



SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2016

# almond **FACTS**

News, Views & Industry Insights



**Dunkin' Broadens  
*Almond Breeze*  
Availability**

**Grand Opening  
of Salida's  
Warehouse 7**

**Long-time Board  
Members Set  
to Retire**



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P. 21

## Features

### 07 | Salida's Warehouse 7

Leaders from *Blue Diamond* and the greater community gathered to celebrate the grand opening of Salida's Warehouse 7.

### 24 | Board Retirements

Clinton Shick and Elaine Rominger reflect on their time on the *Blue Diamond* Board of Directors.

### 20 | Almond Breeze

Dunkin' Donuts has increased availability of *Almond Breeze* to all its restaurants nationwide.

### 30 | New Field Supervisor

Justin Elam got his start at the cooperative working in the Turlock Plant and has recently assumed the role of field supervisor.

### 8 | FIELD SUPERVISORS

### 10 | GROWER LIAISON

### 12 | NEWS IN A NUTSHELL

### 32 | ADVOCACY REPORT

### 34 | THE BEE BOX

### 38 | TIME TO CONSIDER

### 42 | CLASSIFIED ADS

Cover:

CEO Mark Jansen and Chairman Dan Cummings officially open Warehouse 7 with a ribbon cutting.



## Board of Directors

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## Almond Facts Staff

Alicia Rockwell, *Corporate Communications Director*

Cassandra Montgomery, *Managing Editor*

Mel Machado, *Contributing Photographer*

Gray Allen, *Advertising Sales*

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## President's Corner

Mark Jansen  
President and CEO



**“Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.” –John Wooden**

The 2015/16 almond marketing year was the most volatile on record. For many in the industry, the year has proven to be quite difficult. This has been demonstrated in the wide range of returns other growers have received. That *Blue Diamond* once again led in grower returns is a testament to the consistency of the co-op's value-added business model. We are proud of our cooperative's performance and the investments we make to ensure your long-term success.

California almond crops will continue to grow and we are positioning *Blue Diamond* to market additional grower-owners' production. At our Salida plant a new processing facility is nearly constructed and will be producing in short order. Our marketing investments during the Olympics are stimulating new consumer demand for our brand and we are working on an exciting array of new almond applications to absorb the supplies coming our way.

Our mission is to maximize the returns of each grower who entrusts *Blue Diamond* with their almonds. We take that mission very seriously. While the past year has presented challenges, I know that you can be proud of our 2015 return and the work each employee performs on your behalf.

I look forward to seeing you all at our Annual Meeting in Modesto on November 16, 2016 where we will outline our plans for continuing success.

### Blue Diamond 2015 Crop Returns

While much of the almond industry struggled through an uneasy market as prices declined after the 2015 harvest, *Blue Diamond* harnessed the power of careful planning and measured actions to achieve great success during the 2015/16 marketing campaign. This is reflected in the 2015 crop grower returns presented here. The actions taken this year demonstrate the expertise built through 106 years of processing and marketing our grower-owners' production, and have yielded a return in which we take great pride.

We appreciate the support our grower-owners have given us over the past year and look forward to continuing to maximize the returns of each who entrusts *Blue Diamond* with their almonds.

Variety	Overall Average	Average of High Quality	Maximum with All Premiums
Nonpareil/Sonora/Independence Inshell	\$3.47	\$3.50	\$3.52
Nonpareil/Supareil Meats	\$3.43	\$3.45	\$3.49
Sonora/Independence Meats	\$3.27	\$3.32	\$3.35
Carmel	\$3.16	\$3.18	\$3.20
Monterey	\$3.13	\$3.14	\$3.16
California/Price/Fritz/Wood Colony	\$3.07	\$3.08	\$3.10
Butte/Padre	\$3.04	\$3.05	\$3.07
Mission/Neplus	\$2.98	\$3.00	\$3.02
Peerless Bleaching (per Inshell lb)	\$1.07	N/A	\$1.09

Note: The above rates do not include Volume Premiums, Domestic Production Activities Deduction and IC-DISC advantages.



Members of the *Blue Diamond* board of directors and community members joined cooperative CEO Mark Jansen and Chairman Dan Cummings in the ribbon-cutting celebration.



Dana Ferreira, a representative from Congressman Jeff Denham's office, presented CEO Mark Jansen with a certificate of recognition in honor of the grand opening of Warehouse 7.



CEO Mark Jansen accepts a Senate Resolution from California Assembly member Kristen Olsen, presented by her chief of staff, Paul Zeek, recognizing *Blue Diamond's* commitment to the California agricultural industry.



Attendees received a special tour inside Warehouse 7, where the first almonds of the 2016 harvest are already awaiting further processing.

# Warehouse 7 Makes Grand Debut

*Blue Diamond's* leadership team, board of directors and community leaders joined together in Salida to officially open the cooperative's state of the art new receiving warehouse. The project was completed in less than a year and is already housing almonds as they await further processing. A key

component of the warehouse is an innovative sloped floor to allow for gravity feeding of almonds onto conveyor belts and to minimize handling of the product by *Blue Diamond* team members to preserve almond quality.

**Mel Machado**



Director, Member Relations  
209.531.6352 Cell  
209.545.6222 Salida  
MMachado@bdgrowers.com

**Dennis Meinberg**



Tehama, Glenn, and Butte Counties  
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

**Ryan Christy**



Colusa, Yolo, Solano, Yuba,  
and Sutter Counties  
530.518.9109 Cell  
530.458.2669 Home  
RChristy@bdgrowers.com

**Jereme Fromm**



San Joaquin County West of Austin Rd;  
Stanislaus County North of the Tuolumne  
river, Stanislaus County West of the  
San Joaquin River, and North of Patterson  
209.596.9520 Cell  
JFromm@bdgrowers.com

**KC Stone**



San Joaquin County East of Austin Rd, South  
of Hwy 4, North of Stanislaus River; Stanislaus  
County South of Tuolumne River, West of Hwy  
99 and East of San Joaquin River; Merced  
County, North of Merced River, West of Hwy 99  
209.596.5375 Cell  
KStone@bdgrowers.com

**Brian Noeller**



Stanislaus County South of  
Tuolumne River, East of Hwy 99;  
Merced County East of Highway 99,  
North of Westside / Bellevue Road  
209.417.2010 Cell  
BNoeller@bdgrowers.com

**Ernie Reichmuth**



San Joaquin County West of San Joaquin  
River, South of Patterson; Merced County  
South of Westside / Bellevue Road;  
Madera County North of Avenue 18-1/2  
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

