



almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2020



Happy Holidays

Annual Growers Meeting

Sustainability Incentive

Salida Becomes Green Business Certified



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ON THE COVER:

Blue Diamond wishes all our readers a happy holiday season and a prosperous New Year.



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Samantha DeMelo, *Managing Editor*

Mel Machado, *Contributing Photographer*

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916.783.4334 & 916.765.3234

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

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MILLIONS SOLD!

PRODUCTION HISTORY

3rd leaf	Westley	123 trees/ac	1,600 lbs/ac
3rd leaf	Merced	141 trees/ac	1,450 lbs/ac
3rd leaf	Modesto	138 trees/ac	1,503 lbs/ac
3rd leaf	Riverdale	130 trees/ac	1,700 lbs/ac
3rd leaf	Shafter-Wasco	123 trees/ac	1,692 lbs/ac
4th leaf	Gustine	145 trees/ac	2,300 lbs/ac
4th leaf	Dinuba	123 trees/ac	2,400 lbs/ac
4th leaf	Fowler	130 trees/ac	2,058 lbs/ac
4th leaf	Manteca	122 trees/ac	1,100 lbs/ac
5th leaf	Modesto	138 trees/ac	1,766 lbs/ac
5th leaf	Gustine	145 trees/ac	2,836 lbs/ac
8th leaf	Salida	138 trees/ac	3,145 lbs/ac

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Mark Jansen
President & CEO



What a Difference a Year Makes

Who would have thought our biggest challenge would be helping employees trust they are safe at work? Who would have imagined that grab and go almond consumption would decline by 25 percent? Who would have guessed that the foodservice business would disappear? Or that in May the entire market of India would shut down? Who would ever have dreamed that Blue Diamond would remain continuously operational?

Not only did we sell the crop, but we delivered upon our mission to maximize the returns for the growers who entrust us with their almonds. Our team members who share a commitment to *Blue Diamond's* mission made this possible. We are grateful for this amazing team!

It took California over 90 years to produce its first billion-pound crop. Nine years later, and early in my tenure, together, we successfully marketed the first two billion-pound crop. Another nine years have passed, and we are receiving what will be California's first three billion-pound crop. This bountiful harvest does not come as a surprise. *Blue Diamond* has been building our business in anticipation of ever larger almond crops.

With this year's perfect bloom weather, it was imperative that we completed our multi-year growth plans. We needed to build out *Blue Diamond's* capacity and capability to handle an additional 100 million pounds of almonds.

Specifically, in Salida, we added the second of two 50 million-pound raw almond warehouses. We also completed and started up the second major upgrade to the main production line that enhances yield and throughput. It was not enough that we just process the additional almonds, we knew we must also profitably market them.

Your most profitable almonds are those we process into *Almond Breeze*®. This incredible growth business is now valued at \$800 million

in retail sales. In Turlock, to keep up with demand, we built a fully integrated almond beverage-base line. This plant expansion produces the proprietary ingredient behind *Almond Breeze*® — it looks like thin almond butter. Our licensee partners also have a secret process that mixes our special almond ingredient with water to create our delicious *Almond Breeze*®.

Our previous way of producing *Almond Breeze*® was effective, but more complicated and expensive. It involved multiple steps across all three facilities. Since May, raw almonds enter one side of the Turlock plant and exit out the other in large totes ready to be shipped to our licensee partners. This expansion more than doubles our *Almond Breeze*® capacity and provides significant operational costs savings. Your most profitable almond business is now more profitable.

During this year's annual meeting, many enjoyed the virtual plant tours. Perhaps these made our important work look easy. During COVID-19, our work became significantly more challenging.





In the spring, just as the unknown pandemic became real, at Turlock the significant engineering work was scheduled. With each major purchase of equipment,

we arranged with the supplier to provide a team of engineers to lead the installation ensuring a smooth start-up. On March 12, the Spanish engineers from Incus had just begun working on the blancher. That night, the President announced that all travel with Europe would be shut down in two days. Not surprisingly, the following morning, instead of showing up to work, the Spanish engineers were at the airport. This cycle repeated itself with each piece of equipment, where needed engineers were prevented from traveling due to their company policy or international restrictions.

