



NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2016

almond **FACTS**

News, Views & Industry Insights



Annual Meeting Recap:

President's
Corner

Chairman's
Message

Huller/Sheller
Breakfast

Young Leader
Dinner



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Bringing joy to your celebration this season with the goodness of almonds!



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Mel Machado, *Contributing Photographer*

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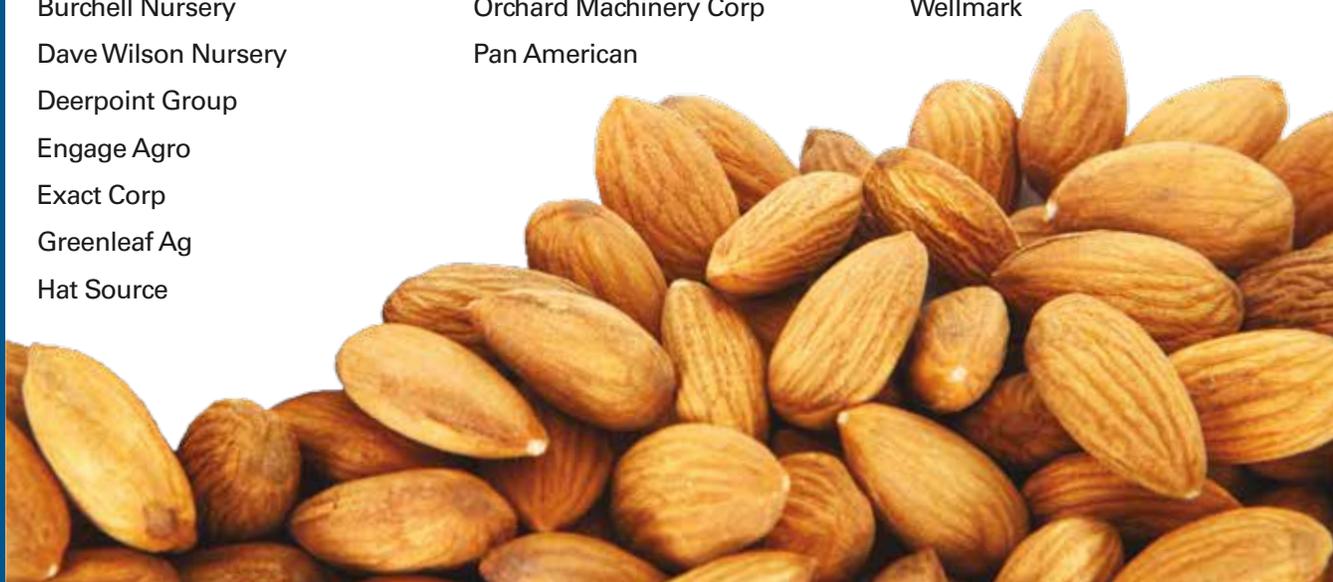
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President's Corner

Mark Jansen
President and CEO



Knowledge. Dedication. Leadership.

Adapted from 2016 Annual Meeting Address

Every day, I am grateful to work at an organization where the owners' most common question is, "Mark, how is your family?" Family is what sustains us and helps us to grow. Our co-op is a family bonded by partnership. You entrust us with your year's work in the form of your almond crop. We respond by maximizing your returns. The purpose of the co-op is to ensure the economic vitality of our owners' almond farms, including small and large orchards. Everyone associated with *Blue Diamond* has a tremendous sense of purpose. Our co-op team members frequently hear from me, "treat *Blue Diamond's* business like it's your own; our growers are counting on you."

This past year was the most volatile on record. In hindsight, it is clear that the drought had created an almond industry pricing bubble. When any market bubble bursts it is always a little (and for some, a lot) painful. Over a seven-year span, almond prices tripled. It was a great time for growers to strengthen their balance sheets.

In the summer of 2015, expectations for on-going drought and smaller crops pushed prices to unsustainable levels. At harvest, the industry recognized the potential for a slightly more robust crop and prices softened. Customers in Dubai, who had purchased at the summer peak, had almond containers arriving in the fall worth \$.50 less a pound. Many of these buyers were new to the almond industry and had only known almonds to be worth more upon receipt. Fortunately, *Blue Diamond Growers* has decades-long relationships with our customers, who tend to be better capitalized after surviving previous market swings. For building such a quality list of customers and managing them through a difficult marketing season, we owe our thanks to Bill Morecraft, Warren Cohen and the rest of the Global Ingredients sales and customer service teams. This team, like so many in *Blue Diamond*, provided unwavering knowledge, dedication and leadership!

While we managed to have very few defaults, other handlers were not so fortunate. As the

shaky buyers defaulted on their contracts, they sent orphaned containers back on the market at discount prices, causing India to also default on contracts, creating a downward spiral in prices. Good customers were reluctant to buy. They kept waiting to see if the price lowered again. During this time when there were no buyers, other handlers' call pool growers were desperate to sell almonds, pushing prices down further. Finally, in February, the market hit rock bottom. Slowly the industry worked through the defaulted contract inventory and began building confidence back in the market. Demand in developing markets returned. Since this dramatic correction, prices have been remarkably stable and are even rising. Excluding the two peak years of the drought-induced bubble, current almond prices are amongst the best on record.

2016 Almond Prices Amongst Best Ever!



Last year, with the market pricing bubble and subsequent bursting, pricing volatility was four times the normal. We calculated that a handler selling its inventory only one month earlier would have gotten a \$.20 return advantage. With our size and business model, *Blue Diamond Growers* must sell throughout the year. Those who attended District Meetings heard my concern. Fortunately, not only did we beat every handler, but we achieved a record competitive return advantage of nearly \$.18 a pound! That in the most volatile year ever, *Blue Diamond* achieved the best competitive return is testament to our value-added business strategy and the extraordinary people of *Blue Diamond*. The calendar year is not complete, but once again your CFO, Dean LaVallee, estimates that your tax advantages from co-op membership will be as significant as your competitive return advantage.

It is a universal truth that until something becomes scarce, we fail to realize its value. *Blue Diamond* members ... Congratulations! You had the vision and trust to join the *Blue Diamond* co-op. Your *Blue Diamond* membership is incredibly valuable. Next to your land and trees, your membership may be your most valuable asset. Every year it gives you the highest returns in the almond industry.

Margin enhancement, what some might call cost cutting or increasing efficiency, is the fuel that funds *Blue Diamond's* growth. There is tremendous innovation, change management and organizational effort that goes into margin enhancement. Last year, the team was very productive. They overcame all challenges to deliver margin savings of \$13 million! Each year we maintain these improvements, so over six years we have a compounded total savings of over \$64 million. This work has allowed *Blue Diamond* to build new warehouses and factories, grow marketing investments, develop the talent of the organization and most importantly, ensure our growers see the best returns.

We are managing supply, but please know we are still aggressively growing. Right now, our innovative new Salida warehouse holds 50 million pounds of your best Nonpareil almonds. In Modesto, it was front page news and deservedly

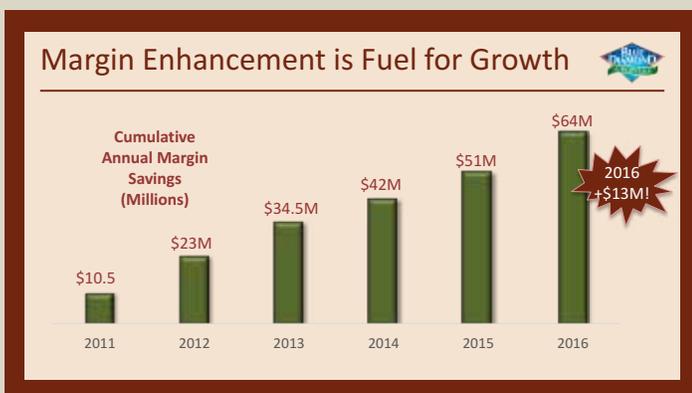
so. This innovative design creates the industry's gentlest handling, ensuring maximum quality premiums.

In Salida and Sacramento, we increased maximum processing capacity by more than 50 million pounds each. At Turlock, we designed and built the first phase, with a maximum capacity of 89 million pounds. Last year, we blew away our original expectations and processed over 105 million pounds! For so effectively building our capacity, congratulations to Brian Barczak and the over 1,300 people on his *Blue Diamond* manufacturing team.

