼ cup pumpkin puree  
2 Tablespoons brown sugar  
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice  
2 green cardamom pods  
1 star anise  
½ teaspoon ground ginger  
2¼ cups *Almond Breeze®*  
Unsweetened Original  
Almondmilk, divided  
2 black tea bags  
½ teaspoon vanilla extract  
2 shots espresso

## Directions

1. In a medium saucepan over medium heat, add pumpkin puree, brown sugar, pumpkin pie spice, cardamom pods, star anise and ginger. Stir until combined.
2. Pour 2 cups almondmilk into mixture and cook until warmed. Remove from heat, then add tea bags and vanilla. Steep 2-5 minutes.
3. Strain mixture into 2 mugs and add an espresso shot to each. Place ¼ cup almondmilk in a glass measuring cup and microwave about 30 seconds. Use a milk frother to froth until foamy. Spoon frothed almondmilk over mugs.
4. Serve!





### *Blue Diamond* Renews and Enhances Partnership with the Big Ten®!



*Blue Diamond* Almonds is thrilled to announce the continuation and expansion of their Big Ten Conference sponsorship, with *Blue Diamond* Snack Almonds as the Official Snack of the Big Ten! With the Big Ten as the largest college conference, with 18 schools, a coast-to-coast presence, and almost 10 million alumni, and with almonds being the *G.O.A.T. of snacks*, this partnership just makes sense. Football is NCAA's most watched sport, and Big Ten schools have won the National Championship two years in a row (2024 and 2025).

"We're thrilled to continue fueling Big Ten fans with delicious and smart snacks for another year," said Maya Erwin, vice president, Marketing & Innovation, *Blue Diamond* Growers. "Whether cheering courtside or tailgating outside the stadium, our almonds deliver energy, flavor, and good-for-you benefits and truly do belong at the forefront of any game-time snack spread."

*Blue Diamond* almonds will activate at several Big Ten tailgates, with sampling, on-site branding, and digital content across Big Ten Network platforms. There will also be branded activations and in-stadium signage at the Discover® Big Ten Football Championship Game in Indianapolis this December.

#### **Bussin' with the Boys Partnership**

To amplify the partnership with the Big Ten, *Blue Diamond* is excited to announce an upcoming collaboration with the wildly popular podcast "Bussin' with the Boys." This partnership is spotlighting Big Ten football culture and crew-led snacking content highlighting *Blue Diamond* as the snack of choice for supreme tailgating.

Bussin' with the Boys podcasters, and past professional and Big Ten football players, Taylor Lewan and Will Compton, appeared onsite at a special tailgate for the game of their rival alma mater schools on September 20 (University of Nebraska vs University of Michigan) known to their fans affectionately as the "Bussin' Bowl." To add an even greater bite to the partnership, The Nutty Cruiser™ showed up for the "Bussin' Bowl" to hand out samples and bring the *G.O.A.T. of Snacks* to attendees and fuel their game day adventures. Even more social media content with podcast advertising surrounding the two Bussin' with the Boys stars is coming this fall.



### Harvest Follow-up Essentials

*As the 2025 harvest winds down, now is an ideal time to step back and evaluate three key areas that will influence your success in the coming season. You've likely already taken a preliminary look at your Delivery Advance statements to assess the grades for each lot. Given how swiftly this year's harvest unfolded and the challenges it brought, taking time to organize your records and conduct a thorough review is more important than ever.*

Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "Plans are nothing; planning is everything." Applying that wisdom to your operation means using insights from 2025 to guide your next crop cycle. A careful evaluation now will help you grow a high-quality crop and position yourself for the best possible results when next year's harvest arrives.

*"Plans are nothing;  
planning is everything."*

— Dwight D. Eisenhower

#### Get Your Records Straight!

Take a moment to gather your harvest records—either by pulling out your physical statements and final summary or by logging in to the *Blue Diamond* Portal to review everything in one place. On the Portal, the "Deliveries" and "Production" tabs on the homepage offer a clear overview, and additional reports provide deeper insights from multiple angles. For growers with a single orchard, this process is quick and straightforward. However, if you manage multiple *Blue Diamond* accounts or subcontracts, a thorough review is not just helpful, it's essential.

- ✓ Double check your statement weights between subcontracts. Does one subcontract look light and another look heavy? It is possible that a delivery arrived under the wrong subcontract. If that's the case, we can move delivery lots to the correct subcontract through a "Delivery Transfer." Contact your regional manager if this is necessary.
- ✓ Verify the accuracy of the acreage you have listed in the Portal. This is what we use to calculate the yield figures under the "Production" tab. If you do not have portal access or have forgotten your login info, please

call the Membership office for assistance. You can also ask your regional manager to provide you with a copy of your "Exhibit to Crop Agency Agreement" which lists all your acreage details. If something is incorrect or needs updating, let your regional manager know and they will do an acreage update to reflect the accurate information on your account.