**Matt Willson**



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

**Justin Elam**



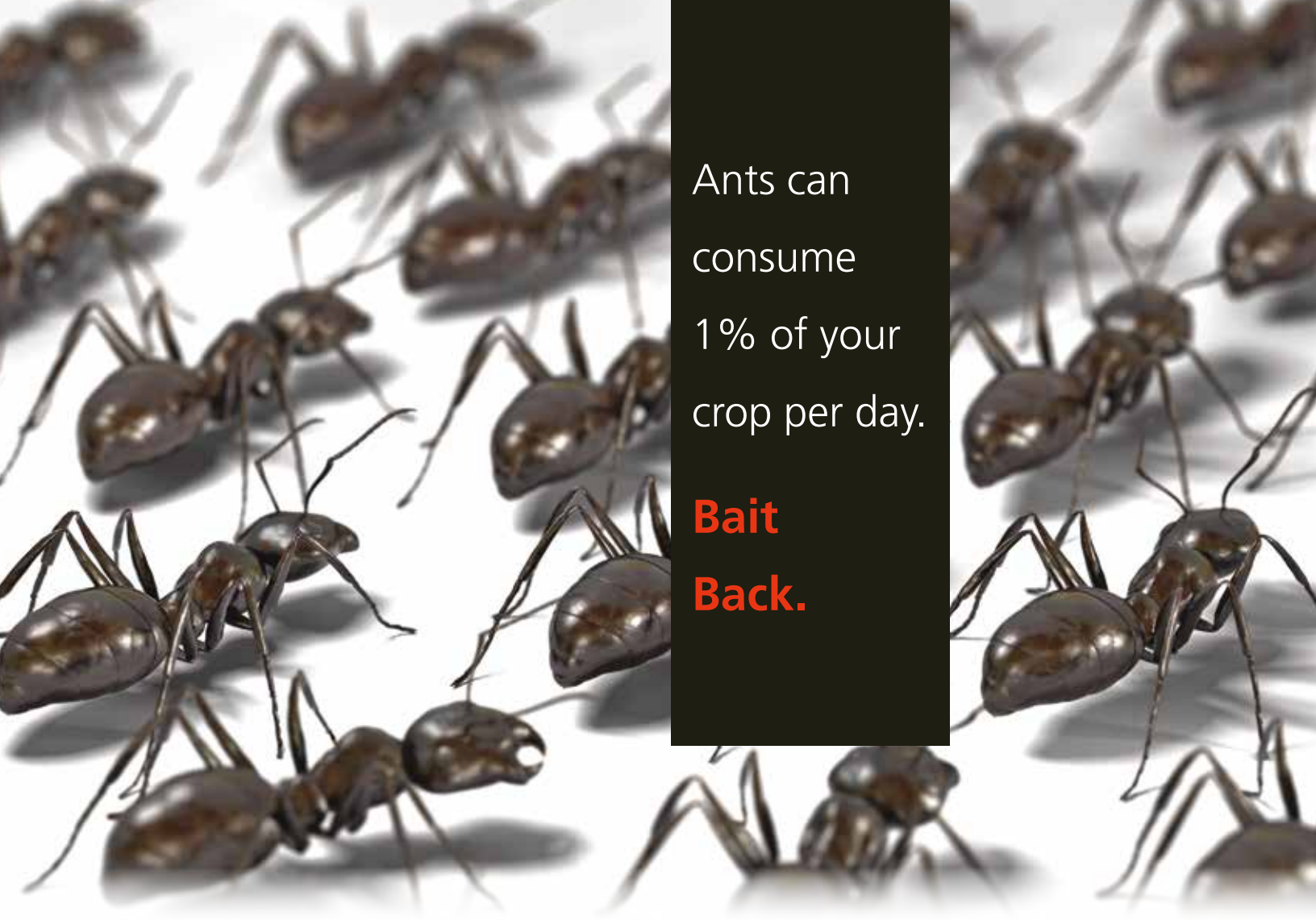
Merced County from the  
Merced River to Hwy 140  
209.303.7306 Cell  
JElam@bdgrowers.com



**Other Inquiries**

Salida Membership Department  
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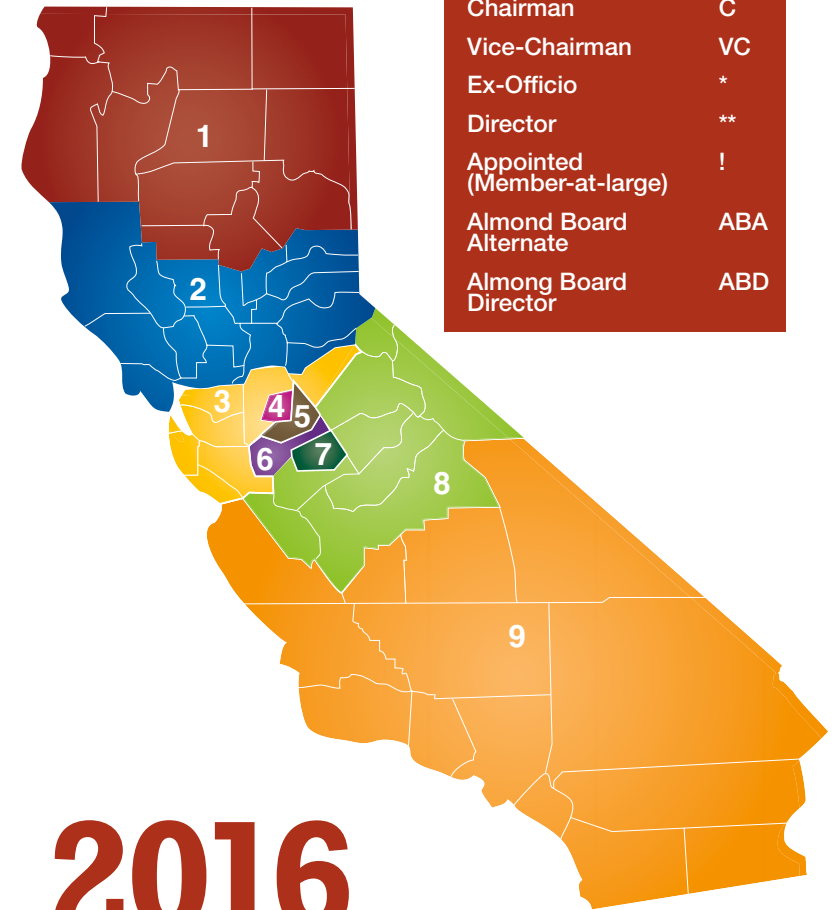
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Ex-Officio	<b>*</b>
Director	<b>**</b>
Appointed (Member-at-large)	<b>!</b>
Almond Board Alternate	<b>ABA</b>
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**2016**

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## Cooperative Hosts Successful First PAC Fundraiser

July 26th marked *Blue Diamond's* first political action committee fundraiser. The event brought more than 50 people from all over the central valley together. Congressman Jeff Denham, Congressman David Valadao, California Senator Galgiani and Assemblywomen Kristen Olsen all attended and provided a brief overview of legislative issues and their policy priorities that were relevant to the almond industry and agriculture.

The fundraiser was an opportunity for growers and industry members to unite and support *Blue Diamond's* ongoing efforts in both the state and federal legislatures and agencies. These efforts are aimed at protecting grower interests and educating legislators to understand the importance of California agriculture and the significance of the almond industry. The event was a great success and *Blue Diamond* would like to thank all of those who attended and contributed.





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## Blue Diamond Celebrates Employees

*Blue Diamond* held its first employee picnic in August to celebrate those that work for the cooperative. More than 2800 employees, friends and family gathered at Raley field on August 26th for live music, carnival games and great food.



## French Ag Business Executives Visit Blue Diamond

A delegation of French agricultural company executives visited *Blue Diamond's* Salida facility this July on their tour of California agriculture. The group toured the plant and had the opportunity to learn about the cooperative, the production of almonds and ag leadership programs *Blue Diamond* has to offer. The delegation was very interested in the Young Leader and Master's Program as they are potentially starting similar programs in France.



# Blue Diamond Raises Top Donations for Salvation Army

Salvation Army recognized both *Blue Diamond* Salida and Turlock plants for their hard work and dedication to raise money for the Salvation Army Kidz Day event. In fact, both teams v with the most donations. The cooperative and *Blue Diamond* employees as a whole raised more than \$10,000 for the event. The Salvation Army Kidz day is an annual event during which volunteers from across the community sell newspapers to raise money for the Salvation Army programs specifically focused on children. This year the event raised more than \$99,000.



# Smokehouse Earns Best Taste Award




*Blue Diamond's Smokehouse Almond* was selected for a 2016 Best Taste Award for snack foods by ChefsBest. The organization judges thousands of grocery products, awarding only the highest quality and best tasting with notable awards. It evaluates national branded products based on industry trends and increased consumer interest in taste quality. Each product was assessed and scored by a panel of Certified Master Tasters, executive-level chefs determining the selections for the awards.

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# Trade Shows Go Nuts for Blue Diamond

Blue Diamond visits multiple trade shows a year for both its ingredient and branded products. The presence Blue Diamond has at these trade shows is truly unique to the brand.




In July, Blue Diamond attended the Institute of Food Technologists expo, which attracted the industry's largest collection of food ingredients, equipment, processing and packaging suppliers.