With our new *Almond Breeze* advertising, *Blue Diamond* created its 2nd best all-time campaign. By modernizing our classic "Can a Week" ads, we told consumers that the best almonds make the best almond milk. And the best almonds come directly from the best almond growers.



2016 was an Olympic year which means it was the focus of our marketing and promotion. We sponsored USA Volleyball and USA Swimming and Diving. This was the first Olympics where we had advertising spots for both snack



almonds and *Almond Breeze*. The quality of our advertising, the power of the Olympics and synergy of our media buys created tremendous lifts in sales. Not only did this increase our business by 16 percent during the games, after the Olympics our sales lift continued at 12 percent to 23 percent. Kudos to our marketing leaders, Al Greenlee, Maya Erwin and Suzanne Hagener!



We have become very effective at leveraging sport sponsorships. Beyond Olympic years, we were looking at other sponsorships to support our business. For six years, the Sacramento Kings have been pursuing *Blue Diamond*. While the sponsorship total cannot be legally shared, it was to our advantage to play hard to get. We told them, “*Blue Diamond* is a global business. We need broad exposure wherever Kings games are televised, including throughout the U.S. and places like India and China.” Together we came up with an innovative and competitive solution that gives our brand global visibility.

We need others to guide and when necessary challenge us to be our best. It is like the proverb, “Iron sharpens iron, just as one man sharpens another.” For many of us, our fathers were our first mentors. At my former employer, The Schwan Food Company, my mentor was the Chief Operating Officer, John Beadle.

This very British gentleman was also an accomplished global marketer with a knack for keeping things simple and getting results. I remember his advice, “Mark, in business, you need to do three things: identify reality, take action and say thank you.” When *Blue Diamond* needed leadership to grow a European retail business, I convinced John to postpone his retirement and join us part-time. When our International Retail Director left the company, John agreed to step in full-time. During his four years at *Blue Diamond*, our European retail business doubled in size and became significantly more profitable. In October, John officially retired and we owe him our thanks.

I also humbly owe a debt of gratitude to my first *Blue Diamond* boss, Clinton Shick. With *Blue Diamond* board experience spanning the careers of four CEOs, his skills wonderfully complemented mine. In our relationship, he always acted like a coach. Clinton gently guided my enthusiasm and ensured that I got off to a fast start. I am forever thankful for his mentoring and that I get to call Clinton and his wife Debbie my friends.

Blue Diamond is a unique company in that it takes time to honor employees. This says something about our partnership culture. In Salida and Sacramento we have annual celebrations to thank employees with service milestones from 25 to more than 50 years. At the event we also honor employees who are retiring.

For the last 26 years, the Administrative Assistant for Grower Membership was Jan Billings. Although her title suggested differently, at the Salida office, she was in charge. Several of the field men called her “Mom.” And you know, they probably needed a work mom. However, her first priority was the more than 3,000 grower-owners of *Blue Diamond*. Most of you have enjoyed the cheerful competency of a phone call that started with Jan Billings and ended with a positive resolution. For making every contact with the Membership office better, we show Jan our appreciation. Congratulations on a well-deserved retirement.



You may remember, two years ago, upon their retirements, seeing the Mount Rushmore of *Blue Diamond* employees.

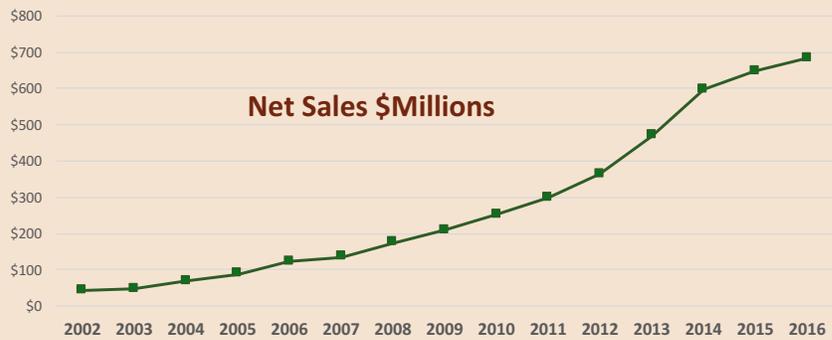


It included the Director of Membership, Dave Baker, the Director of Manufacturing, Bruce Lish and the Director of Public Affairs, Susan Brauner. With the summer retirement of our North American Consumer leader John O’Shaughnessy, we have completed our monument to great

former *Blue Diamond* leaders. John has been an instrumental contributor to marketing strategy on the Almond Board of California, but most importantly, in our branded consumer business, he was the leader who “got our good going.” John and his North American Consumer team grew our *Almond Breeze*, *Nut*Thins* and snack almond businesses to net sales of more than \$700 million. Those of you who have met John know him as a former New Yorker with a bigger than life personality, great sense of humor and no lack of confidence. It is my honor to share this “numbers don’t lie”

chart of John and his team’s achievement. We owe John our appreciation for his extraordinary impact on the growth of our North American Consumer business.

North American Retail Growth



It is never easy replacing a legend. After an exhaustive search, I am pleased to introduce your new Global Retail Leader, Raj Joshi. Most recently, Raj was VP and General Manager for Kellogg’s Pringles business. He has a strong background in marketing, product innovation and consumer insights. He also is that rare ivy league MBA whose personality and values fit our unique *Blue Diamond* culture. Because he has extensive global marketing experience in Europe and Asia, under his leadership we are combining our North American and International Retail divisions. Please welcome Raj to *Blue Diamond*.

We can all help Raj continue his sales growth. His biggest challenge is retailers who replace *Blue Diamond* with cheaper products. And while our snack almonds,

*Nut*Thins* and *Almond Breeze* sell very well, they are not the cheapest. We test to ensure *Blue Diamond* has the highest quality and best taste. When retailers imitate *Blue Diamond* with similar looking products, they are always cheaper and inferior tasting.

You have the power to influence. In addition to being owners of the co-op, you are also retail food customers and local farmers. We need you to become brand champions for *Blue Diamond*. Retailers respond to consumer requests and to the community pressure to purchase locally grown. Consumer protests have gotten our products back on the shelf. Make sure you speak with the local store managers. No need to say I sent you, because your voice as consumers, family farmers and co-op owners is the most influential. Imagine the power of 3,000 farm families making sure their networks of friends and neighbors request *Blue Diamond* products. Take on this challenge and soon, I look forward to sharing that you got our products back on the shelf.

The power of *Blue Diamond* is in our commitment to partnership. We are at our strongest as a network of growers, employees and partners. Together, over the last six years, we have had an incredible run. We have grown through investments in new plants, warehouses and marketing. The result has been increasingly competitive returns. Thank you for the opportunity to work for a strong values-based company.

My concluding remark is always the same; together, the best is yet to come!



Chairman's Message

Dan Cummings
Chairman of the Board



Legacy of Leadership Drives Our Future

On March 18, 1910, California almond growers exchange founder J.P. Dargitz set a new course for the almond industry. "We have come together as growers, not seeking to corner the market or cause the consumer to pay more but to steady the market...We have come together with no slate made up, seeking no position or place of preferment but with a sincere desire to put the grower in control of the situation which is rightly his. This course persisted in will surely bring us success."

The visionary words of our founder ring true today as we have maintained our control through time and most recently accomplished two remarkable years back to back! Crop year 2015 brought the fourth year of severe drought, heavy scrutiny on the water use of almonds and record high prices peaking just as the harvest of the 2016 crop began. The Godzilla El Niño never materialized this past winter, though water conditions did improve in most locations. Then the price of almonds fell to half of what they were eight months earlier, causing an

extreme swing in the market before finally resetting back to a more normal trading range while continuing to strengthen today. But, even with such unprecedented volatility, *Blue Diamond* held firm, delivering another very competitive return. We will continue to face challenging times, it's the nature of agriculture, but *Blue Diamond* grower-owners will always enjoy the unique benefit of controlling the entire process of getting their crop into homes around the world.

Clearly this year has shown that your cooperative is a very potent weapon for facing adversity and embracing opportunity, making it essential that we grow wisely. Success builds on success as we have enjoyed the security and consistency in strong returns the last several years, bringing new interest among growers. This surge in new membership interest, paired with added tonnage, has the potential to overrun our value-added volume and weaken your return. Though we have traditionally encouraged growers to join the cooperative, this year we thoughtfully elected to pause and take stock. I assure you we will continue to grow but at a managed pace to protect the current membership's investments. I believe this will protect your future interests and sustain our success for years to come.