What was amazing, is that even with these challenges, team members found ways to receive virtual instruction and largely on their own complete the startup. Thank you to our engineering and manufacturing teams for your Innovation and for Playing to Win.

At last year's presentation, many of you will recall panel members Mary Ann Henriques and Rebecca Hinojos. We learned of their leading roles in Salida's safety journey. I am pleased to report that Salida recently completed its fifth consecutive year without a lost time injury — an incredible five million hours worth celebrating! The Salida management and HR teams found an innovative and special way to celebrate in the COVID-19 era, by using the parking lot! Employee safety is an act of integrity. Congratulations to Site Director Dennis Bettencourt and the entire Salida team for their Integrity.

In a typical year, *Blue Diamond* sells almonds to over 90 countries. For the team selling raw almonds and almond ingredients, clearly nothing has been typical about 2020. First, after the Sacramento plant fire, we had to rebuild product supply and inventories, so we told the sales team

to limit early sales. Second, due to trade wars, almonds out of Australia had a 50 percent price advantage into China which caused us to pivot toward India for growth. Third, the forecast and realization of perfect bloom weather created a significant market price correction.

Fourth, COVID-19. While the U.S. response was not optimal, I assure you it was better than countries like India. They sent migrant port workers to their homes hundreds of miles away. Only to then reconsider that essential food imports still needed to flow through ports to replenish stores. Then government officials invited port workers back only after many had made the long journey home leaving ports undermanned when work resumed. It was chaos. Last year, it was the biggest threat to the almond industry.

Did you know that it takes up to six weeks for almonds shipped out of the port of Oakland to clear the port in India? When the ports closed, on the way to India were \$30 million worth of *Blue Diamond* almonds. They were stuck in risky limbo. We were indeed fortunate that we sell directly into India. We have a full-time agent in the market and the most experienced sales team in the industry. And we are proud that we excel at creating long-term partnerships with the most reliable customers.

After significant negotiation, not only did we successfully ship and receive payment for that \$30 million worth of almonds, but by the end of the year we shipped and collected on another \$30 million, growing annual sales to India by 40 percent! We appreciate our Global Ingredient Sales and Customer Service teams for demonstrating the values of Partnership, Integrity and Playing to Win.

In this year of COVID-19, retailers were less interested in new products. They were rightly focused on the basics. Simplifying their business and keeping the most important, top-selling core items on the shelf. These included our Unsweetened *Almond Breeze*® in grocery stores and Smokehouse® Almonds at Costco. This did not stop innovation at *Blue Diamond*.

Our product innovation teams were among the first to implement creative scheduling and protective barriers that allowed them to be fully productive. Moreover, this past year we created enhanced leadership and resources

for innovation, knowing that the world would ultimately survive COVID-19 and that our customers would look to *Blue Diamond* for new sources of growth. For the on-going commitment to innovate unceasingly on new products and for the cross functional innovation teams under the leadership of our Vice President of Innovation, Maya Erwin, thank you.

We made the commitment three years ago that Amazon, *Blue Diamond's* 86th largest customer, would be a top five customer within five years. We made early investments in adapting to e-commerce and in recruiting world-class talent like our Director of E-commerce Sales Jonas Paretzkin. This prepared *Blue Diamond* to rapidly respond after the pandemic accelerated consumers' adoption of all e-commerce sites. Last year, our e-commerce customer sales more than doubled! You will also not be surprised to learn that two years ahead of schedule, Amazon is *Blue Diamond's* fifth largest customer.

Last year, you heard me describe that *Blue Diamond* is a growth business by choice. I am glad to share that with a great deal of hard work our sales leadership continues to be recognized. For the fourth consecutive year, *Blue Diamond* was awarded as a fastest growing Consumer Packaged Goods business.

We pride ourselves on being nimble. The changes we have made in brand building are another example. Six years ago, we were spending more advertising dollars on magazine and traditional radio than in paid search or social media. Today, we analyze the return on investment for all of our marketing spending. The result is that we are substantially more effective in picking the right messages and the right marketing vehicles to grow your brands. Social media and paid search have proven two and a half times more effective than those old vehicles. In the U.S., television is still effective, but digital vehicles make up our largest and highest returning investments. The quality of our advertising continues to improve and our newest advertising tests at world class levels.