- ✓ Review your grade information to identify any outliers. You may see that most of your grades were in a relatively tight range, say, 1-2% rejects, but one load shows a significantly higher value. This could be an end-run lot that could be of lower quality than the bulk of your product. In the case of box deliveries, end runs are typically smaller, weighing just a few hundred pounds. End runs also typically have higher foreign material and reject values as these problems can accumulate during the sheller run and wind up in the last box. However, if the delivery is not an end run, and its values do not align with the rest of your deliveries from that orchard, it may be worth requesting a retest for further evaluation. Samples are taken at the time of receipt according to a strict protocol, but sometimes, due to field variation, pockets of higher-than-average insect damage or foreign material can occur. At our Sacramento Test Room, the samples are divided, with half of the sample stored in a reference library for use in the event a retest is requested. The reference samples are retained for at least 60 days. The process of requesting a retest starts with a call to your regional manager. You may also want to consult your huller to get their opinion on the delivery. Huller operators typically maintain notes on each delivery and may be able to shed some light on the situation. Your regional manager will advise you on the retest process as there is a possibility of negative financial impact if the grade goes down in the retest process.

- ✓ Make sure that all your names on the contracts and subcontracts align with your other business interests (trust name, partnership name, exact corporate name) or other legal purposes. Most often, crop insurance companies will require your statements (including the names and acreage of each subcontract) to correspond exactly with what is detailed in the policy.

## Orchard Removals

Planning for orchard removals and replanting occurs year round, and directly after harvest is the best time to let us know if an orchard that was harvested in 2025 will be pulled and going out of production for 2026. Be sure to let your regional manager know of any acreage changes such as pullouts, orchard sales, or ownership transfers sooner rather than later. Most importantly, this helps *Blue Diamond* keep our current acreage records straight. Better to let us know now! If you plan on replanting but haven't figured out what variety or exactly when you'll replant, no problem. We can list that subcontract as an unknown variety and put in a tentative replant date that we can track and update later.

## Set an Appointment with your PCA/CCA

Scheduling a meeting with your PCA shortly after harvest is one of the most impactful steps you can take to set the stage for next season. Your grade results directly influence planning decisions for the upcoming crop cycle. To prepare, gather your statements or download the "Variety by Grade Summary" report from the Portal—this will ensure you have all the necessary data to guide a productive discussion. If your grades for 2025 were all Qs, congratulations! If your approach last year delivered solid results, that provides a strong foundation to build your IPM plan for the upcoming season. Still, it's worth exploring ways to fine-tune your strategy and prepare for any emerging pest pressures that may arise. And if your grades fell short of expectations or you faced more challenges in 2025 than in previous years, know that you're not alone—many growers experienced similar hurdles. Increased navel orangeworm pressure and the increased damage seen from the plant bug complex continue to cause issues for many growers.

Sample Breakdown Test for Rejects	
Brown Spot	45.71%
Beetle	11.43%
Orangeworm	40.00%
Mold	2.86%

(Figure 1) The reject breakdown will show the proportions of damage that occurred by each causal pest. In this case, the overall total reject percentage "Reject meats" was 3.5% (not shown here as it appears on the main line of the statement) and each percent listed is a fractional percent of the overall 3.5%.

The focus on your statements should not just be on the total reject percentage, but on any reject breakdowns that were performed this year. We've worked hard to help growers recognize how beneficial it is to complete at least one reject breakdown on each orchard. This gives you the fractional breakdown of the total reject damage and lists the proportional impact of each type of pest (as illustrated in figure 1). If you did not request a reject breakdown and would still like to receive the information, you can request an "information only" retest, which will not impact your grade. Our regional managers are available to support this process and you can arrange to meet with them and your PCA to provide further perspective. These services are just one reason why *Blue Diamond's* member-growers produce the highest quality almonds. ♦

*"Success is the sum of small efforts,  
repeated day in and day out."*

— Robert Collier



Christine Ivory,  
Sr. Regional Manager,  
Blue Diamond Growers

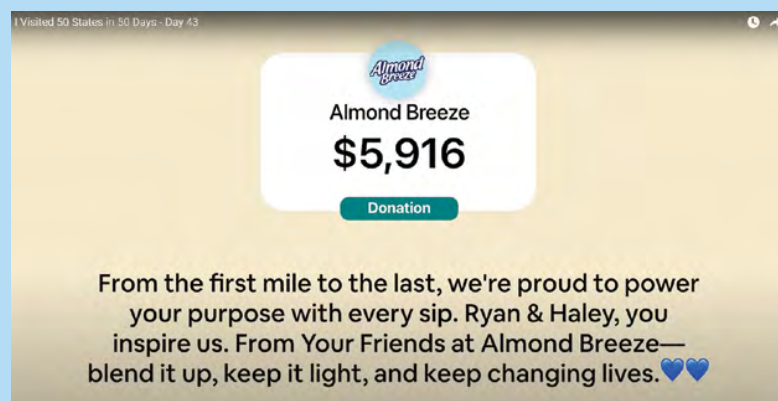
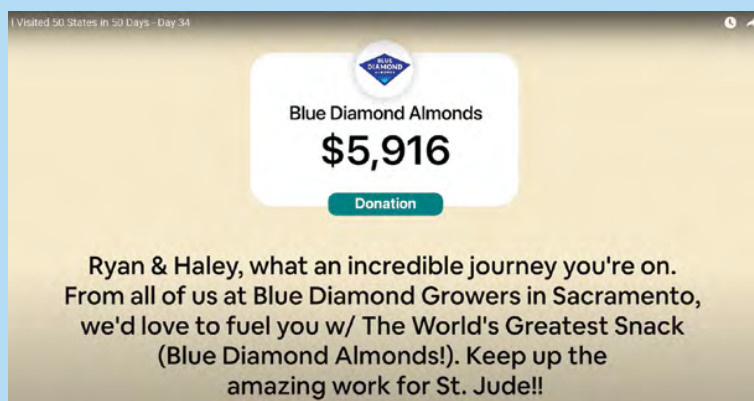
### *Blue Diamond Supports a 50-Day Cross-Country Challenge for a Cause*