Growing wisely and profitably is made easier with the expertise of our talented *Blue Diamond* team members. They will guide us, pushing forward,

pursuing the right opportunities and maximizing the cooperative's potential while also guarding our very strong financial foundation. The team's successful partnerships with USA Swimming and Volleyball during the Summer Olympics produced strong sales and brand impressions and I am very excited at the value yet to come from the most recent sponsorship of the NBA Sacramento Kings and new arena in Sacramento.

Another highlight was our team's ability to drive quality and efficient operations with the new electronic sorting equipment and new, state of art Nonpareil storage warehouse in Salida. Additionally, the global sales teams really stepped up with strong growth of almond flour and almond milk sales.

I know we are in good hands as the team continues:

- building demand for *Blue Diamond* branded and ingredient value added products,
- researching and developing new products and uses for almonds,
- opening new markets around the world,
- advocating on behalf of our growers to counter the negative onslaught of legislation and regulation and;
- protecting our assets through efficiency in operations and margin enhancement.

I am confident that we have the right tools, and more importantly, the right team in place to continue achieving strong results and maintain consistent returns.

Your board of directors is privileged to serve as your voice and representation in the governance of our cooperative. We serve tirelessly, committedly and with great concern for your best interests. Now, as the saying goes, all good things must come to an end, but for two of your directors it is just a new beginning. I am honored to recognize their distinguished and long history of service.

Elaine Rominger is retiring as District 2 director after 15 years of service. As the only woman in *Blue Diamond's* 106-year history to hold a seat on the cooperative's board of directors, Elaine was committed to bringing a different perspective to board interactions. She also encouraged other women to get involved with the cooperative. Her involvement in key board decisions helped change *Blue Diamond* for the better. I asked Elaine what counsel she might leave the board, after her many years of service, to which she replied, "Endeavor to fill open employee positions with highly talented, cooperative-minded individuals."

District 9 director **Clinton Shick** is retiring after more than 33 years on the board. Through his tenure, he served as vice chairman for 16 years and chairman of the board for eight years. Clinton was an active board member with a strong commitment to this cooperative. He was impactful in leading the board in annual strategic planning and investing in the cooperative's branded product line. His parting counsel was twofold, "Keep your eye on the big picture and ... the board should continue to demonstrate the importance of having the right people – the right leadership – who



Elaine Rominger and Clinton Shick retired from the cooperative's board of directors.

bring added value and different perspectives to the cooperative.” Thank you Clinton for your outstanding commitment to *Blue Diamond*.

I am pleased to welcome two new leaders to the board. Each brings with them not only contributions as growers but a wealth of experience and unique expertise to your board of directors.

For 35 years **Kent Stenderup** has grown vines, trees and row crops on his family farm in the Arvin area. He has served on both District 9’s Grower Liaison and Advisory committees, and for the last four years has represented *Blue Diamond* on the Almond Board of California where he currently serves as vice chairman. Kent’s devotion to maintaining *Blue Diamond Growers* as the #1 almond handler and processor in the world will make him a valuable asset to the board.

The board also welcomes **John Monroe**. The Monroe family has been a member of *Blue Diamond* for more than 45 years. As CEO of Done-Again Farms, Inc., John has farmed almonds in Arbuckle since 1998. He is a member of *Blue Diamond’s* District 2 Grower Liaison and Advisory committees. John’s experience in farming, operational, international and strategic business will undoubtedly complement the existing strength of the board of directors.

The process to elect two board members and numerous liaison committee members is the very foundation of the democracy which governs our co-op. Your participation and engagement is vital. This means:



Stay Informed.

Attend summer district meetings and our annual meeting. Read Almond Facts and the updates distributed through email.



Participate.

Run for election to your local liaison committee. Represent *Blue Diamond* at the Almond Board of California – there are many opportunities to contribute on task forces, committees, and the board of directors itself.



Advocate.

Speak out for your farm, your industry, and your cooperative through Farm Bureau Action Alert letters to legislators. Consider membership with local Farm Bureaus or the Almond Alliance of California. Learn and use social media to share about agriculture and comment on issues impacting the industry. Contribute to our *Blue Diamond* political action committee.

Remember, the cornerstone of our successful cooperative is your active engagement to support future growth and prosperity. This future begins and ends with the dedication of each of you, our grower-owners. We are stewards of the land investing daily in our farms, in our farming knowledge and decision making skills, and the next generation succeeding us.

Our cooperative is 106 years strong and the future is only going to shine brighter for *Blue Diamond Growers*. Together, as The Almond People, we deliver on our social and cultural values of integrity, hard work, commitment to quality and respect for others ... this is The Power in Partnership!

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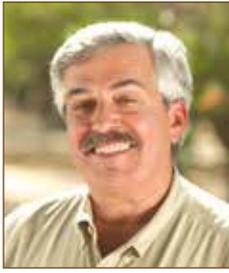
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MMachado@bdgrowers.com

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530.864.0619 Cell
530.674.4724 Home
DMeinberg@bdgrowers.com

Michael Grindstaff



Central Fresno County between
Highway 180 and Kamm Avenue
559.470.9731 Cell
MGrindstaff@bdgrowers.com

Brian Noeller



Stanislaus County South of
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KStone@bdgrowers.com

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Southern Tulare County, South of
Lindsay Highway; Kern County
559.554.4118 Cell
559.897.0304 Home
MWillson@bdgrowers.com

Ernie Reichmuth



San Joaquin County West of San Joaquin
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559.474.2996 Cell
559.645.4708 Home
EReichmuth@bdgrowers.com

Mike Griffin



Southern Madera County South of
Avenue 18 -1/2; Northern Fresno
County North of Highway 180
559.779.6400 Cell
559.449.9751 Home
MGriffin@bdgrowers.com

Justin Elam



Merced County from the
Merced River to Hwy 140
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Other Inquiries

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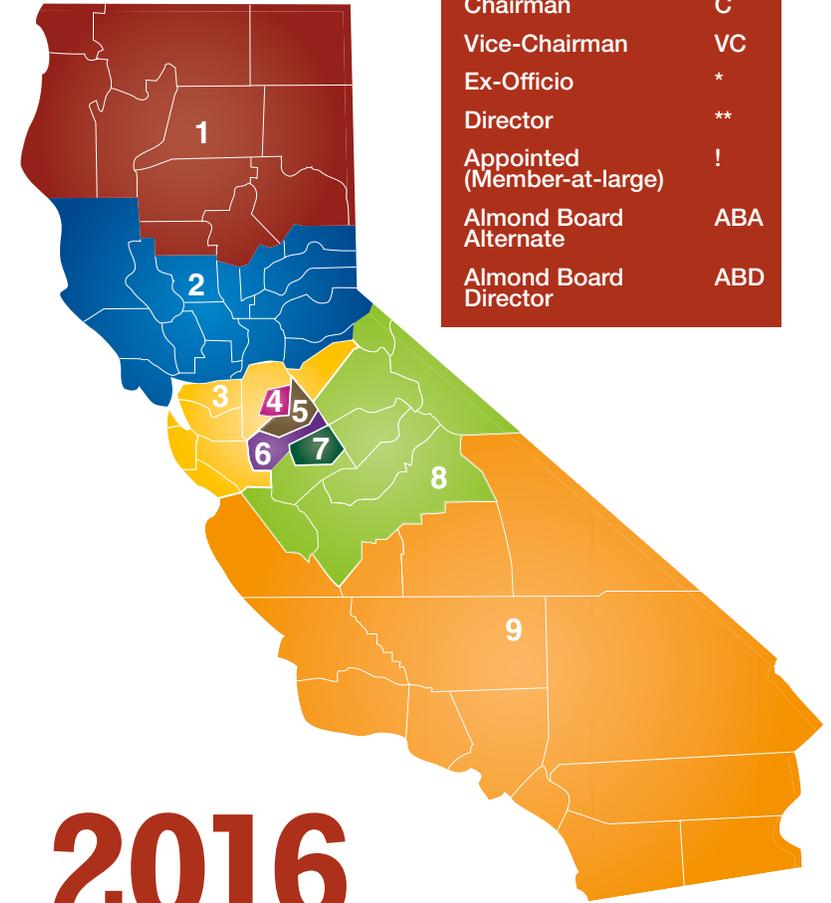
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 Neil Van Duyn *****