On team *Blue Diamond* is a marketer with 32 years of service who helped lead the original Can A Week campaign. And, as Vice Chair of the Global Marketing Development Committee has significantly influenced the Almond Board of California's advertising. Most recently he has overseen negotiations with all sports sponsorships and for contracts with advertising agencies. Al Greenlee will be retiring in December. Thank you, Al, for your 32 years of iconic marketing leadership at *Blue Diamond*!



The team members of *Blue Diamond* understand that the dollars we invest in new facilities, people or marketing must provide a positive return to our growers. We know that you entrust us with your year's work in the form of the almond crop. We are proud that *Blue Diamond* has never been more successful in delivering competitive returns.

Over the last decade, we exceeded the previous 10-year advantage of \$.01 per pound by delivering an \$.11 advantage. Many will recall that seven years ago, we committed to the then very ambitious goal of \$.10 per pound. Our capabilities and our ambitions continue to grow. This year we delivered over a \$.16 per pound advantage and we have set our future sites on \$.20.

It is only appropriate that I introduce the Leadership Team at *Blue Diamond* whose guidance and expertise has made these results possible.

- Raj Joshi, Senior Vice President of Global Consumer, who has elevated our consumer sales and marketing to world class levels.
- Brian Barczak, Senior Vice President of Global Supply, whose leadership helped *Blue Diamond's* plants and warehouses stay operational through the pandemic.
- Simone Denny, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, whose expertise protects *Blue Diamond's* incredibly valuable assets.

- The recently promoted Vice President of Member Relations, Mel Machado, whose team this year will help growers deliver an additional 100 million pounds of almonds.
- Bill Morecraft, Senior Vice President of Global Ingredients, our veteran whose expertise this year will allow his team to confidently sell those additional 100 million pounds.
- Dean LaValle, Chief Financial Officer, who pioneered hundreds of millions in tax savings for members and is also the man who never gets tired of saying “I work on behalf of the grower-owners.”
- Laura Elkins, Executive Assistant, my first hire and the person who ensures the executive team and board administration is always organized, even through the pandemic.

Please join me in showing our appreciation for this world class leadership team!

Blue Diamond is indeed fortunate that we have such strong and experienced leadership. Importantly, all of our team members share a deep feeling of responsibility to receive and market your almonds. And we are grateful that you, our grower-owners, show the affection is reciprocal. Especially during the early days of COVID-19. When coming to work as an essential worker was an act of courage. Our frontline workforce was so proud of the heartfelt, encouraging notes from growers. Some of you even sent in recorded messages and our communications team was able to compile them into videos we displayed in the breakroom. I must admit, these also made me emotional.

Sharing your appreciation with team members is yet another way that you can serve your co-op. In past meetings, we have suggested that you encourage retailers to stock *Blue Diamond* products, write favorable product reviews, be a social media champion, participate in lobbying for co-op or ag issues, donate to the PAC or be a leader in sustainability through CASP enrollment. You have responded and the network power of this 3,000-farm family co-op is awesome to behold.



“Ask not what your co-op can do for you, but what you can do for your co-op.”

Still, I believe our growers are *Blue Diamond's* greatest untapped resource. Imagine the power if everyone is participating. Wasn't it John F. Kennedy who said, “Ask not what your co-op can do for you, but what you can do for your co-op.” Don't be shy about contacting your Regional Manager to discuss where you will make an impact.

Possibly the most important area of membership service is your Board of Directors. At *Blue Diamond*, they are extraordinarily committed to learning the business, providing good governance and ensuring management performance. Having spent 10 years leading a co-op and in associations with most of the other large ag co-ops, I believe the quality of the board and their relationship to their CEO is highly predictive to co-op success. At *Blue Diamond*, our relationship is excellent. I am personally grateful for the partnership with Chairman Dan Cummings and our entire board. Thank you!

Each year brings its unique challenges. *Blue Diamond* clearly sees the big crop of 2020 — a wave of almonds we're excited to ride! Our 2020 rallying cry is “Rising to the Challenge” as we excellently receive, process and market your record crop. We are prepared for this challenge and it inspires us.