What happens when two adventurous creators take on the ambitious goal of traveling to 50 states in 50 days? For YouTube duo, Ryan and Haley, it became more than just a road trip; it turned into a record-breaking fundraiser that caught national attention.

The YouTube series followed them as they stayed in the most unique Airbnb units each night, racing against the clock to complete their challenge. Their original goal was to raise \$1 million for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital through donations.

Each night, Ryan and Haley highlighted donations and updated their running total. *Blue Diamond* was happy to contribute to such a great cause first, making a mark with a \$5,916 (916 to represent the Sacramento area) contribution under the *Blue Diamond Almonds* name followed by another \$5,916 donated under the *Almond Breeze*® banner. Both earned special appreciation in front of millions of viewers.

***The campaign quickly surpassed its \$1 million goal and, by the end of the journey, raised over \$11 million for St. Jude's! ♦***





### Addressing Industry Challenges at Home and in Washington, D.C.

As the new crop year begins, California's almond industry is navigating rising costs, tightening regulations, and an uncertain trade environment. These pressures are real, but they also underscore the importance of strong advocacy and collaboration. By working together and focusing on practical solutions, we can support growers, adapt to change, and keep California almonds competitive worldwide.

#### Advocating in Washington, D.C.

In late July, our second annual fly-in brought almond leaders to Capitol Hill for two days of high-level engagement. We met with House and Senate Agriculture Committee leadership, appropriators, and California delegation members, as well as USDA, EPA, and USTR officials. Discussions focused on:

- Expanding global market access
- Securing robust farm bill provisions for specialty crops
- Addressing water infrastructure and supply chain challenges
- Ensuring accurate and transparent federal data reporting

These meetings gave us a chance to share firsthand accounts of current pressures and reinforced the importance of strong federal partnerships.

#### Trade and Tariffs

International trade is vital to our industry but faces ongoing challenges. Tariffs during the first Trump administration sharply reduced demand in key markets like China, and new threats pose similar risks. The Almond Alliance is working with federal leaders to protect market access, defend fair trade, and expand opportunities through global nutrition and government purchase programs.



President Trump's recent tariff announcement under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act adds new uncertainty. A 90-day U.S.-China truce extends through November 10, holding current rates in place, but China's steep tariffs—up to 45% on in-shell almonds, 25% on processed almonds, and 40% on almond flour—continue to limit competitiveness.

India remains another top priority. Despite strong demand, recent tariff disputes have created volatility. We are pressing for tariff relief, smoother port clearance, and stronger almond promotion to ensure stable market access.

The global trade environment is shifting rapidly, and we are working to protect almonds from future retaliatory measures while expanding and safeguarding trade channels that strengthen prices and diversify demand.

## Economic Pressures on Growers

This year's USDA Objective Estimate triggered a \$0.50/lb. drop in market prices, adding to the strain on growers who have faced production costs exceeding returns for four straight years. This imbalance is unsustainable and threatens the future of many family operations. That is why our priority is advancing policies that help stabilize prices, improve the accuracy of market data, and prevent distortions that erode grower returns.

During our summer meetings in Washington, D.C., we made sure these challenges were front and center in discussions with USDA and policymakers. A key focus was the impact of recent NASS reporting. We are pressing for clearer, more accurate reports that better reflect industry realities.

## Pests, Invasive Species, and Abandoned Orchards

Abandoned orchards are becoming a serious issue across almond-growing regions. Left standing, they create breeding grounds for rats and other invasive pests that quickly spread into healthy orchards. The result is more crop damage and higher pest control costs for neighboring farms.

The Almond Alliance is working with state and federal agencies to accelerate orchard removal and reduce pest pressure industry wide. We are also fighting to restore access to critical pest control tools, including emergency exemptions for rodenticide use. At the same time, we are investing in long-term answers—securing \$1.5 million for invasive pest mitigation and \$500,000 for carpophilus beetle research. These efforts are aimed at protecting orchard health, lowering costs, and safeguarding yields for growers.

## Redistricting and Representation

The Almond Alliance is closely monitoring California's redistricting fight, which could reshape congressional representation and weaken agricultural advocacy in Washington. Governor Gavin Newsom has launched

a campaign to redraw maps in response to President Trump's push for new GOP-leaning seats in Texas. California voters will decide the plan in a special election on November 4, which could reduce the state's Republican delegation from nine to four seats.

For agriculture, the biggest concern is the Central Valley. Congressman David Valadao's District 22—home to key almond-growing regions—could gain more registered Democrats, making it even harder for Republicans to hold. Northern California's Congressman Doug LaMalfa, a fourth-generation rice farmer, could also see his district reshaped to include urban wine country while losing rural farm areas.