Blue Diamond's International Retail team went to Shanghai to the SIAL exhibitions, Asia's largest food innovation exhibition.





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# Recipe of the Month

## ITALIAN MEATBALLS

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES • COOK TIME: 45 MINUTES

### MAKES ABOUT 24 MEATBALLS

½ ONION  
¼ CUP FRESH BASIL, PACKED  
¼ CUP FRESH PARSLEY, PACKED  
6 CLOVES GARLIC

2 POUNDS GROUND BEEF  
½ CUP GRATED PARMESAN CHEESE  
1 EGG  
1 CUP BLUE DIAMOND EXTRA FINE NATURAL ALMOND FLOUR  
2 TABLESPOONS GARLIC POWDER  
½ TABLESPOON RED PEPPER FLAKES  
SALT/PEPPER

MARINARA SAUCE  
OLIVE OIL

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a food processor, puree onion, basil, parsley, and garlic.
3. In a large bowl, hand mix ground beef, cheese, onion and herb puree, egg, almond flour and spices. Roll mixture into 1½ inch balls and place on a baking sheet (with sides).
4. Bake for 30 minutes or until the center of the meatballs are slightly pink.
5. Place meatballs in a baking dish and cover with marinara sauce. Cover dish with foil. Bake for an additional 15 minutes.



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## Dunkin' Donuts to Offer *Almond Breeze* Nationwide

America's favorite coffee shop, Dunkin' Donuts, announced at the end of summer that it would now offer *Blue Diamond Almond Breeze* in all of its restaurants nationwide. This is an exciting partnership between the coffee and baked goods chain and *Blue Diamond Growers*, whose almondmilk product line continues to grow in popularity among customers and consumers worldwide.

The cooperative's relationship with Dunkin' Donuts first blossomed in 2014 when the chain introduced *Blue Diamond Vanilla Almond Breeze* to the majority of its restaurants as an addition to hot or iced coffee and espresso beverages. The move offered Dunkin' guests their first opportunity to enjoy a non-dairy alternative to milk or cream in select locations.

"Our fans love that we offer so many choices to personalize their favorite coffee beverage. Over the past couple years, based on an increasing number of customer requests, we began to explore options for expanding our menu with a non-dairy alternative to milk and cream. We believe adding *Almond Breeze* Almondmilk now gives our guests a unique and delicious new way to enjoy our famous coffee or lattes," John Costello, Dunkin' Brands President, said of the original partnership.



With all locations now offering *Almond Breeze*, the opportunity to introduce the product to a brand new segment of coffee-drinking consumers is huge, says Jim Lardy, *Blue Diamond's* Director of Food Service. "Our Almondmilk has the potential to reach an ever larger swath of our target demographic. We hope those individuals seek out *Almond Breeze* on their next trip to the grocery store!" he said. "We're excited to see just how big an impact this partnership has on our business."

Dairy alternatives, such as almondmilk, have been a growing trend in the coffee industry. According to Mintel researchers, 58 percent of adults consume non-dairy milk, with almondmilk ranking as the most popular option.

To learn more about the partnership, visit [www.dunkindonuts.com](http://www.dunkindonuts.com) and be sure to order *Blue Diamond Almond Breeze* in your next coffee or latte!





## International Excitement Grows Over Almond Breeze Barista Blend

**What started as a conversation in Melbourne, Australia between a café owner and Blue Diamond's local manager has blossomed into a new sales avenue for the Almond Breeze line of non-dairy beverages!**

“In that initial conversation in early 2014, we learned that skilled baristas could transform lattes and cappuccinos by incorporating *Almond Breeze*. They were able to make a delicious coffee drink for consumers who preferred our almond milk to dairy and other non-dairy alternatives. We realized the potential for was huge!” said Roger Ringwood, *Blue Diamond's* Australia representative.

Pursuing the development of an even better *Almond Breeze* designed specifically for coffee drinks meant seeking out a team of skilled Australian baristas, in tandem with *Blue Diamond's* in-country partner Freedom Foods, to optimize the blend to ensure it performs like regular dairy milk. The resulting product delighted the team of barista testers as it stretched, held and exhibited good foam – qualities prized by baristas and consumers alike. Best of all, though, was the taste. “Taste testers responded overwhelmingly positively to the *Almond Breeze* lattes,” Ringwood explained.

*Blue Diamond Barista Blend* was born in the fall of 2014, making its official launch at the National Fine Foods show in Melbourne. Sold exclusively through the food service channel, *Barista Blend* was received to great industry acclaim and was named best new Foodservice Product of the Year at Fine Food Australia, the nation's leading industry food show.

With accolades from the industry pouring in, the push for wider distribution focused on promoting directly to baristas in premium cafés in metro areas in Australia throughout 2015.

“We recognized that we needed to earn the approval of the individuals who would actually be working with the product if we were going to be able to build on our initial launch momentum,” said Ringwood. “Barista endorsement and support from the barista community was key to receiving buy-in by café owners.”

After a full year of growth, the team took 2016 by storm. Trained baristas descended on cafés across Australia to sample and secure new listings and an advertising campaign in trade media kept *Barista Blend* at the forefront of the coffee shop scene. The marketing team even launched a nationwide latte art contest, The Breezy Masters, which challenged baristas to make works of art using the foam produced by *Barista Blend* as their canvas.

“It has been an exciting year for our unique product and these are only some of the strategies we've put in place,” said Ringwood. “We've seen sustained sales growth and have even expanded to New Zealand. Best of all, we're seeing positive crossover to our retail products in terms of consumer trial and awareness. Look for more to come from *Almond Breeze Barista Blend* in Australia!”





## South Africa Joins the *Barista Blend* Party

With the successful introduction of *Barista Blend* in Australia, *Blue Diamond's* team of International Retail marketers targeted South Africa as its next market. Preparing to launch in fall 2015 meant zeroing in on the best approach to gaining steady distribution and backing up the strategy with marketing support.

“One of the defining factors of our South African success to date is the marketing support we offer to the vendor-partner to create awareness for their customer base,” explained Christine Lott, Marketing Manager for International *Almond Breeze*. “Combined with brand-building initiatives, our efforts ensure that the customer is seeing *Almond Breeze Barista Blend* in the media, online, on social channels and at the point of purchase.”

Exciting promotion avenues that the South African team has employed include:

- Showcasing at food and barista trade shows, where trained baristas demonstrate *Almond Breeze* lattes on the spot, complete with beautiful foam art for attendees to enjoy.
- Branded media packs with samples of the product and *Almond Breeze* branded merchandise.
- In-store marketing material such as clothing, aprons, branded jugs and coffee sleeves.

- Vehicle branding on vans and Smart Cars alike, bringing the *Barista Blend* message to the streets.
- Hosting the South African Barista Championship Smackdown, pitting baristas against one another to produce the most creative latte art using *Almond Breeze Barista Blend*.

“Distribution is building and we’ve gained support in key accounts, including *vida e caffè* and *Bootlegger Café*,” Lott said. In both social media and through their online newsletter, *vida e caffè* has touted the product and encouraged its fans to get their “great tasting coffee fix made with *Almond Breeze Barista Blend*!” *Bootlegger Café* put a call out on Twitter for followers to share pictures of themselves with their *Almond Breeze* coffees.

The *Almond Breeze Barista Blend* international marketing team is always searching for the next big market where the product can flourish. Launches have commenced in the UK and Japan. And another new introduction includes Finland, where instead of being sold strictly on the food service side, it is also sold at retail stores directly to consumers. “The Finnish population has one of the highest consumptions of coffee in the world and *Barista Blend* fits in perfectly as a low calorie alternative to milk,” Lott explained. “We’re very excited for the future of this dynamic product.”