District 3

Bill Koster
 Allen Sipma **C**
 Bruce Oosterkamp **VC**
 Craig Miller **!**
 Jim Thoming
 Mike Bogetti
 Kris Thomsen
 Richard Low **!**
 Durk Van Laar
 Stephen Vander Veen
 William J Van Ryn II
 Ian Koetsier **!**
 Dale Van Groningen ******
 John Thoming **ABA '09**

District 6

Jeff Lee
 Aaron Piazza **C**
 Darrell Cordova
 Rod Vilas **! VC**
 Tim A. Vieira
 Christine Gemperle - Bacon
 Eric Brush
 Chris Miller **!**
 Steven Scheuber
 Philip G Wagner
 Bart Muller
 Don Mailloux **!**
 Charles Crivelli III ******
 Steve Vilas *****
 Bill Brush **ABA '02**



Legend

Chairman	C
Vice-Chairman	VC
Ex-Officio	*
Director	**
Appointed (Member-at-large)	!
Almond Board Alternate	ABA
Almond Board Director	ABD

2016

District 7

Dan Clendenin **C**
 Don Harcksen
 Michael Ohki
 Dr. S.S. "Toki" Takhar **!**
 Pete Bandoni **VC**
 Frank Fagundes
 Jeff Baize
 Jim Snyder **!**
 Rick Scoto
 Jon-Mark Horta
 Steve Moeller
 Tim Lohman **!**
 Robert J. Weimer ******
 David L. Zollinger *****

District 8

R.J. Maan **VC**
 Kyle Rodrigues **C**
 Richard Markarian **!**
 Dan Wattenbarger
 Curtis Bettencourt
 David Massaro
 Rusty Nonini **!**
 Ranbir Grewal
 Nayiri Saghdejian
 Ryan Indart
 David Tolmosoff **!**
 George Goshgarian **** ABD**
 Aldo Sansoni *****

District 9

Dominic Fino
 Ernie Spencer
 Ben Wilson
 Diana Clark **!**
 Kent Stenderup **ABA VC**
 David Snell **C**
 Carl Nikkel
 Rick Jelmini **!**
 Mark Fanucchi
 Sean Shick
 Kyle Balakian **VC**
 Chris Vandborg **!**
 Clinton Shick ******

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Huller/Shellers Consider Election Outcome

Blue Diamond's federal advocate provides insights

“Last Tuesday’s presidential election results were totally unexpected, unpredicted and no one thought it was going to happen,” declared Julian Heron of Tuttle Taylor Heron, Washington, D.C. – based representatives for Blue Diamond and other cooperatives on federal policy and regulations. Speaking at the annual huller/sheller breakfast the morning of the annual member meeting, Heron called the 2016 presidential election “a revolution of sorts.”

Sponsored by Duarte Nursery again this year, the annual breakfast attracts more than 100 huller/sheller operators to network and consider issues of interest to their industry. This year, the presidential election was top of mind.

Heron explained the surprise results this way: “The silent majority woke up, went to the polls and voted, and that is something that had not happened in a long, long time, and it made a real difference.”

Good for Agriculture

“The election was very good for agriculture and rural America,” Heron declared. “The reason for that was that rural America turned out in record numbers. Even though the total turnout for the election was the lowest since 1996, in the rural areas the turnout was huge. And by and large Trump was supported in those areas. That accounted for his victory in a number of states where he was not expected to do well.”

Therefore, agriculture will have special importance not only in the Trump administration, but also the Democrats will be paying much closer attention to agriculture than they have in the past, Heron observed. He pointed out that the last time either party paid much attention to rural areas was in the election of George Bush, Sr. “This election will bring the parties back home and that will be very good for us,” Heron said.

While many pundits have been criticizing the pre-election polling, Heron points out “the polls were not very far off. Up to the last week that the polling was covering, 80 to 85 percent of the voters had made up their mind which way they intended to vote. But the large group of undecideds remained undecided until the last week. During that last week, they broke hard for Trump. The polls just couldn’t pick that up.”

What Could Happen?

While it is impossible to say exactly how policy will break for agriculture, some signs look good. Some rural-state people are being placed in positions of importance. The president-elect supports renewable fuel standards, which helps the corn industry. He opposes the Trans Pacific Trade agreement, which could be good for almonds if it is approved. He wants to renegotiate NAFTA, which if amended may or may not benefit agriculture. He said he will use executive action and regulatory oversight to overturn some of the things Obama has done, such as Waters of the US, which is vigorously opposed by agriculture. That may be done soon. Trump also said he would have farmers and ranchers advising him on immigration policy for agriculture, which could be very good for California agriculture.

Overall, the election bodes well for our industry, Heron concluded, but many unknowns remain.

Julian Heron provides an overview of the election results at the annual breakfast.



Sacramento Kings and *Blue Diamond* Announce Multi-Year Partnership

***Blue Diamond Growers* will join forces with another Sacramento institution, the Sacramento Kings, in a multi-year sponsorship beginning with the 2017 season of the National Basketball Association. “This marketing investment is multi-year and multi-layered, giving us many ways to showcase the *Blue Diamond* brand to basketball fans every time they attend or tune in to a Sacramento Kings’ game,” said Mark Jansen, *Blue Diamond* President and CEO.**

The most visible aspect of the partnership comes in the placement of the cooperative’s iconic logo on the left chest of the Kings’ team jerseys beginning next season, 2017/18. The NBA is the first U.S. professional league to allow uniform branding, and *Blue Diamond* is the second company to secure branding rights for a team. “Just as we aim to be first to market with our products, our early involvement in this kind of opportunity will be significant,” said Raj Joshi, *Blue Diamond*’s Senior Vice President of Global Retail.

Kings President Chris Granger highlighted the importance of agriculture to the greater Sacramento community in their decision to partner with *Blue Diamond*. “For decades, *Blue Diamond* almonds have been one of Sacramento’s most well-known products around the country. We are proud of this community’s history of high-quality agriculture. It’s why we’ve committed to supporting local producers by using locally sourced food in our arena and why our players are proud to showcase the *Blue Diamond* brand on the court and around the league.”

Additionally, the Sponsorship Will Include:

- Four seasons as the Official Snack Nut of the Sacramento Kings
- Use of the Kings logo in media and specified programs
- *Almond Breeze* signage within the suite-level bridge in the Golden 1 Center, Sacramento’s state-of-the-art new arena
- Golden 1 Center chef-inspired menu items will be sold at the stadium and communicated through videos on Kings’ digital, social media and in-arena channels



This innovative marketing partnership also includes *Blue Diamond* visibility in design elements at Sacramento’s brand-new Golden 1 Center, the world’s first LEED Platinum indoor arena. The new Center features the NBA’s first open door arena, which will allow the Delta breeze to blow past almond trees planted in the arena’s main entry plaza. Within the arena, *Almond Breeze* will be TV-visible on the sideline “aprons” in front of the home and visiting team benches.

“We are thrilled for this opportunity to further secure local and global top-of-mind brand recognition, share the story of our grower-owned 106-year-old cooperative, and boldly communicate our health and wellness message that the best almonds come from *Blue Diamond Growers*,” Jansen said. “This partnership is a big deal and supports our ongoing commitment to maximize the returns of each grower who entrusts *Blue Diamond* with their almonds.”



Brand Champions Making a Difference

Blue Diamond grower-owners have the power to influence. As local farmers and retail food customers, you can become brand champions for *Blue Diamond*. The more consumers ask for certain products, the harder it is for the retailer to ignore the overwhelming demand.

Blue Diamond member Bruce Chapman took the *Blue Diamond* Brand Champion challenge and asked his local Costco to bring back *Almond Breeze* to the Central Valley. "It is a superior product that tastes much better than the product it was replaced with, and is made from local almonds supporting the local farmers and community," wrote Chapman. Costco took notice and a member service representative responded to Chapman that his suggestion would be reviewed by the buying office. Retailers respond to consumer requests and to the community pressure to purchase locally grown.

Take the challenge! Next time you are out shopping and notice a lack of *Blue Diamond* represented on the store

shelves, don't be afraid to place a request. It really does make a difference.

Are you or someone you know a *Blue Diamond* Brand Champion? Send your story to sdemelo@bdgrowers.com to be featured in a future issue of *Almond Facts*.

"The *Blue Diamond* name carries a very favorable and positive response whenever and wherever I bring it up. I believe that as growers, we are in the perfect position to promote our own product."