Agricultural groups and watchdogs argue this undermines California's independent redistricting commission, created in 2010 to prevent partisan gerrymandering. The outcome will directly affect farm representation in Congress at a time when growers already face mounting pressure from trade disputes, water shortages, and regulation.

## Moving Forward

From abandoned orchards and pest threats to market instability and trade uncertainty, the challenges ahead demand long-term focus and steady action. The Almond Alliance will continue to advocate across all levels of government to protect and strengthen the almond industry, ensuring it remains competitive, economically viable, and well represented where decisions are made. ♦



**Alexi Rodriguez,**  
**President & CEO,**  
**Almond Alliance**

## The Art and Science of Crop Estimating

*Accurate crop estimating is crucial for managing farm inputs and production costs, involving both art and science. While industry-level forecasting faces challenges and criticisms, individual orchard estimates rely on various factors and experience, with ongoing efforts to improve accuracy through technology and research.*

### On the Farm

Several research projects are underway to develop tools to assist growers in estimating crops at the individual farm level. Private organizations are also working to develop tools for use by growers. At the orchard level, accurate crop estimation is critical to providing the appropriate amount of fertilizer materials and water. It is important to provide the nutrients required to the developing crop and enough to support spur development for crops in following years. Recognizing crop load early in the growing season, shortly after the first shedding period, can help growers and crop advisors make critical nutrient decisions. This provides needed nutrition to maximize production while also managing costs.

For most growers, the classic method of crop estimating involves nothing more than a hands on your hips guess. At the individual orchard level, there are several factors that can influence yield:

- **Tree population per acre**
- **Variety**
- **Canopy size.** Remember, six feet of daylight between the trees doesn't produce any nuts.
- **The number of missing trees**
- **Canopy density.** Think of this as "tree health."
- **Crop location within the canopy.** Is the crop evenly distributed within the canopy or is it a "tip or top crop?"

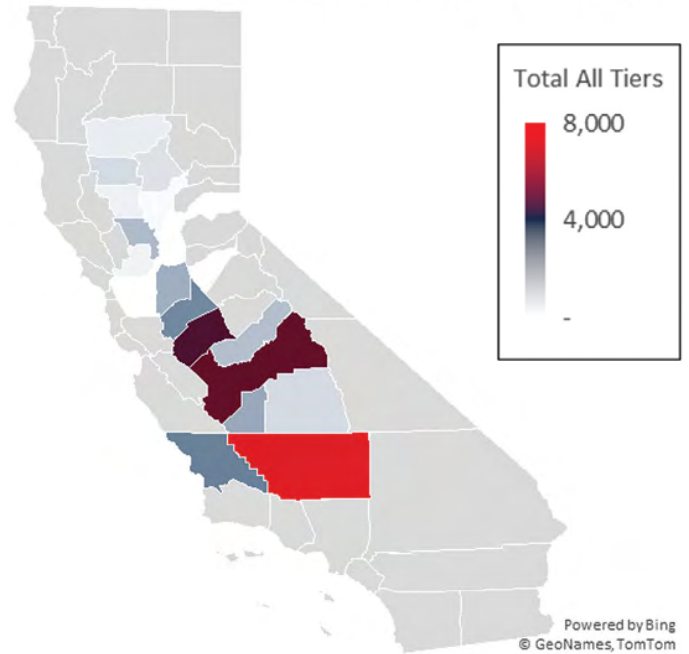
The first estimate of any orchard is always the most challenging and the most prone to error. In subsequent years, knowledge of the orchard's production history provides priceless insight into the orchard's actual potential. Considering the variables listed above, the productive potential of two orchards that appear to be very similar can be surprisingly different. Knowing the orchard's history definitely helps.

Many of us also have a bias when evaluating crop yields. I know from experience that my first guess in any orchard tends to be about 10% too high. Experience helps when estimating crops in individual orchards, and I've been evaluating crops for a long time. But I have to admit that I've been both amazingly accurate and horrifyingly wrong on the same day.

### Across the Industry

At the industry level many still believe that the ultimate answer lies in technology. Certainly, there are organizations claiming they have the answer by scanning the crop using cameras and aerial imagery. However, to this date, the methods proposed cannot produce an error rate of less than 10%, which is no better than current methods. One expert noted that the technology enabling this type of work is just a few years old, and the early work is rough. Perhaps technology will provide more accurate results in the future, but not now.

## Observed Stress Acreage by County



Crop estimating falls into two categories: subjective, which is the result of opinion, and objective, which requires that a sample or measurement be taken.