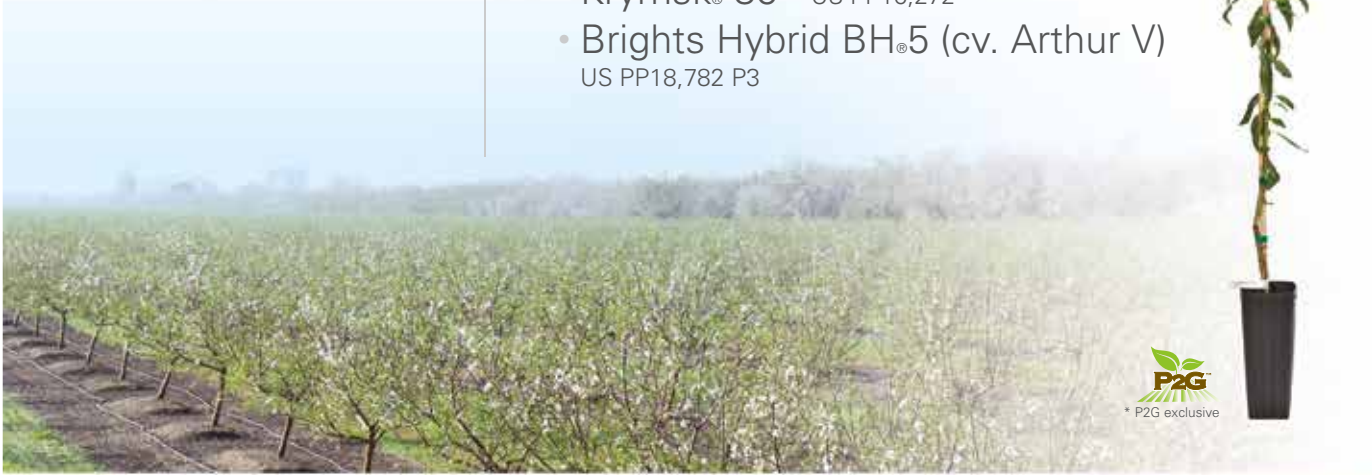
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## Shick To Retire From *Blue Diamond* Board after 33 Years

**The almond industry has grown significantly since District 9 Director Clinton Shick first joined the *Blue Diamond* cooperative. In more than three decades, he's seen the size of the crop skyrocket from 239 million pounds to more than 2 billion pounds and the distribution network of that crop has wrapped around the globe. Shick has decided not to seek reelection to the *Blue Diamond* board of directors for the first time since joining the board more than 33 years ago.**

Shick, of McFarland in Kern County, was first elected to the *Blue Diamond* board in 1983 as the first director for the realigned District 9. The cooperative had redrawn its nine directorial districts in recognition of

rapidly expanding almond acreage in the Central Valley. "Rather than create another district, they decided to look at existing structure and adjust to account for the enlarging amount of production coming out of the south valley. So Districts 8 and 9 were redrawn to their current boundaries," he explained. "The newly created District 9 did not have an incumbent from the area so I put my name in the hat. I don't remember if anyone else ran or not but I was elected and that's how I joined the board."

Since that first election, Shick has sought to be an active board member and was committed to helping his cooperative regain the competitive edge that some perceived to have been lost in the early 1980s. "For a young farm boy who had only been



exposed to the Farm Bureau, it was a nice opportunity to see how a large company worked and to try to make things happen because I knew it could be better," he said. "In those first years in the 80s, there were some tough times. I could see that *Blue Diamond* was doing great stuff for the industry but outside our membership, some questioned whether we had lost our way. I saw it as a challenge to earn back the recognition *Blue Diamond* deserved."

According to Shick, there is one function of any board that stands

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above the rest – selecting the right management and monitoring effectiveness. As such, he points to the last two management transitions as two of the most impactful decisions that the board has made while he was a member. “The process for each was well thought out. We took our time and tried to evaluate where we were and where we needed to go and took the necessary steps to get us there,” he said. “I feel good about the way we have handled our CEO transitions.”

Other impactful decisions during Shick’s tenure included engaging the board in annual strategic planning and investing in the cooperative’s consumer product line. “You can see there is a dramatic turn-around starting in 2000 when the board took a more active role in how the company is managed,” he said, referring to the year that the board was first included in the formal planning process. “The board and management being actively engaged in how strategies are set forth has been key to our success today.”

The decision to invest and grow the consumer product business has been instrumental to *Blue Diamond’s* success. “Also in 2000 we on the board could sense that there had to be more to the branded product business of which we could take advantage,” Shick said. The result was the hiring of a dedicated consumer products director and sales have continued to grow ever since. “It just highlights the fact that you need the right people in the right places. Look what this decision has brought us. The growth in our consumer brands has been phenomenal!”

Through Shick’s 33-year tenure, he served as Vice Chairman for 16 years and Chairman of the Board for 8 years. He first planted almonds in 1973 and joined *Blue Diamond* the following season. “Ever since I’ve grown almonds, I’ve never sent them anywhere but *Blue Diamond*,” he said. “I stayed with *Blue Diamond* because I could see from

the inside all the good stuff being done to build up the company and industry. I think it’s just the best place to be and our results are beginning to bear that out, too. There aren’t many opportunities for family farmers to have their own brand. I’m proud of that and I like being a part of it.”

Shick’s last term will come to a close at the 2016 Annual Meeting in November. While he plans to remain very active on the farm, he is also enjoying

incorporating his son Sean into the day-to-day operations and is making plans to explore local opportunities to get involved in Kern County. “I plan to continue with The CVAA cooperative huller board and may look at something in the water area. There’s a lot of stuff happening in that area and I’d like to learn more about it,” he said. “My time with *Blue Diamond* has been a rewarding experience and I’m thankful to be part of such a great team.”



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# Rominger Retiring as District 2 Director

**In *Blue Diamond's* 106-year history, only one woman has held a seat on the cooperative's board of directors and that woman is Elaine Rominger. She has represented the interests of growers from District 2 and the entire membership since first joining the board in 2001. Rominger is set to retire from the board of directors at the close of *Blue Diamond's* 2016 Annual Meeting in November. From her office in Arbuckle, she reflected on the journey that brought her to her decision to not seek reelection to *Blue Diamond's* highest office.**

“How the cooperative is managed has always been interesting to me and I knew there were some things I wanted to learn more about. There had never been a woman to run for the board but I knew I was as qualified as anybody,” she said. “My field supervisor at the time, Daryl Brun, said the only way to find out if I had the support of the membership was to put my name out there. I collected the 15 signatures to file a candidate petition and I haven't had any competition thus far.”

Rominger's qualifications included serving on the city council and as mayor of the city of Woodland, as manager of the Yolo County Farm Bureau and as President of the Colusa County Farm Bureau. “My parents would always say ‘you know what you think, you say what you mean, you don't lie and you stick to your guns.’ That was the philosophy I took with me into local government and beyond – if I don't say what I'm thinking, then others can't consider my point of view,” she said. “I think the more transparent we are, the better. I learned that on city council and it's still important today.”

## Representing a Different Point of View

After winning her election to the *Blue Diamond* board, she made a commitment to bring a different



perspective to board interactions. “Women have a different perspective and it only enhances discussion and thinking at all levels of the company,” she explained. “In agriculture, interactions can be difficult. People assume I'm a spouse so they're less likely to talk with me. Now that I've been serving on the *Blue Diamond* board for this long, that dynamic has changed.”

Rominger recalled one particular interaction with *Blue Diamond* team members that stood out in her

memory. “One year, the board and senior management went across the street to the Sacramento plant to have a big group lunch with our team members. I looked around and saw a table of ladies and I asked if I could join them. I introduced myself and we got to talking. They gave me an earful! These ladies appreciated having a woman on the board and thanked me for taking the time to talk to them.

“It's important to go out of your comfort zone and mix it up. You

learn so much more from talking to other people and learning from their experiences. These ladies made an impression on me that I haven't forgotten," she said.

She's encouraged other women to get involved in the cooperative through one of her favorite board activities – liaison committee meetings. "Three women from my district were elected to the liaison committee last year. This year we have two more women interested. I think it's very important," she said.