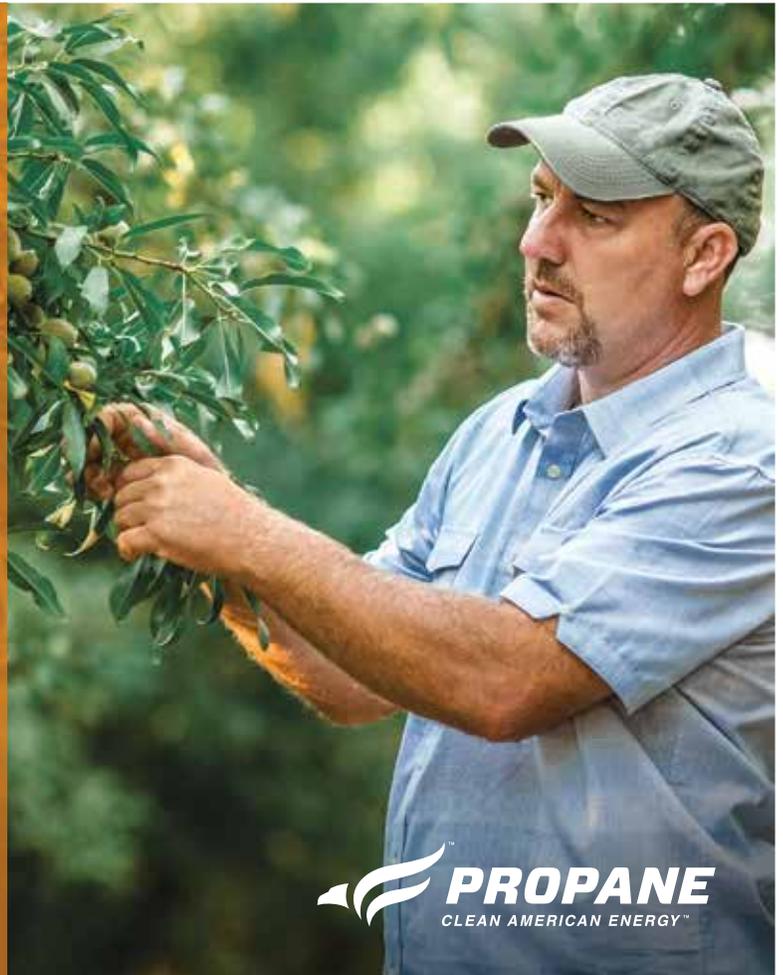
– Bruce Chapman, Bruce Chapman Farms, Chowchilla California

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Almond Breeze Almond Nog Makes Holiday Season Debut

The holidays just got that much merrier for fans of Blue Diamond's Almond Breeze. Almond Breeze Almondmilk Nog is available at select retailers just in time for the holiday season. Two limited edition flavors include Classic and Vanilla Chai Spice, can be found at SaveMart and other locations throughout the California Central Valley.

Almonds Lead Nut Category in New Product Introductions Across Europe

According to Innova Market Insights latest Global New Product Introductions Report, almonds are now the number one nut in new introductions in Europe with a 48 percent regional share and a new record high of 42 percent globally. Germany, UK and France follow the United States as the top leading countries introducing new almond products. With 4,313 new almond products, Europe saw a double-digit growth of 16 percent increase in 2015.

This is the first time almonds have taken the top spot in Europe with the lead being particularly driven by increased consumer demand in the snacks and bars sectors as well as growing interest in lactose-free and gluten-free - the leading health claim in United Kingdom almond introductions. The demand for almonds can also be attributed to their role as natural, nutrient-rich ingredients with appealing taste and crunch and extensive versatility.

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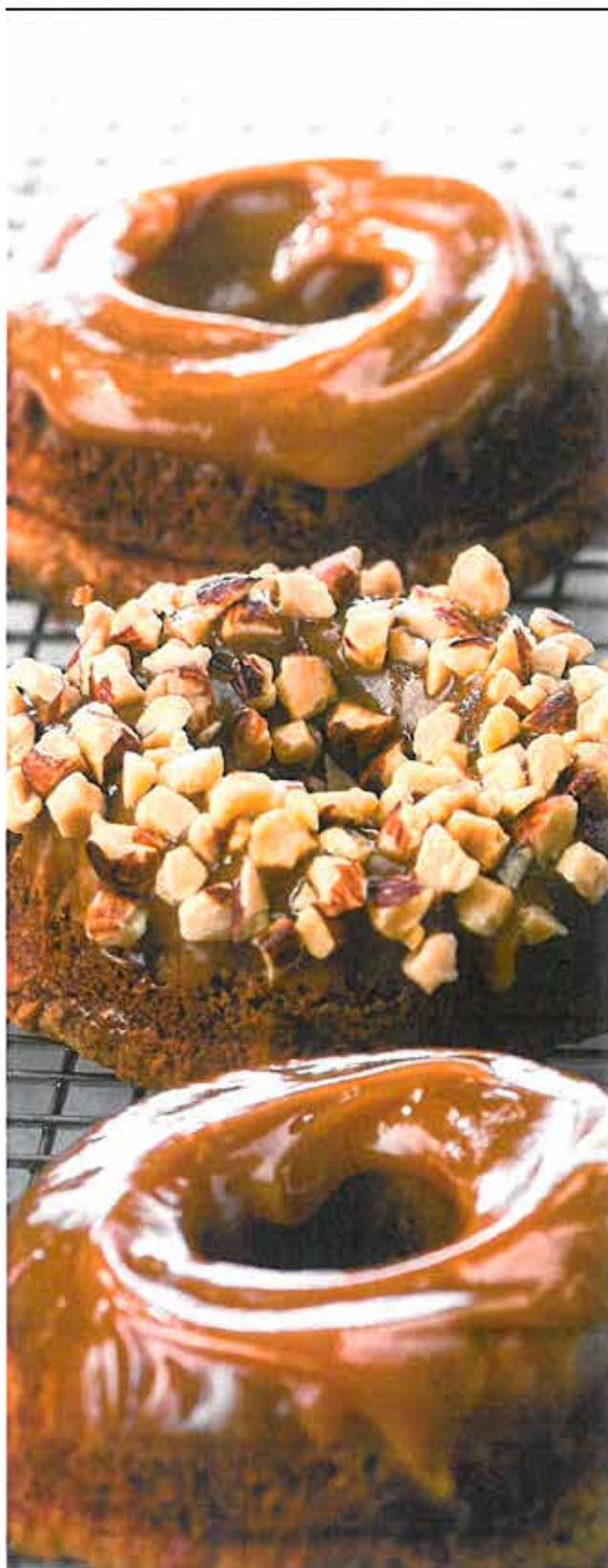
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Recipe of the Month

BAKED APPLE DONUTS

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES - COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES



MAKES 6 DONUTS

Donuts:

- 1 cup apple sauce
- ⅓ cup butter
- 1 egg white
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- ¼ teaspoon salt

- 1½ cup Blue Diamond Extra Fine Blanched Almond Flour
- ½ cup Blue Diamond gluten-free flour blend (page 5)

- 1 teaspoon baking soda

Caramel Glaze:

- ¼ cup almond butter
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ⅓ cup butter

Preheat oven to 350°F.

1. Place apple sauce, butter, egg white, sugar, cinnamon, vanilla and salt into a mixer and blend until well combined.
2. Mix together almond flour and gluten-free flour blend. Slowly add to wet ingredients inside of the mixer. Mix for 2 minutes.
3. Turn off mixer and hand mix in baking soda.
4. Grease donut pans and fill to rim with batter. Bake at 350°F for 15 minutes.
5. Allow to fully cool before dipping into caramel sauce.
6. In a microwave safe bowl wider than the width of the donuts, add all ingredients for caramel glaze. Microwave for 2 minutes, stopping and stirring every 30 seconds until smooth.
7. Dip donuts into caramel and top with favorite toppings.

2016 Annual Meeting



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Agricultural Council of California

EMILY ROONEY, President

Moving Forward into 2017

It's been a contentious and sometimes acrimonious election. With the dust settling, we are able to gain perspective. At the state level, out of 120 legislators, about 20 percent are incoming freshman. With 12-year term limits, new legislators could be in office through 2028 if they prevail in subsequent elections. This is why Ag Council prioritizes outreach and communication on our key issues, particularly given that the majority of new legislators represent urban and suburban districts.