The biggest secret of crop estimation at the industry level lay in the variables that can create significant errors. Some are obvious, others are not. These include:

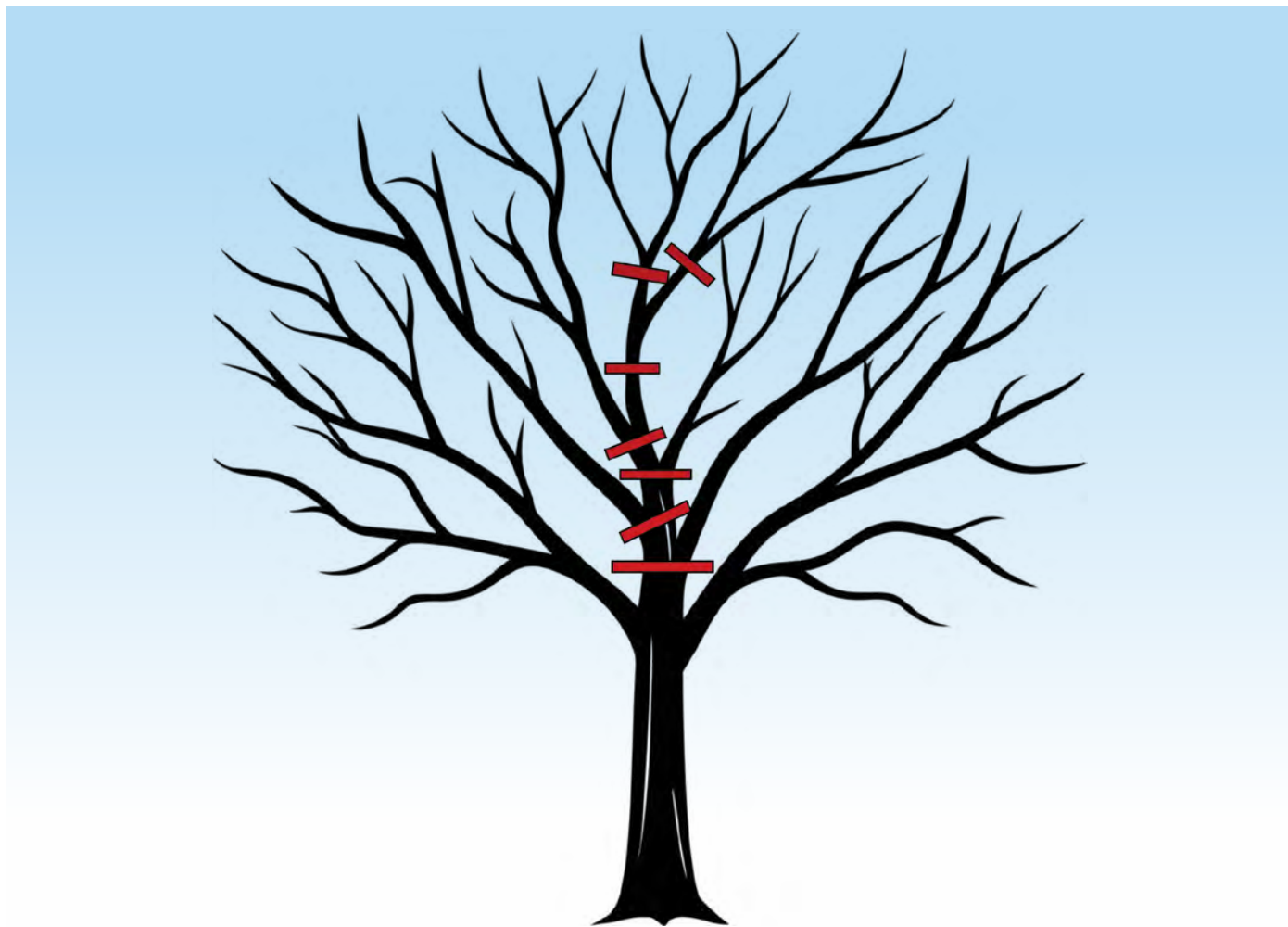
- **Harvested acreage** – this can be different from the bearing acreage
- **Orchard demographics** – the condition of the harvested acreage
- **Nut set per tree**
- **Kernel weight**
- **Tree population per acre**
- **Turnout percentage** – the meat weight harvested as a percentage of the field in-hull weight

Most in the industry use the satellite data developed by Land IQ to determine California's bearing acreage. It is generally accepted that Land IQ's data is at least 98% accurate. That said, there are still limitations in the data. Anyone traveling through the Central Valley will observe a wide variation in orchard health. Many orchards have been literally abandoned and many more are in very poor condition. When documenting California's bearing almond acreage, the basic theory is that, if an orchard is green and standing, it's considered bearing. However, whether that acreage is harvested or not is unknown, as is the potential production of those that are harvested.

While orchard removals show up quite easily in the satellite imagery, stress is harder to quantify. It is expected that the areas with the greatest stress are found in the San Joaquin Valley. In their November 2024 report, Land IQ published data presenting the relative stress levels observed in California's almond acreage. They classified the stress levels and acreage within each category as follows:

- **Tier 1A** - Low to moderate levels of stress observed in the current water year
- **Tier 1B** - Low to moderate levels of stress observed across two or more consecutive water years
- **Tier 2** - Moderate to high levels of stress observed during the current water year
- **Tier 3** - Moderate to high levels of stress observed during two or more consecutive water years

Tier 1A	Tier 1B	Tier 2	Tier 3	Total All Tiers
6,675	5,025	4,939	13,876	30,515



### Nut Set Per Tree

Objective estimates require that a sample be taken. The USDA physically counts the nuts on approximately 1,800 trees. The number of trees of each variety group included in the sample should reasonably match the percentage of the acreage of that variety group. In other words, if 10% of the Nonpareil acreage is in a particular county, 10% of the trees in the sample should come from that county. The age of the trees is also a consideration.