## Being an Almond Ambassador

With her orchards and huller/sheller operation in Arbuckle just a short drive from *Blue Diamond's* Sacramento headquarters, Rominger and her husband Gerry (a former District 2 director himself) often find themselves as tour hosts for customers, politicians or international agricultural groups. "We call it 'Almonds 101.' They know little or nothing about almonds and we're happy to teach them about our crop," she said.

The last group that the Romingers hosted on their farm was a group from the Chinese consulate. They toured through the orchards, pointing out the different stages of tree development, and gave them a look inside their huller/sheller. "They were so excited to get in there and take pictures with our trees and the equipment. It's part of what we do as growers – we share our story and help foster understanding for almond consumers from the United States and around the world," she explained.

## Making a Lasting Impact

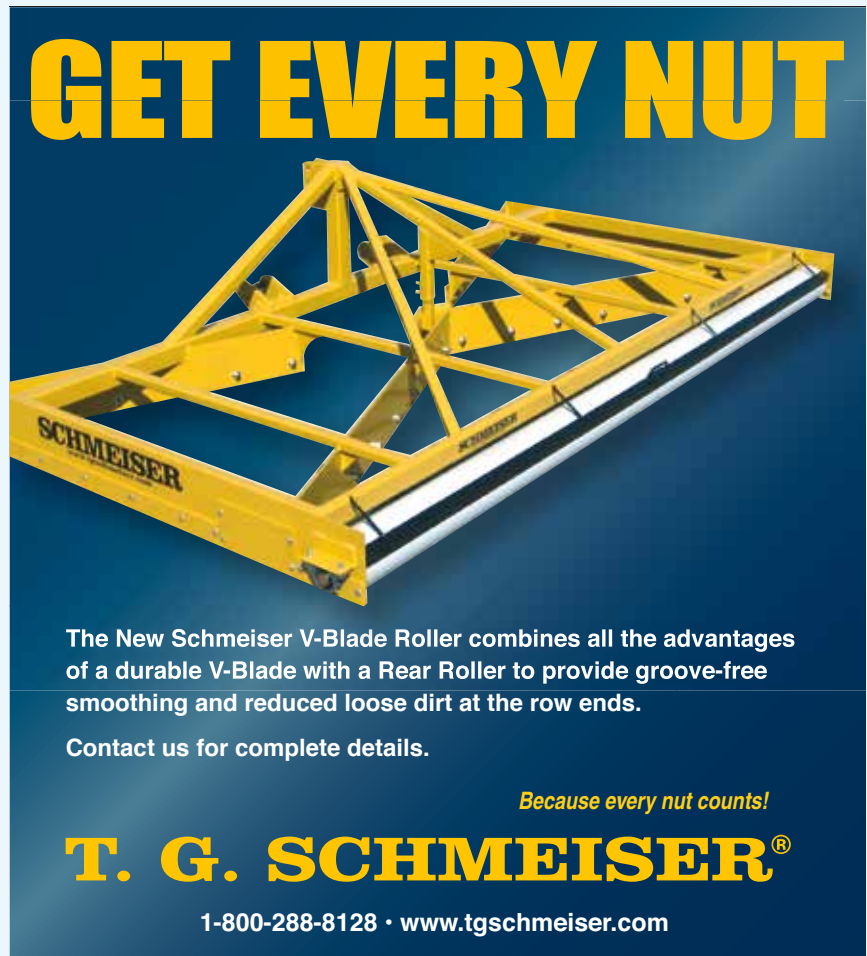
There are several key board decisions Rominger points to that helped change the direction of *Blue Diamond* for the better. Those include transitioning from

a brown almond business model to a focus on value-added almonds, realizing the potential grower marketing benefits of mailing Almond Facts to all almond growers in California, appreciating the value of premiums for bulk almond deliveries over boxes, as well as key personnel decisions.

From Rominger's viewpoint, *Blue Diamond* will continue to succeed if the co-op remains committed to investing in state-of-the-art equipment, research and development, advertising and marketing campaigns and most of all, people. "People are important," she said. "I understand that in California it is sometimes tough to attract and retain talent but we are a very good company and we treat our employees well. I know that we can find very good, co-op-minded people who can be beneficial to our company's future."

Going forward, Rominger will continue managing the office side of three family farms and the huller/sheller, juggling the layers of regulations to remain in compliance amid California's agricultural business climate. "It's difficult but I enjoy being in business and our lifestyle. The farm is our home and our only income," she explained. "We are a real multi-generational family farm and we're proud of that."

The Romingers, alongside Gerry's brother and son, farm about 3,000 acres in the Sacramento Valley, the majority of which is in almonds. They also operate a huller/sheller, where they process a 50-50 split of their almonds and their customers' crops.



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# Meet Your Newest Field Supervisor, Justin Elam

**Justin Elam is *Blue Diamond's* newest field supervisor, covering parts of Merced County, south of Highway 140 and north of the Merced river. He began his career with *Blue Diamond* in the Turlock plant and has now transitioned to the field. We caught up with him to learn who he is and what he brings to *Blue Diamond*!**

## **Almond Facts (AF):**

**Tell our readers a little about yourself?**

**Justin Elam (JE):** I grew up in Hickman, CA on a small almond farm. I graduated from Hughson High School and then enlisted in the army. I was in the military for 4.5 years and then did contracting for about 6 months. I decided I wanted to go back to school and so, I came back home and started school at Modesto Junior College in their plant and science program and am currently a few classes away from having three associates degrees.

My wife and I got married in September 2009 and we now live in Hughson with our two little girls, three and one. They keep us on our toes and are very fun.

## **AF: What attracted you to *Blue Diamond*?**

**JE:** A few years back during school, we were going on a tour down in Livingston and there was a billboard for *Blue Diamond*. It caught my eye and that's when I decided to apply for a job here. I ended up getting a job at the Turlock Plant on the line in raw finished goods. However, I knew that I eventually wanted to be more in the field and so, a few weeks into working the line I emailed Membership Director Mel Machado and introduced myself. I told him who I was and that I was working to get my PCA license and was going to school to work directly in the agriculture industry. I asked for guidance as to what steps I should take to eventually assume a role like a field supervisor.

I was fortunate enough to have met with Mel a few times. He showed me the ropes and took me out around the Valley. I met a few people and I kept working on my school. That was two years ago. When the recent field supervisor position opened up, I applied and fortunately got the job.



## **AF: What made you want to become a field supervisor?**

**JE:** Ever since I came to *Blue Diamond* and learned about the position I knew that was what I eventually wanted to do. I've always wanted to work with people, specifically growers, and in agriculture. Now that I'm in the position, I see it really is a perfect fit. I get to go outside, work with great growers and help people each day.

## **AF: Have you always been interested in agriculture?**

**JE:** Yes, I love agriculture. It's my passion and what brought me back into the industry. Ever since I was little I have been interested in agriculture. My dad was a PCA when I was growing up and so I got to see the industry when I was young and ever since I have wanted to be part of it.

## **AF: Do you have a favorite *Blue Diamond* product?**

**JE:** That's a tough one. I used to say *Jalapeno Smokehouse*, but I think I'll have to say the *Habañero BBQ*.

**AF:** What do you do in your free time?

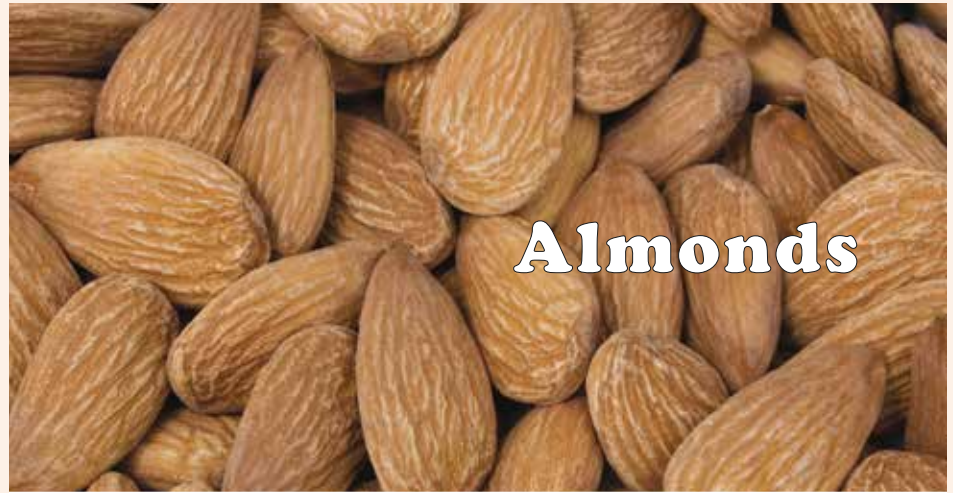
**JE:** I really enjoy spending time with my family, going out on the lake and I'm a big fan of hunting and trap shooting.