As a result of the election, Assembly Democrats have a supermajority where the party holds two-thirds of the votes allowing for easier passage of tax hikes, changes to ethics rules and the placement of constitutional amendments on the ballot. However, it is yet to be determined whether the supermajority significantly impacts policy issues. Democrats retain a majority in the Senate; however, it is not a supermajority pending the outcome of a close race currently leaning in favor of the Republican.

Despite the results of the national election, a progressive agenda remains the focal point in the Legislature. It is more important than ever to build bridges with legislators, advocate our viewpoint and communicate that we represent more than 15,000 California farmers who grow, produce and process an impressive array of healthy, local products including more than 90 percent of the almonds processed in California.

We are preparing upcoming tours with legislators to ensure they hear first-hand from our members about the critical issues facing agriculture. We appreciate *Blue Diamond's* past and continued participation in these outreach efforts. The positive relationships fostered during such tours are invaluable and result in lasting connections for years to come.

Legislative & Regulatory Issues at the Forefront

As we transition into 2017, Ag Council continues to work on pragmatic solutions with a politically balanced approach, which is in the farming community's best interest.

Climate Change

Ag Council is highly engaged as the Air Resources Board (ARB) moves to implement SB 1383 by Senator Lara (D-Bell Gardens). Ag Council sought passage of SB 1383 in the Legislature this year because it creates needed parameters around ARB's efforts to regulate manure methane emissions from dairies and gives more certainty to dairy farming families. On another climate change front, Ag Council is emphasizing cost-effectiveness, feasibility and the need to avoid duplication as ARB develops its 2030 Scoping Plan, which is a strategy outlining how to achieve greenhouse gas emissions reductions of 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 now required by law.

Buy American Requirement

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee recently approved Ag Council's audit request, sponsored by Senator Galgiani (D-Stockton), to determine compliance and enforcement of the Buy American requirement in California schools. The audit helps ensure our children consume food of the highest quality and safety, and supports locally grown products, as well as our economy.

Water

A solution to nitrate in drinking water is crucial, as those in affected disadvantaged communities need help to ensure their families have safe, clean drinking water. And, as many farmers already know, the legal implications are serious. Ag Council is actively engaging with other organizations and state officials to help push toward a solution for agriculture and the communities that need drinking water improvements.

Ag Council is opposing the State Water Resources Control Board's effort to force 40 percent unimpaired flows from three San Joaquin River tributaries for the beneficial use of fish and wildlife, in addition to salinity control. By drastically slashing surface water allocations, this plan will result in job and economic losses. Ag Council is participating in the public hearing process and supports the request by locals for the Board to focus on non-flow measures, such as river and habitat improvements, as well as predation suppression.

Prop. 65

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) has a number of pending regulations impacting chemicals that are used in production agriculture and/or naturally-occurring in the environment. From bisphenol-A (BPA) to lead, many of these compounds are prevalent throughout agriculture. Additional developments are anticipated in 2017, and Ag Council remains very involved in Prop 65.

Upcoming Events

Ag Council invites *Blue Diamond Growers* to join us for the following events in 2017. Further details will be available soon at: www.agcouncil.org/events.

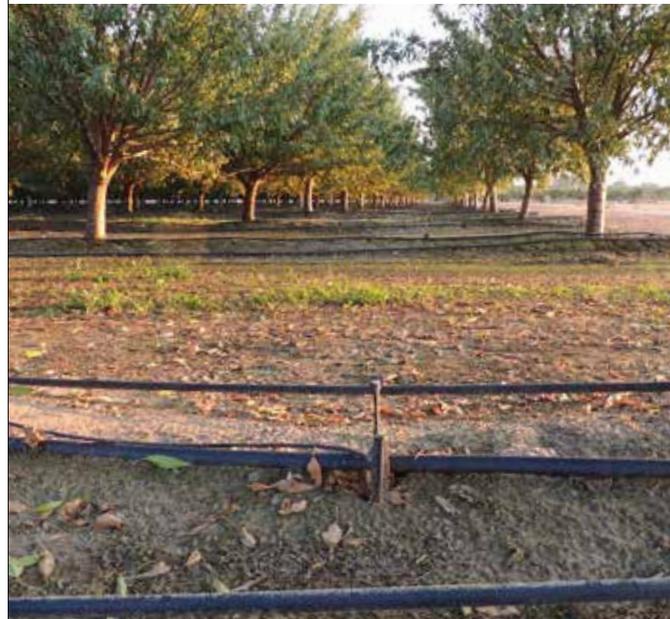
World Ag Expo Breakfast ~ February 15, 2017
Heritage Complex on the Expo Showgrounds ~ Tulare

98th Annual Meeting ~ March 8-10, 2017
Park Hyatt Aviara Resort ~ Carlsbad Golf Tournament & PAC Fundraiser at Torrey Pines on March 8, 2017 ~ La Jolla

Legislative Conference ~ May 16, 2017
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Contributing to BDG Foundation Scholarships Aids Future of Almond Industry

Several years ago the *Blue Diamond* Board of Directors established the *Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Scholarship*. During the course of that time the foundation has annually awarded scholarships to many qualified students who have demonstrated both academic excellence and community involvement. The students are selected from within the almond growing region of California and have indicated that they are preparing for careers that will be associated with areas such as production agriculture, food processing and research. The scholarship is open to *Blue Diamond* grower-members and employees' families, as well as the general public.

"It is a pleasure to participate annually in the selection of the scholarship recipients but also difficult because we get many more qualified applicants than we can award scholarships," said Bob Weimer, Director from District 7.

Blue Diamond is a front-runner in support of all aspects of the California almond industry. The sponsoring of things such as its Young Leader Program and scholarships are ways of demonstrating commitment to the future of the almond industry.

"Scholarships are a long-term investment," Weimer said. "We commit to put money out with anticipation that some day we will reap rewards no different than when we plant a new orchard. We cannot directly evaluate the success of scholarships as we can with pounds of almonds per acre, but we do know that many of these students return with new knowledge and become productive citizens."

Scholarships take money and although the Foundation is connected to *Blue Diamond*, it is responsible for its own funding.

"As I reflect on the last few years of almond returns and I look at my impending obligation to the IRS, I am putting a check in the mail to the *Blue Diamond Growers Foundation* and letting the government help pay for this tax deductible donation," said Weimer.

Send Contributions Payable to:

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1802 C Street, Sacramento, CA 95811

Thank you for your support!

Past Scholarship Recipients



SCHOLARSHIP 2017!



The Blue Diamond Growers Foundation, a scholarship fund established in 2010, is now accepting applications for the 2017 - 2018 school year.

The scholarship is open to students living in the almond producing regions of California who plan to pursue a four-year degree in plant sciences, agricultural engineering, agricultural economics or subjects with relevance to almond production.

Completed applications must be received by:

March 31 in order to be eligible for consideration.

Applications can be downloaded from *Blue Diamond's Grower* website at:

www.bluediamondgrowers.com

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The Bee Box

KAREN RENNICH

Holding yard in CA. Here the colonies are fed heavily as there is no available forage. Photo courtesy of the Bee Informed Partnership



Winter is Coming

This is the time of year when the rubber hits the road for commercial (and all) beekeepers. Everything you have been doing all year to manage your honey bees leads up to this point. Are the bees well fed? Do they have low mite levels? Is the queen healthy and productive? Do they have plenty of winter stores and is the equipment allowing adequate ventilation? Many people don't realize that winter bees differ physiologically from summer bees and have the capability to live for months rather than weeks. They must have the resources to cluster through the winter yet still live long enough to feed the new generation of spring bees once that queen starts laying. In a way, you can think of these winter bees as a special team raised solely for the purpose of keeping the queen alive and converting the winter stores into food to raise their younger sisters. For beekeepers not in the north, there still can be some clustering on colder days and winter stores are still important as there is usually not much as far as nectar or pollen stores out on the landscape.

Out in the Field

Many of our commercial beekeepers' head south to overwinter or go into climate controlled sheds in the north. This allows the bees to grow (in the south) or have a milder winter (in the sheds) before moving into almonds in January.

Our technical transfer teams have been making their last round of colony health assessments in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, North Dakota and Minnesota. As I write this, we still have teams sampling in Texas, California and Florida. It is critical for Varroa mite levels to be low this time of year. If Varroa levels are still elevated, emergency treatments must be applied if those colonies hope to make it through the winter and into almonds. We closely track these mite levels starting in August. We were seeing low mite levels in September but some teams have seen increased mite loads in October compared to last year. We're helping the beekeepers get the colonies as healthy as possible and as prepared as possible for movement into the orchards. The next time we will see them, the almonds will be blooming.