To determine the number of nuts per tree, the USDA counts the nuts observed along a random path through each tree. The path is determined by the number of branches within the tree and the circumference of each branch. Two terminal branches are counted within each tree. The illustration above shows an example of a potential path through one tree.

Using statistical modeling, the programming used by the USDA takes into consideration the number of branches within the tree, the circumference of the branches and the number of nuts along the path to estimate the number of nuts within the tree. Along the path, every fifth nut and all of the nuts along the terminal, or last stage, is harvested. These nuts are taken to a lab where they are measured and weighed.

Turnout Percentage.

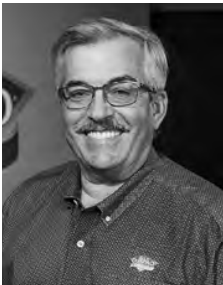
The turnout percentage is the last variable that can make or break an accurate crop estimate.

It is the meat weight expressed as a percentage of the total removed from the orchard. Many will ask how this value is important as the field weight includes orchard debris that must be deducted. However, turnout can provide an early indication of which direction a crop will go. A small variation can create a significant change in the total crop amount. Huller/sheller managers have reported a wide range of turnout values in recent years, as much as 2.0% from historical averages. Consider the example below with a 1% change in turnout.

Keep in mind that this represents the same number of nuts. But the relative weight of the hull, shell and kernel varied enough to create a significant difference in the final crop total.

While I don't believe that this article will help anyone do a better job of estimating the crops in their individual orchards, hopefully it leads to a better understanding of the process. We've all come to expect science and mathematics to produce very accurate results in the things we measure. But you must remember that we are applying these tools to a highly variable medium, trees and orchards, across the landscape. The results can only be as accurate as the variables allow. ♦

Original Estimate	3,000,000,000
Turnout %	24.0%
Field Weight	12,500,000,000
Revised Turnout%	23.0%
Revised Estimate	2,875,000,000
Variation	(125,000,000)



Mel Machado,  
Chief Agricultural Officer,  
Blue Diamond Growers

### THE ALMOND BOARD

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## Preventative Fungicide Treatments are Key to Managing Red Leaf Blotch in Almond Orchards

*A newly identified disease called red leaf blotch has been confirmed in California almond orchards. First detected in Merced County in May 2024, the disease has now been found in orchards from all almond-producing areas of the state.*

Caused by the fungus *Polystigma amygdalinum*, red leaf blotch was previously known to affect almonds in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions, and researchers are urging California growers to be proactive in managing the disease.

### Recognizing the Symptoms

As the name suggests, red leaf blotch primarily affects the leaves of the tree. According to UCCE Plant Pathology Specialist Florent Trouillas, the disease first shows up in late April through mid-May, usually on young leaves. Early symptoms can be subtle — small, pale-yellow spots may appear on either side of the leaf. As the disease progresses, these spots grow larger, turning orange or reddish-brown and reaching up to one to two centimeters in size. In more advanced cases, the blotches can merge, causing the leaves to curl, scorch, and fall off the tree prematurely. This defoliation weakens the tree and reduces photosynthesis, which can impact both current-year yields and the development of flower buds for the following season.

Trouillas has confirmed the disease in several varieties including Aldrich, Butte, Carmel, Fritz, Independence, Monterey, Nonpareil, Padre, Shasta, and Wood Colony. Red leaf blotch is not lethal to trees, but its effect on canopy health and productivity can be significant if not addressed early.

### Understanding How it Spreads

Red leaf blotch is considered a monocyclic disease, meaning it only has one infection cycle per season. The fungus survives the winter in fallen infected leaves. In spring, spores are released from this leaf litter and spread by rain or wind, typically infecting young leaves just after petal fall. Trouillas notes that the disease has a long latent period of 35 to 40 days, so by the time symptoms are visible, the infection window has long passed. This makes early, preventive management the key to controlling the disease.

### Preventive Fungicide Program

Because symptoms appear weeks after infection, preventive fungicide applications are critical. Based on findings from UC research and international experience, a three-spray program is recommended for orchards at risk. The first spray should be applied at petal fall, followed by a second application two to three weeks later, and a third spray five to six weeks after petal fall if wet weather continues. These timings coincide with disease pressure and can also serve to manage other spring diseases like shot hole, rust and anthracnose.

The most effective products come from FRAC groups 3+7; 3+11; 7+11 and FRAC 3-triazoles, including mixtures like fluopyram and trifloxystrobin, or pyraclostrobin and boscalid. Growers are advised to rotate modes of action and follow all resistance management and product label guidelines to prevent product failure over time.

## Orchard Sanitation

Sanitation plays a moderate role in controlling red leaf blotch by reducing the amount of fungal spores available to infect next year's crop. UC Cooperative Extension recommends removing or breaking down infected leaf litter before the next season. This can be done by mowing or shredding leaves in the fall or winter. Applying urea or other nitrogen-rich materials to leaf litter can speed decomposition, helping to suppress the fungal population. If conditions allow, incorporating the leaves into the soil through light tillage can also be beneficial.