**AF:** How has your first few weeks (or months) been as a field supervisor?

**JE:** I have been on the job for about a month and half. It's been great, I love this job. I enjoy talking to people, I enjoy helping people solve their problems. I'm constantly meeting new people, many of our growers and industry members, you never know who you are going to meet. Being involved in the growing side of the almond industry has so far been the best experience. In school I studied other crops, but almonds really interest me.

**AF:** What are you looking forward to the most as you begin your career as a field guy?

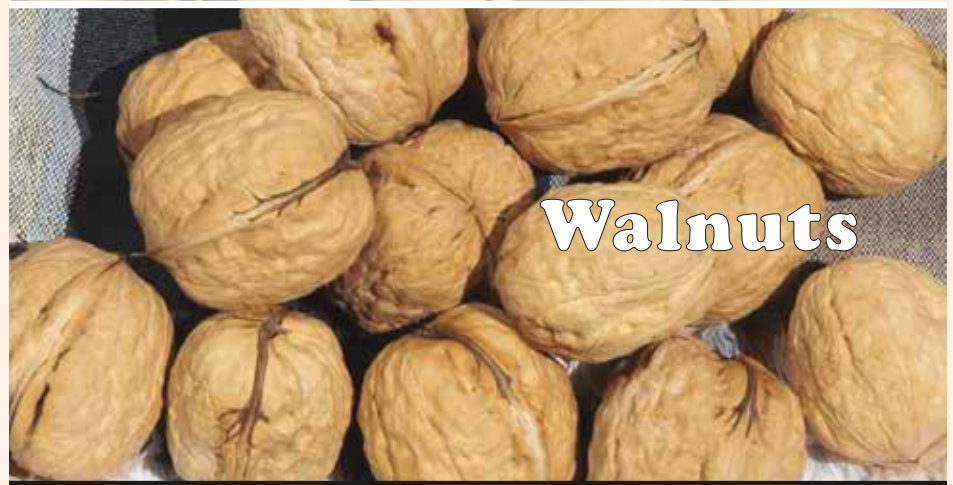
**JE:** I am looking forward to making a name for myself and being more involved in *Blue Diamond* co-op and the almond industry. I do not see myself going anywhere else, I hope to make this a career. I am really excited to continue to be a part of the *Blue Diamond* team. I've seen both sides of the company and from what I've seen this is a pretty great place to work, it has a great environment and I think it's an honorable company.



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Advocacy Report  
KELLY COVELLO

## Almond Alliance Works for the Industry

As is often heard in Sacramento, “if you are not at the table, you are on the menu.” While many in the California almond industry strive to put almonds on chef’s menus, the Almond Alliance is working at the table to maintain a strong and viable industry.

On midnight, August 31, 2016 the legislature gaveled down the 2015-16 Legislative Session. The legislature worked to send a host of critical bills to the Governor for consideration by September 30th, which is Governor Brown’s deadline for approving or vetoing legislation.

The 2015-16 legislative session will be known as one marked with historic progressive measures being passed – increase in minimum wage, mandatory vaccinations for students, right to die for terminally ill medical patients. With this progressive legislative leadership and focus, the Almond Alliance worked tirelessly with coalitions on key issues throughout the session and will continue through the end of the Governor’s action period. The Alliance tracked 72 bills and took positions on 22 this year. Key legislation and outcomes are discussed below:

### Biomass

The Almond Alliance, working with Assembly members Dahle and Gordon and a coalition representing various interests, was successful in getting SB 859 passed on the last night of the legislative session. This measure includes an important but modest proposal to ensure biomass facilities continue to operate as an integral piece of the state’s management of wood waste for the next five years.

In response to the state’s tree mortality crisis, SB 859 requires the State’s utilities to procure 125 megawatts (MWs) of biomass power annually for the next five years. 125 MWs is the annual equivalent to the power generated by an estimated four to five biomass plants. While 80 percent of the plant’s feedstock shall be from dead tree removed from high hazard areas, the remaining 20 percent of the biomass feedstock can be supplied from ag and urban sources.

Under SB 859, the Public Utilities Commission will apportion each utility a specific allotment of biomass power the utility must purchase. The utilities will then run procurements allowing each eligible plant to compete for the contracts. It will likely be several months until we know which plants will receive contracts to provide the power. A very important element of the bill is that closed plants will have access to the bidding process as long as they were operational prior to June 1, 2013. While the feedstock priorities tilt to forest tree removals, important to the almond industry is that the program has great potential to get the doors open at closed biomass plants that served as a home for almond industry biomass outlet. The annual biomass procurement strategy was pushed when it became apparent that the use of funds to buy down the cost of biomass power was not going to garner enough votes and was not likely to get our biomass plants re-opened.

This bill will certainly provide some short term relief to biomass plants which is a positive for the almond industry, which relies on biomass for our orchard removals, huller/sheller sticks, and other woody byproducts.

### Ag Overtime

Legislation that will require overtime after 8 hours in a day and after 5 days worked in a work week passed the California Legislature. Currently, ag employees are required to be paid overtime after 10 hours in a day and 6 days in the week. AB 1066 (Gonzalez) mandates overtime to be paid at 1.5 times pay after 8 hours in a day, and five days worked in a week. Double time would have still been required after 12 hours, as already mandated in existing law. The author added in provisions providing an additional three years to comply for farmers employing less than 25 employees.

The Almond Alliance worked with a broad coalition of ag and



business groups opposing the measure and were successful defeating the first bill introduced on this topic. The coalition focused on the unique aspects of the industry managing planting, harvesting seasonality and weather, the impact on the gross income to the farmworker if they were restricted to 40 hours in a week and the impact on the long term viability of the industry. The grassroots efforts of farmers and association members meeting with legislators, logging in calls and emails and writing letters was noted by legislators that supported and opposed the legislation. Ultimately Governor Brown chose to sign the legislation into law.

## Climate Legislation Passes

Major climate legislation passed the legislature in the last week requiring specific industries to evaluate the impact. The lead bill, SB 32 (Pavley) extends the state's current greenhouse gas (GHG) program to 2030 and requires a target of 40 percent below 1990 levels with no oversight by the Legislature. The bill provides unfettered authority by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to achieve the new GHG reduction goal. Soon after passage, Governor Brown released a news statement stating that he intends to sign the legislation.

With the passing of SB 32, methane emissions have been identified as major sources that need to be regulated to meet these new mandates. Therefore, representatives of the ag and livestock industry initiated negotiations on existing legislation to place restrictions and oversight on CARB as they manage methane emissions. SB 1383 (Lara) limits California Air Resources Board (CARB) authority to regulate methane emissions from livestock manure management, and requires the board to make findings that the regulations are cost effective, feasible and within existing economics of the industry. It also restricts CARB's ability to regulate enteric emissions from livestock – which includes gas released from “both ends” of the cow. The long term viability of the dairy industry is important as a market for almond hulls.

## Bees

Neonicotinoids became a crop protection material of intense interest this year.