Texas Training

In late October, we had the wonderful opportunity to train new prospective technical transfer teams at the honey bee lab in College Station, Texas. As some of our team members move on to other jobs or academic callings, we had a chance to meet and work with some exciting and talented new team members. Part of the training involved instructing them on how to consistently and accurately evaluate a colony, take a sample, and record the data in sometimes less than ideal circumstances (hot weather, fire ant hills all around the colonies and thigh high grass). It was fun and everyone was excited to participate. We hope they get to meet our beekeepers in the new year and they will certainly will be ready and sampling in almonds.



Ventral view of a Varroa mite. These are the mites responsible for so many honey bee colony deaths. Photo courtesy of the Bee Informed Partnership

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A Time of Thanks and Giving

The Bee Informed Partnership is entering into a time of growth. We are receiving requests from commercial beekeepers to expand the technical transfer teams to other areas of the country. For this, we are grateful. We are excited to continue to serve some beekeepers who have been with us for more than 5 years and we are thrilled to meet new participants. We truly have the best job in the world. As our teams try to service as many beekeepers as possible, additional funds are needed to create new teams, get them on the ground and working with more operations because we know that they have a measurable

impact. For the first time, we are trying our hand at a crowdfunding campaign to raise money in support of the new and current teams. As the holiday season approaches, if you have someone in your family who has everything and cannot think of what to give them, think of us. Your gift to support our teams will also have a measurable impact. Every dollar will go into the support of one of our teams and since we are a nonprofit, your gift is fully tax deductible. Here is the link to donate or share our campaign: <http://igg.me/at/beetechteams>

We all want to make a difference and now you can. Thank you from all of us.



Ben Sallmann (CA tech team) trains new tech team members to assess a colony. Photo courtesy of the Bee Informed Partnership

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“Calm Action” Sets Example

CFBF President Lends Advice to Young Leaders

Citing *Blue Diamond’s* “calm actions rather than chaotic reaction” to a dramatic price plunge amid market turbulence during the 2015-2016 crop marketing season as the key elements in price recovery, Board Chairman Dan Cummings, speaking to the Young Leader graduating class of 2016, said, “Those actions speak to our cooperative’s century of leadership in bringing calm actions to industry changes.”

Cummings spoke of renewed plantings and record crops for all nut crops in a sharp rebound from last year’s market turmoil. As a result, he said, we are doubling resources for our Almond Innovation Center to develop even more high-margin outlets for your crops. We intend to continue to be the industry leader in processing and marketing, and grower returns.”

The Class of ‘16 gathered for a graduation dinner the evening before the annual growers’ meeting in Modesto on November 16. Seventeen young growers and seven financial services representatives attended to receive their certificates of completion. The class had visited the state capitol to meet with legislators and advocates for agriculture, toured *Blue Diamond’s* Sacramento, Salida and Turlock plants; met with *Blue Diamond* executives and staff to learn about almond processing and marketing, and visited two tree nurseries to see how almond trees are propagated.

Asked to tell the dinner gathering what stood out most in their year in the program, the graduates highlighted product innovation, co-op interaction with growers, dedication of the staff to their jobs and the growers,

the impact of government regulations and policies on agriculture, and “seeing how almond growing, processing and marketing all come together.”

Jerry Rai, young leader from Selma in District 8, felt it was “a great experience learning how the co-op works and meeting the people – their knowledge is amazing!”

Steve Van Duyn, board member and chairman of the Young Leader Program, thanked the graduates for their participation and commitment, and encouraged them to stay involved in *Blue Diamond* activities and leadership roles. He pointed out that more than 500 growers have completed the Young Leader Program and that three current members of the board are graduates of the program: Chairman Dan Cummings, Steve Van Duyn and Kevin Fondse.

Board member Fondse thanked retiring board members Clinton Shick and Elaine Rominger, and former board member Gerry Rominger, “for their support of the Young Leader Program from its inception. Their foresight and leadership were instrumental in getting the program started and becoming the success that it is.”



Guest speaker Paul Wenger, president of the California Farm Bureau Federation, and an almond grower from the Modesto area, made a powerful case and plea for grower support of political and regulatory advocacy at the state and federal levels. “We cannot just sit back and complain about the regulations and policies that impact our businesses,” he said. “That accomplishes nothing. We have to invest not only in our crop but also in public policy and regulation by supporting organizations that speak for agriculture, such as the California Farm Bureau. The people who make policy do not know what we do or what goes into producing the food they eat. They do not know the risks we take. We need to explain how relevant we are.”

“Tonight is a starting point for you,” he said, urging the young growers to get involved in political action and advocacy for agriculture. Citing the struggles over water, Wenger said, “We get more crop per drop than anyone else in the world.” But policy makers think farmers are water wasters, he added, pointing out that agriculture needs to convince the public and government of how efficient farmers really are.

Speaking as a third-generation farmer, Wenger said, “If we are going to be able to carry on the tradition and pass our farms and way of life on to the next generation, we must get involved in outreach programs. We have a battle on our hands! We have to be better leaders in Sacramento and Washington, DC. As a *Blue Diamond* member, you have a brand to protect. So I urge you now to invest in your future.”

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Time To Consider

DAVID DOLL, UCCE Nut Crop Pomology Farm Advisor, Merced County

Although having the appearance of a quieter time, the dormant period is a time of preparation for the coming cropping year. Activities include orchard and equipment maintenance, pruning, and developing management practices for identified issues.

Pest Management Considerations

Spur sampling for San Jose and Walnut Scale and mites should be performed during the dormant period. I have observed numerous orchards experiencing “lower limb dieback” in the middle of the summer only to identify high scale populations. This pest is the easiest to control in the dormant period. Mite eggs often concentrate around spurs and also can be identified at this time. If populations are beyond thresholds, dormant sprays should be considered. More information can be found at the “Spur Sampling” link on the UC IPM Website: <http://ucipm.ucdavis.edu/>.

Winter Sanitation for Navel Orangeworm (NOW) Control

The most effective way to reduce over-wintering NOW populations is sanitation. By removing the ‘mummy’ nuts from the tree and destroying them before mid-March (when moths begin to emerge), NOW damage at harvest can be reduced. These nuts serve as the overwintering point for the pupae and developing larvae, and are the in-season food source for adults and second flight larvae.

The recommended industry practice is to reduce the average mummy nut count to less than two per tree. This recommendation was developed by performing research and reviewing the data collected from plots throughout the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valley. The research showed that for every mummy nut left in the tree, 1 percent damage from NOW should be expected. In other words, five mummies per tree equals 5 percent NOW damage. Therefore, in order to meet the industry standard of 2 percent NOW damage levels, there should be two or fewer mummies per tree.

Recent research, however, conducted by Brad Higbee (Paramount Farms) and Joel Siegel (USDA-ARS) has shown that a greater reduction of mummy nuts is needed in areas with higher NOW pressure. In Kern County,

they have found that the standard for sanitation has to be less than 0.7 mummy nuts per tree in order to keep NOW damage below the industry standard of 2 percent. They also found that the quantity of mummies on the ground influences NOW damage – having more than 8.9 ground mummies per tree increased NOW damage above the 2 percent industry standard. These results were drawn from research conducted over a 5-year period reviewing data from plots established on 50 orchards.

By reviewing this data, does that mean everyone across the state needs to sanitize to less than 0.7 mummy nuts per tree? The short answer is “it depends.” Insect pressure will vary by location due to more degree days and lower rainfall that is generally characteristic of the southern San Joaquin Valley and some micro-climates in the Sacramento Valley. Regardless of location, all of the research indicates that the fewer mummies within the orchard (both tree and ground), the less NOW damage to expect at harvest. Therefore, higher standards of tree and ground sanitation are recommended for orchards in high pressure, higher heat unit/degree day areas. Growers in cooler, low pressure areas should still reduce average mummy nut counts to two or fewer per tree and destroy any mummies that are on the ground.