It's important that growers avoid transporting infected debris or equipment from one orchard to another. Tools, trailers or bins that have had contact with infected plant material should be cleaned before moving to new sites. The more growers in a region who follow these sanitation practices, the more effective they will be since spores can easily move on wind or rain between neighboring blocks.

## Monitoring and Research

Growers should begin scouting for symptoms in early May and report any suspected cases to their local UCCE farm advisor. Early reporting helps researchers better understand the disease's spread and behavior in California growing conditions.

Research led by Trouillas and his team at UC Davis is ongoing. They are currently studying fungicide efficacy, timing of spore release and host susceptibility, environmental triggers, and how different almond varieties respond to infection. They are also developing improved diagnostic tools to help detect the disease earlier in the season.

Red leaf blotch is a new disease for California almond growers, but with early action and coordinated management, it can be kept under control. Preventive fungicide sprays, diligent orchard sanitation and regional cooperation are the best tools currently available. Stay in touch with your local UCCE advisor and watch for further updates as more research results become available.

*Article Contributed by the Almond Board of California ♦*



*Red Leaf Blotch Tight*



*Red Leaf Blotch Medium*



*Red Leaf Blotch Wide*

### THE BEE BOX

## A Guide to Planting and Calibrating Cover Crops in Orchards

*Cover crops provide a variety of benefits to farms, crops, and pollinators. However, proper cover crop establishment is vital for cover crop performance. Careful calibration of planting equipment is arguably tedious but will have a long-lasting impact on the stand. In permanent crops like orchards, cover crops are typically planted on a portion of the total acreage, not the entire field. This planted area is the total land minus the space occupied by tree rows (berms). While maximum soil health benefits are achieved when all the soil is covered, practical considerations in permanent crop production often lead to patterns like open middles or narrow plantings.*

The cover crop planted area is usually determined by the planter width and the width of the drive row. For example, if trees are on 22-foot centers and you use a 10-foot-wide drill then divide 10 by 22 and multiply by 100, which equals 45%. This percentage is further altered if a grower decides to plant every other row:

**Planting every middle covers 45%  
of the total orchard area**

**Planting every other middle covers 22%**

Calculations, often called Cover Crop Math, are used to determine the amount of seed to order. Simply multiply the planted acreage (e.g., 45% of your total acres) by your anticipated seeding rate. Note that drill seeding rates are generally lower than broadcast rates due to more uniform seed placement and higher germination rates.

Seed for Bees® provides suggested planting rates for their seed blends which are available on their webpage.

### Planting Methods: Broadcast vs. Drill

Planting a cover crop involves distributing seed across the area and ensuring good seed-to-soil contact for germination. The two primary methods are broadcast seeding and drill seeding.

Broadcast seeders are popular for their simplicity, low cost, and adaptability. Seed falls from a hopper onto a spinning plate that propels it in a wide arc. Seed flow is controlled by a metering gate or shutter. They require very little horsepower, and some models can be pulled by a quad or ATV. They work well with smaller seeds like brassicas and clovers, while PTO-powered tractor-



PTO Broadcaster



Drill with fenders for use in orchards



Pull Behind Broadcaster

mounted models are better for large seeds. For best results, broadcasted seed should be followed by a second operation (e.g., light tillage, dragging chain-link fencing, or rolling) to press it into the soil.

A seed drill is the preferred method as it requires less seed, places seed at a consistent depth, and ensures excellent seed to soil contact, typically resulting in a better stand. A conventional grain drill works for cover crops, but a no-till drill is better for hard soils or minimal seedbed preparation.

## How to Calibrate Your Equipment

Calibrating a broadcast seeder is similar to calibrating a boom sprayer and requires measuring time, area and output. For additional reference, Project *Apis m.* has a helpful cover crop planting video on their YouTube channel which provides calibration tips.

**Determine Speed:** First, find a safe and realistic operating speed under field conditions. For example, 400 feet per minute equals 4.5 MPH. Since spinner plate RPM is often fixed, speed is the easiest way to adjust the application rate; slowing down applies more seed, while speeding up applies less.

**Determine Swath Width:** The seeder throws seed in an arc, often at 180 degrees. The width can be narrowed either by slowing down or using improvised or manufacturer-provided deflector plates or fenders.

**Collect and Calculate a Sample:** At your desired speed, drive over a tarp or hard surface. Measure the width and length of the seeded area. Gather the seed and weigh it in ounces.

Calculate the area in square feet (length x width).

Multiply this area by your target seeding rate (lbs./acre).

Divide that result by 43,560 (sq. ft. per acre) to find the pounds of seed that should have been applied.

Convert pounds to ounces by multiplying by 16.

Compare this calculated weight to your measured sample weight to determine if you need to adjust your speed or the seeder's gate setting.

Most drills can be calibrated off field. The owner's manual usually provides a chart with suggested settings for different seed types and how to calibrate the unit.

**Setup:** Safely lift the drive wheel off the ground and brace the drill to protect both you and the machinery. Measure the wheel's circumference. Place catch containers under three seed cups (often by pulling the ends of the seed tubes out and placing them in a container).