There were two bills aimed at restricting the use or requiring significant notice. The Almond Alliance joined a coalition to oppose the measures

**SB 1282 (Leno and Allen)** and **AB 1259 (Levine)**. After intense discussion with the authors, SB 1282 was defeated on the Senate floor and AB 1259 was amended into a measure to help bees by opening up state owned lands to apiculture to assist in diversifying bee diets and grazing opportunities.

Further assisting bee health became the focus of **AB 2755 (Gallagher)**, which will create the opportunity for civil actions in the amount of three times the value of stolen beehives against individuals suspected of taking the hives. This is modeled after similar provisions in the Food and Agriculture Code, which provide for quadruple damages against people who steal cattle and double damages against people whose dogs kill or injure livestock. The Alliance provided language that clarified the enhanced damages applied to intentional taking or damage, and not accidental harm that could occur during normal farming activities.

## Organic Production

Two bills were passed that were intended to address the rules and regulations governing organic production and inputs. The organization of California Certified Organic Farmers is sponsoring legislation, AB 1826 (Stone), to address the fee structure, advisory board and regulations for organic production. After lengthy negotiations with the administration and farm entities, the compromise bill was passed. AB 1811 (Dodd) – this legislation addresses the organic fertilizer program providing more tools for enforcement and inspections and provides more clarity for manufacturers and consumers on labeling of organic fertilizer and inputs.

## Excavation, Call Before You Dig

**SB 661 (Hill)** reforms the “811 Call Before You Dig” program, which revises the rules governing steps to be taken during excavation to protect underground structures such as natural gas lines, oil pipelines and fiber optic cables. Adherence to the rules is important for those who dig or move soil in order to be protected from liability for any damages to underground installations from accidental contact. However, for those who do not call and follow procedures, there can be clear liability.

The bill creates a new state Board within the Office of the State Fire Marshall. The new California Underground Facilities Safe Excavation Board would have authority over private landowners, like agriculture, to enforce all provisions related to the rules, including the authority to impose financial penalties for violations. The bill passed the legislature but will need funding and potentially clean up legislation next year.



## The Bee Box

KAREN RENNICH



Russell Heitkam (CA) and Robert Snyder (CA Tech Team) checking colonies in almonds this year. Photo courtesy of the Bee Informed Partnership

THE BEE BOX

**Christi Heintz and Tara McCall from Project Apis m. have generously passed the honor of writing this column to those of us at the Bee Informed Partnership. In the spirit of the Olympics, we view this as handing off a hive tool baton to a fellow team member in the struggle to improve colony health. We are proud to be associated with both PAm and Blue Diamond Growers and are excited to have this opportunity to describe who we are, what we do and report what is happening in the field and in the lab.**

You may have heard of us from Christi's last article when she summarized our latest colony loss report. The Bee Informed Partnership began more than 5 years ago as a USDA/NIFA grant to monitor colony loss, management practices and to start a single Technical Transfer team in northern California to work with the queen breeders in that area. The grant has ended but the work continues and we transitioned into a non-profit that has evolved and expanded on the work we started years ago. We have

now grown into five Technical Transfer teams based in California, Oregon, Texas, Florida and Minnesota and our outreach efforts and management results can be found at our highly utilized website – [www.beeinformed.org](http://www.beeinformed.org).

### Technical Transfer Teams

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*Continued on page 36*

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Harvesting Systems



Katie Lee, Midwest (MN) Tech Team lead sampling colonies. Photo courtesy of the Bee Informed Partnership

work closely with commercial beekeepers in their region to quickly disseminate information to their beekeepers as well as monitor, sample and provide near real time diagnostic data to these beekeepers so that the operations can make informed decisions - decisions driven by data from their own colonies. Following colonies longitudinally, we are able to identify diseases or problems early and prevent unnecessary losses. Ours is a unique and special relationship and it takes years to develop the trust of these experienced and large operations. Once we have garnered the trust, the TTT acts as a second set of eyes, ears and hands for the commercial operations and often becomes one of the family. Although closely bound, we make sure that all data remain anonymized and confidential.

Since most commercial beekeepers are migratory, our TTTs also follow colonies to almonds and other pollination events as well as those areas where they are stationary while either making splits, packages, nucs (nucleus colonies), requeening or producing honey. Typically, a TTT will meet and sample a beekeeper three to four times a year, but the real strength of these teams is working one on one with a beekeeper to determine the optimal sampling regimen for that specific operation.

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Other uses of our TTT include hygienic testing of queen breeder stock, testing new products or treatments, pesticide analysis, incidence response, treatment efficacy, queen health and protein testing.

## Why are the teams located there?

Our TTTs are located in areas of the country where there is a high concentration of commercial beekeeping operations within a day's drive. Usually these regions exist due to nearby pollination needs, high honey production, or longer or warmer growing seasons that aid in splitting, queen production or package/nuc production. In some cases, for example our Pacific Northwest team based out of Oregon State University, we serve beekeepers in adjacent states such as Washington and Idaho in addition to Oregon. Many routes overlap in the migratory map and several of our TTTs are able to help each other in the field when colonies converge as in California for almond pollination or in North Dakota for honey production. Putting in long hours and many miles on our trucks are all part of being a TTT; however, our teams love what they do and they have a rare view into this small cadre of critical beekeepers that our food security relies on.

## Participation helps lower losses – and how that helps growers

By collecting longitudinal pest and pathogen data on a percentage of colonies in an operation, we are able to inform a beekeeper's management decisions. Our central diagnostic lab, located at the University of Maryland, is able to turn around sample results on average in eight days from the sampling date (or within four days of receipt of the sample). Because of this near real time data exchange and because of other critical data we provide to the beekeeper, participating beekeepers have been able to significantly reduce their colony loss.

For the first time, we are able to present multi-year results of those commercial beekeepers active in our program compared to those beekeepers who are not. All told, beekeepers in TTTs lose 35.6% fewer

colonies annually than their counterparts who are not serviced by tech teams. For the typical 2,000 colony operation this means that our members, on average, would save almost 300 colonies per year - a savings of at least \$74,000.

Keeping more colonies alive and healthy enables more pollination units and a more stable population for growers. Healthier colonies in orchards and on farms mean that less disease is spread to neighboring colonies. We think this is a win-win for everyone.

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## Time To Consider

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

**With the hustle of harvest slowing down, late fall is a good time to walk the orchard and look for any issues that can be addressed in the following months. Take time to reflect on the challenges of the season and be on the lookout for the following:**

### 1. Stick Tights

Does there appear to be more than expected? Does one variety have more stuck nuts than the other? If so, what symptoms are observed? Gummy can occur with hull rot, boron toxicity, or diseases such as anthracnose or bacterial spot. Dead shoots often are due to hull rot. Stick tights could also be due to uneven ripening from a protracted bloom (common in self-pollinating varieties), poor shake timing or incorrect water management. Sanitizing these mummies will need to occur to reduce navel orangeworm pressure the following season.

### 2. Weeds

What weeds presented a challenge to manage this past year? Were applications of glyphosate or glufosinate ineffective due to resistance or lack of activity on weed spectrum? Are these weeds beginning to spread across the field? Even more concerning, is there a new weed problem emerging? The weeds present and issues experienced will help with post- and pre-emergent selection, timing and rates.

Stick tights can occur for many reasons. Identifying the causes can help increase yield and reduce shaker damage to the trees.



### 3. Water infiltration issues

Water infiltration problems are becoming more common due to increased water applications, low quality water, reduced cover crop usage, compaction and varying soil characteristics. After an irrigation, are there visible puddles? Are there visible signs of soil crusts? Does water appear to run off the field? Does the water create saturated zones underneath the emitters? These problems are not easy, but critical in maintaining high yields. Areas with problems should be sampled to identify the underlying soil chemistry issue. The irrigation water should also be sampled.

### 4. Appearance of salt toxicity

Are leaves exhibiting signs of brown, crispy or “burnt” edges? This could be evidence of sodium or chloride toxicity. Review leaf tissue samples from July to determine the element of concern. Sample soils to compare to previous year’s samples to identify any emerging salinity issues. Utilize this information to develop a leaching program, which may include early winter irrigations to refill the profile and leach, and applications of soil amendments to assist with the leaching process.