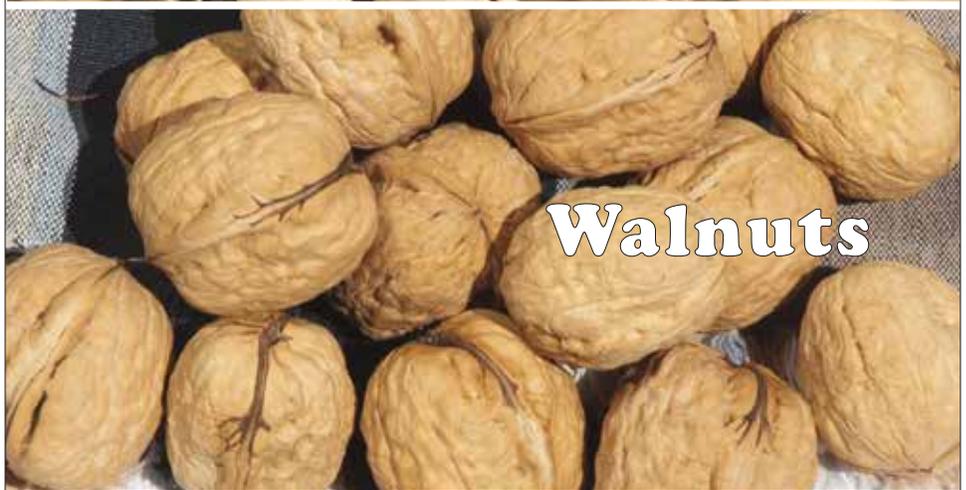
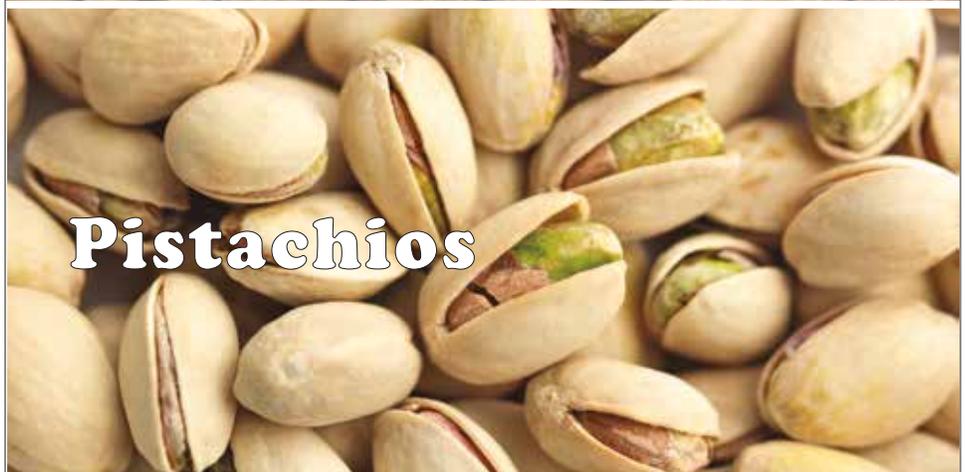
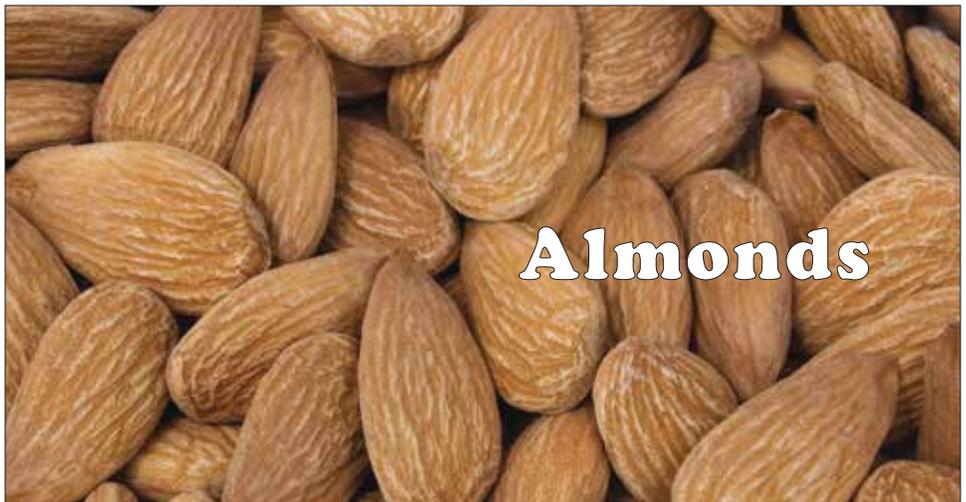
Mummy nuts serve as the overwintering location of Navel Orangeworm. These nuts should be removed from the tree and destroyed to reduce pest pressure. Hard-shells, as pictures, also can harbor NOW and should be managed similarly to soft-shell varieties. **Gurreet Brar, CSU Fresno.**



Annual Soil Sampling

If managing a salt problem, determining soil amendments or refining a nutrient program, soil sampling should be considered. Soils should be sampled down to five feet in even increments to determine the concentration of salts and texture. After sampling, the soil salinity values should be averaged to determine the root-zone's salinity. If the soil's EC is over 1.5 dS/m or the levels of sodium, chloride or boron are greater than 5.0 ESP, 5.0 meq/l, or 0.50 ppm, respectively, than a leaching program should be considered. If pH is beginning to change, consider amendments to assist in improving it to around 7. Lime can be used as a winter application to raise the pH while soil sulfur or other acidifiers will lower. If identifying soils with high residual nitrate, evaluate the fertilization program to determine what has caused the excess and plan to modify the future year's program. Address any issues with low levels of phosphorous or zinc.

Winter fertilization plans typically include potassium. This cation is removed at a rate of 92 pounds of potassium oxide (K_2O) with every 1,000 kernel pounds harvested and should be replaced to maintain productivity. Winter application strategies, however, should vary based on soil type. Fields with high cation exchange capacity (CEC) soils (>15 meq/100g of soil) should consider fall to early winter applications of potassium sulfate or potassium muriate. Applying it early will utilize any rainfall to assist moving the cation into the rootzone. Lower CEC soils should have the potassium applied later in the winter, with applications on the sandiest soils (CEC<5 meq/100g)



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Scale feeding can kill limbs. Populations should be monitored during the dormant period to determine if treatment is needed.
Gurreet Brar, CSU Fresno.



occurring as late as bloom. Furthermore, the higher the CEC, the higher the rate of potassium. Soils with low CECs should consider split applications between dormant and in-season to help assist in maintaining adequate tree potassium levels.

Dormant Leaching Program

If planning to leach during the dormant period, it is important to begin this process early in the dormant period prior to root expansion (mid-January). Enough water must be applied to fill the soil profile. Once the profile is full, smaller quantities of water applied either through rain or more frequent irrigation is the best way to move salts below the root-zone. Ideally, it is best to refill the profile early with irrigation water, as subsequent rainfall will aid the leaching process. Be careful not to saturate the soil for prolonged periods because this may increase the risk of root diseases. Also, keep in mind the timing of soil amendments and fertilizers. Applications of calcium can assist with leaching boron and sodium, while

in some soils, applying potassium prior to the leaching program will be wasteful. Contact your local UCCE farm advisor or agronomist for a recommended amendment rate and application procedure for your soil type.

Pruning of Young and Mature Orchards

Pruning of mature and young trees often occurs during the winter months. Research has shown that reduced pruning on younger trees can lead to larger, earlier yields. This is mostly due to increase canopy that is able to produce crop. Nevertheless, some structuring of first and second leaf trees may be needed to address tight branch angles and close proximity of scaffolds, which leads to included wood and weak branches. These branches will split when the crop load begins to increase, typically around year four or five. Prune only when rain is not in the forecast to avoid wound infections by pathogenic fungi that disperse spores during rain events. Wounds can be susceptible up to two weeks



discussed it to reduce pest and disease pressure. UCCE research out of the Sacramento Valley has shown a 6 percent decrease in NOW infestation in the upper canopy in pruned trees due to better insecticide spray distribution in the upper canopy.

The Final Thought

I wish you and your families a very happy holiday season. I am looking forward to seeing many of you at The Annual Research Conference of the Almond Board of California held in Sacramento on December 6th-8th as well as other meetings across the state.

after pruning, with larger wounds taking the longest to heal. Work out of Australia has suggested that acrylic paints provide some wound protection. Other products (e.g. latex paint, tree seal) have not been shown to be effective in both California or Australia conditions. Pruning as late as leaf out will have no impact on tree growth.

Mature tree pruning may also be needed. Many are aware of the multiple research trials that have shown no yield benefit from pruning mature trees. There are, however, other reasons to prune mature trees, including: easier access, worker safety, increasing the amount of light to the orchard floor to assist with drying, and to remove broken, dead and diseased limbs. Another reason that is often not



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