**Simulate Planting:** Put seed in the hopper. Turn the drive wheel a predetermined number of revolutions (e.g., 20 turns). The distance simulated is the number of revolutions multiplied by the wheel's circumference (e.g., 20 revs x 5 ft/rev = 100 ft).

**Weigh and Calculate:** Weigh the total amount of seed collected from all catch containers. Divide this by the number of cups (e.g., three) to get the average per cup, then multiply by the total number of cups on the drill. This gives the total seed released over the simulated distance.

**Compare and Adjust:** Calculate the seed weight that should have been applied for that area using the method described for broadcasters. Compare this to your measured weight and adjust the drill's seed metering lever as needed.

Cover crops can be a simple and rewarding addition to orchard management systems if set up correctly. They provide a variety of benefits including improved water infiltration, reduced soil compaction, and many more functions. Seed planter calibration is an important component which can often determine the success of the cover crop. ♦



*Tom Johnson,  
Seeds for Bees® Grower  
Relations Manager,  
Project Apis m.*

### TIME TO CONSIDER

*With harvest starting later than usual this year, it may feel premature to think about post-harvest tasks. Yet, the foundation for a successful 2026 season begins the moment the last almond leaves the field. As growers wrap up harvest, it's time to shift focus toward planning, nutrition and orchard care. Here are the essential steps to take this fall.*

#### Strategic Planning for 2026

Start by mapping out your 2026 calendar. Schedule a post-harvest meeting with your PCA/CCA to review the season's performance. Use tissue, soil and hull sample data to identify nutrient deficiencies and discuss what worked, what didn't, and where improvements can be made. This is also the ideal time to build your fertilizer and pesticide budget — ensuring a focused, efficient approach to next year's crop management. It's also the perfect time to develop a budget for the new crop year. A well-structured budget helps guide decisions on spray and fertilizer applications, product selection and cost management. Think of it as your roadmap for the season — reducing confusion and increasing confidence in your farming strategy.

#### Water: The Post-Harvest Priority

Post-harvest water management is critical. We return to full Evapotranspiration (ET) rates to support bud differentiation — a process that determines whether buds become fruiting or vegetative. Insufficient water during this phase can lead to reduced bloom and yield in the following season. If water is available, use it to strengthen your trees for next year. This last year was considered mild as far as temperatures are concerned. This means that your almonds have been functioning at their optimum pace. The stress from holding back water can have lasting impacts, but you can mitigate that by getting water on soon and often after harvest.

#### Nutrient Management: Post-Harvest Nitrogen, Potassium & Boron

Gone are the days of applying 75–100 units of nitrogen post harvest. CDFA guidelines now recommend only 20% of your annual nitrogen be applied during this period. If July tissue samples show levels above 2.5–2.8%, additional nitrogen may not be necessary. However, heavier crops or low nitrogen levels may warrant a post-harvest application to support next year's bloom.

Potassium (K) is vital for bloom development. Check both soil and tissue levels. If soil K is high but unavailable to trees, consider granular applications placed 3–4 feet from the trunk. In micro-irrigation systems, use a diverted broadcast method to target the wetting zone. Drip systems may require fertigation to address deficiencies. For quick uptake, liquid K injections are effective.

Hull samples are the best indicator of boron levels. Less than 80 ppm is deficient and orchards may benefit from a foliar and/or soil application. Always consult your



Winter Shaking. Photo by Mel Machado



*Flood Irrigation. Photo by Trent Voss*

PCA/CCA before applying boron, as overapplication can cause toxicity. Apply foliar nutrients promptly after harvest to ensure trees absorb and store energy before leaf drop.

### Zinc: Should I Apply it Post Harvest?

Historically used to induce dormancy, zinc sulfate is now primarily applied to reduce disease inoculum (e.g., scab, rust). Avoid early applications in healthy orchards, as premature leaf drop can disrupt photosynthesis and carbohydrate storage, potentially reducing bloom. There are many other post-harvest foliar nutrient mixes that include zinc that will not burn leaves and can be absorbed by the tree. Consult with your PCA on which fit is best for your situation.

### Soil Amendments: Tailor it to Your Needs

Review soil samples with your PCA/CCA to determine the right amendments:

- Ag Lime: Raises pH in acidic soils.
- Dolomite: Raises pH and adds magnesium if needed.
- Sulfur: Lowers pH in alkaline soils.
- Gypsum: Improves water infiltration by reducing crusting without affecting pH.

### Weed Management

Winter weeds emerge quickly post harvest. Use the UC IPM Weed Photo Gallery to identify species and select appropriate herbicides. Discuss pre-emergent

strategies with your PCA. As I've said in previous articles, the only thing guaranteed for farmers is death, taxes and weeds! The earlier you jump on them, the easier they are to maintain.

### Cultural Practices & Field Prep

Post harvest is also the time for field maintenance:

- Float orchard floors to smooth out harvest disruptions.
- Rototill areas with heavy plant residue.
- Plan for winter shaking and pre-emergent herbicide applications.

### Final Thoughts

The post-harvest and dormant season passes quickly. A proactive plan ensures you make the most of this critical window. With thoughtful planning, focused dedication, and a little luck you'll set the stage for a strong and productive 2026. ♦



**Trent Voss,**  
**Sr. Regional Manager,**  
**Blue Diamond Growers**

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