It is for this reason, as you have heard for 10 years, that I am confident in declaring, “The Best is Yet to Come!” ♦

Mark Jansen
President & CEO





Dan Cummings
Chairman of the Board



Celebrating 110 Years

This year we celebrate the 110-year anniversary of the Blue Diamond Growers cooperative. I am privileged to have been a member of the Blue Diamond Board of Directors since 2006 and have served as your Chairman the past six years.

I'm a proud third generation *Blue Diamond* grower from Chico up in Butte County. And, I'm honored to have represented *Blue Diamond* on the Almond Board of California, including three years as Board Vice Chairman, and numerous years as Chairman of the domestic and international marketing committees.

On May 6, 1910, a small group of California almond growers banded together right here in Sacramento to form the California Almond Growers Exchange (CAGE). What those innovative growers did was not only establish the foundation of *Blue Diamond Growers* but solidify a sustainable future for generations of almond growers to come.



As I mentioned, I am a third-generation farmer. My grandfather started growing almonds in 1928, for CAGE, and I know he'd be quite proud to see that I've carried on his legacy. At this year's annual meeting, we featured a video showing some of our growers discussing their own legacies. It is a great

testament to the trust and loyalty our growers have placed in our co-op. Thank you to the Montgomery, Miyamoto and Lewis families for sharing your legacies and helping tell the *Blue Diamond* story this year.

As we celebrate our rich past, let us also reflect on this past year and take a look forward into

our future. Without a doubt 2020 has been a year of unexpected hurdles. Despite the global pandemic, our cooperative was able to navigate the challenges and remain operational through it all.

But 2020 wasn't all bad. As growers, we experienced a phenomenal bloom across all our districts. We enjoyed near perfect weather during the growing season. And, many of us had a fairly compressed harvest timeframe that got our crop out of the orchards and into the hands of *Blue Diamond* processors quicker than normal and ahead of the rainy season.

And what a crop it is! Estimates are that it will be the largest in history at three billion pounds. I fully understand the implications that can have for us growers in terms of impacts on pricing. Many of us may experience decreasing returns that could impact our livelihood. We also know this is cyclical. It may be a few years until the world market adjusts to a new supply base.

But because of the bravery and innovative spirit of our founders 110 years ago, we *Blue Diamond* growers will fare better than our competitors. That's due to the strength and value that is added to our almonds through our co-op. It is because of our commitment to the three main values our co-op was founded on in 1910: Quality, Innovation and Partnership. As we look to the future of *Blue Diamond*, we must continue to carry those values through in all we do.

The success of *Blue Diamond Growers* has been built on quality. Since 1930, our industry

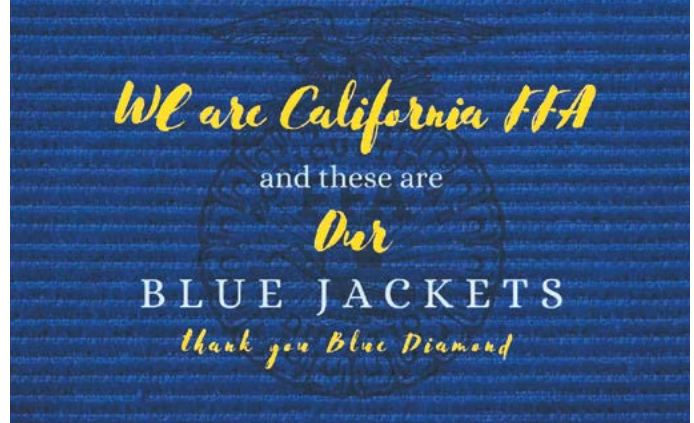
leading quality, testing and grading standards have earned *Blue Diamond* a reputation for unwavering quality in every almond and every product we sell. Just as important as product quality, though, is the quality of our growing practices. There has been increasing importance placed on the quality of how our almonds are grown. There's a greater need to communicate our story of sustainable practices as more customers and consumers are looking for a commitment to sustainability in the products they purchase and brands they support. I'm thankful to see so many of our growers engaging with the member relations team and participating in District Meetings and workshops that focus on topics such as water efficiency, pesticide management and bee health to ensure we demonstrate our commitment to best practices.

The success of *Blue Diamond Growers* has been built on innovation. For our growers, *Blue Diamond's* focus on innovation has factored greatly in our ability to receive and process this year's record crop. The innovative technology of the new Bulk 8 Warehouse and expanded receiving capabilities in Salida bring added benefits to our growers in efficiency of deliveries and increased storage capacity.