Soil crusting occurs when soil aggregates break down and the reorganization of the remaining soil particles form a sealing layer.

## 5. Under-performing areas

Trees that are growing at a slower rate than other areas could be indicative of a soil texture change or poor irrigation distribution. It is difficult to manage soil texture differences, but emitters could be changed to apply water over a larger wetting pattern to increase the soil volume. In these cases, try not to change the emitter

flow as this may impact distribution uniformity (DU). Pump and irrigation line maintenance will help improve DU. Check pressure at the emitter to determine if flows are reduced. If lower pressures are observed, check the flow rate of the pump to see if it may have dropped or not properly set, inspect lines for leaks and clogged screens and emitters for precipitation build-up, and flush the lines.

## Timing of Orchard Pruning

Over the past few years, there has been an increase in wood canker pathogens infecting pruning wounds, wind cracks and damaged areas of young almond trees. Infections start off slow, but eventually girdle limbs, killing scaffolds and impacting production. These pathogens are most active right before, during and immediately after rain events as they require the humidity to sporulate and the wind-splashing of rain to spread. In order to prevent pruning wound infections, pruning of young trees should not occur when rain is in the forecast. Cutting of limbs on primary scaffolds of mature trees should also not occur at this time.

Planning to prune young trees around the weather may delay pruning. Research performed in Yolo County has shown no impact when pruning as late as full leaf expansion (late March). In this study, the growth was followed over three years and no differences were observed in the various treatments, including a winter dormant pruned control. Research on how early pruning can begin isn't as clear. Starting too soon can spur unwanted growth. Pruning once the days are cooler and shorter should reduce the risk of secondary bud break.

Pruning of mature trees can begin shortly after harvest. Pruning should be minimized as multiple long term studies have found that it can reduce yield and increase orchard operation expenses. Nevertheless, limbs that are blocking equipment access, creating a safety hazard, or are dead or dying should be removed. Selective limb removal also has been shown to increase spray coverage, reduce sticks at harvest, as well as reduce foliar diseases.

*Continued on page 40*



Wood canker pathogens can infect pruning wounds causing tree death or crop loss. Try to time pruning to avoid rain events.

## Orchard removal and replanting

If planning to redevelop a block, consider harvesting the later varieties earlier to allow more time in the process. Nematode sampling should occur prior to removal to determine which species are present and assist in rootstock selection. This can be done one to two years prior to removal. Line up the resources for orchard removal, which can be done by tub grinders, whole orchard incorporation or removal for firewood. Once removed, the field should be ripped to the depth of 24 inches or greater several times to assist in root removal and reducing compaction. Some cases, ripping deeper should occur to assist with breaking or re-breaking hardpan. Backhoeing has been shown to be effective in increasing tree growth with or without fumigation in sandy soils and is recommended for these conditions.

After soil modification, the field should be disced and spring-toothed to assist in root removal and leveling. After settling, the

ground can be leveled and berms can be pulled. Fumigation should be considered, especially for sandy loam to sand soils to manage *Prunus* Replant Disease and plant parasitic nematodes. If fumigating, most of the land prep should be done prior to fumigation, with the exception of pulling the berms. Moving soil around after fumigation defeats the purpose of fumigating. The field should be prepped and the irrigation system installed or ready to be installed immediately after planting. Bare root trees should be planted as soon as possible. Potted trees have more flexibility in planting timing.

Fumigation should be considered in areas with high population of plant parasitic nematodes (Ring, Lesion or Rootknot) or a history of *Prunus* species (peach, plum, almond, cherry, etc). A matrix to assist with the decision is provided in the table. Although not a true replant scenario, almonds following grapes often struggle with high counts of Ring and Rootknot nematode and fumigation with Telone-II should be considered if

populations are high. In other soil types, replanting *Prunus* species after other *Prunus* species creates not only nematode problems, but also issues with *Prunus* Replant Disease. In these situations, a nematode analysis can help determine if chloropicrin or C35 (mixture of chloropicrin and Telone-II) or Telone-II should be used.

## The final thought

Removing and replanting almond orchards in a short timeline can be challenging. If this process is not done correctly, the orchard will not perform as well. If time and resources are limited, consider extending the timeline of the removal process. This could include late plantings with potted trees or replanting with another crop or cover crop. Planting another crop for a year or two can help reduce the pathogen and nematode populations within the soil. Remember, it is more important to perform the replanting process correctly as the mistakes and shortcuts made will have to be lived with for 20 years.



	Not Advised	Rowstrip Telone-II	Broadcast Telone II	Rowstrip or Spot Chloropicrin	Rowstrip C35, Chloropicrin
<b>No Orchard History -Fallow Field, no nematodes</b>	X				
<b>No Orchard History – w/Nematodes</b>		X – Population dependent	X – Population dependent		
<b>Orchard History, No Nematodes, Sandy Loams or coarser</b>				X	
<b>Orchard History, No Nematodes, Silt/Clay Loams or finer</b>	Possible			X	
<b>Orchard History w/ Nematodes</b>			X- Population dependent		X- Population dependent
<b>Orchard History with Aggressive Pathogens</b>				Some benefit	Some benefit

When considering to fumigate, consider the orchard history, presence of nematode species, and soil type.



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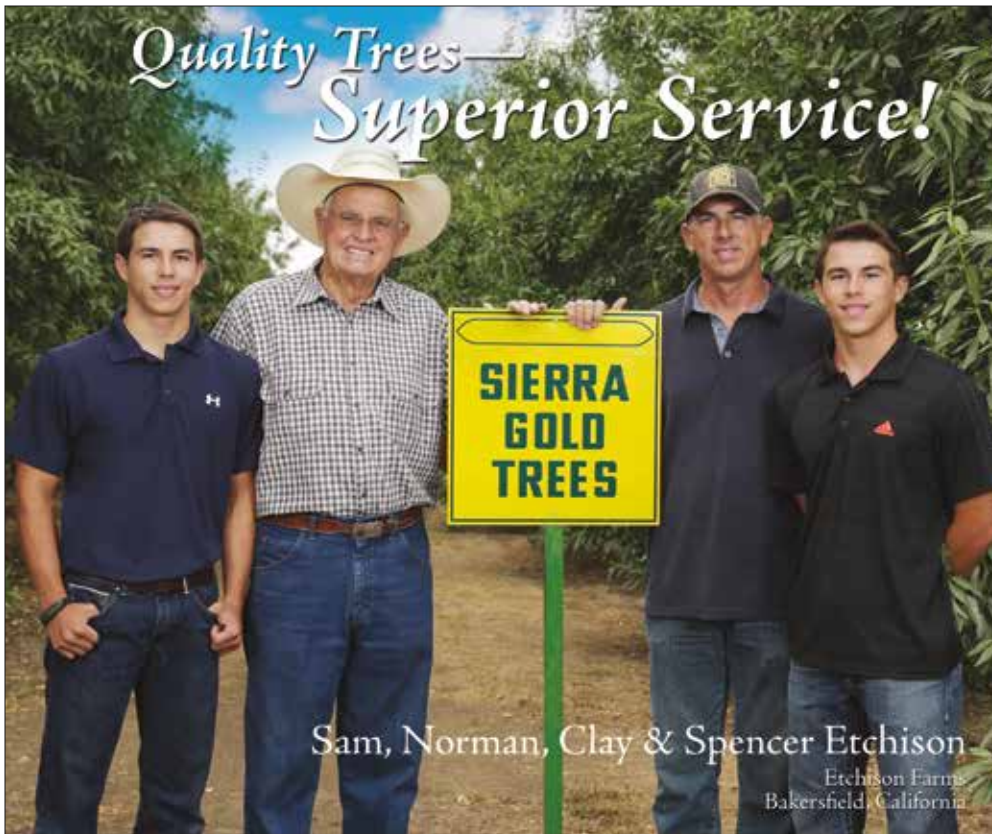
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