In Turlock the innovative new expansion of an Integrated Bev Base line increases production and added value to the returns of our growers. Innovation allowed us to stay connected during COVID-19 with virtual seminars, workshops, district meetings and obviously our annual meeting yesterday and today.

And true to our roots, the success of *Blue Diamond Growers* has been built upon partnerships. We partner together to nurture future generations of farmers and industry leaders. We are proud of *Blue Diamond's* continued partnership with Future Farmers of America and supporting their Giving Tuesday jacket drive. Thank you to all our growers who have supported this day in the past.

We also remain committed to our *Blue Diamond Growers* Scholarship Foundation. These 16 aspiring young men and women were awarded scholarships this year so they can build a bright future for agriculture. Thank you for the generosity of our growers that has made these



scholarships possible. I want to thank Charles Crivelli for his leadership of the foundation committee. We partner together to nurture future leaders of our co-op.

Blue Diamond is also inspiring the next generation of *Blue Diamond* leaders through our Young Leader program. As some of you know, I was a proud member of the first Young Leader class 23 years ago. This program provides our young growers the opportunity to advocate on behalf of their industry and become more involved with the cooperative. This year's class was put on pause do to COVID-19 travel and gathering restrictions, but we look forward to continuing with this same group next year. Thank you to Kevin Fondse and Kent Stenderup for their work with the Leadership committee.

As a co-op, we also partner with our industry and environmental groups to ensure a sustainable future for our almond orchards. I'm proud that this year's virtual workshops featuring the California Almond Sustainability Program (CASP) allowed *Blue Diamond* to reach more growers than ever. Our customers are very interested in our sustainable grower practices and CASP allows *Blue Diamond* to use data to inform on an aggregated level all of the good work our growers do.

We have continued to concentrate on bee health with the support of our partners Project Apis m. (PAm) and Pollinator Partnership through outreach for PAm's Seeds for Bees program as well our own Water for Bees program which will be going into its third year for this coming harvest.

Our engagement and participation with the Almond Board of California has kept us at the table in discussions that impact our industry and helped raised industry standards overall. I want to thank those board members and former board members serving on the Almond Board: Kent Stenderup, who is chairman of the Board, and George Goshgarian, who is chairman of the Nutrition Research Committee.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Other robust partnerships that have contributed greatly to the success of *Blue Diamond* are those found along the greater supply chain that provides the benefits of almonds to the world. Our hullers and shellers, the manufacturing partners and co-packers, the marketing partners and retailers, and truck drivers and shipping lines.

And finally, and perhaps most important of all, is the incredible partnership between our growers and the 1,800 hard-working *Blue Diamond* team members in the plants, in the offices and on the leadership team. We are all truly grateful for your dedication to going above and beyond during the challenges of 2020 to keep the co-op running.

I would also like to recognize the regional field managers for your engagement and education with growers. The relationship between growers and their Regional Manager is indispensable in providing a valuable connection to the cooperative and the industry. I encourage you to continue growing that relationship.

I would now like to recognize our Board of Directors for their service.

Dale Van Gronigan: *Vice Chairman & District 3 Director*

Matt Efird: *District 8*

Charles Crivelli: *District 6*

Dan Mendenhall: *District 7*

Kent Stenderup: *District 9*

John Monroe: *District 2*

Steve Van Duyn: *District 5*

Kevin Fondse: *District 4*

And, our at-large director Joe Huston. We are all proud of the work you do for this cooperative.

Each year I have the honor of naming one of our growers as our Ambassador of the Year. This award recognizes outstanding service and unwavering commitment to the overall success of the cooperative. This year we had several outstanding nominations, but one grower in particular exemplified the spirit of both a dedicated servant and an inspired leader. This person is known for always being willing to help and is frequently heard saying "Whatever you need me to do, I'll be there."

But it's his quiet leadership and role as a mentor to others that has truly made a difference to our co-op over the years.

He stays involved in Almond Board committees and is

considered one of the most

active Grower Liaison Committee members we have.

Finally, his commitment to supporting sustainability and modeling the CASP has been crucial to our co-op's growth in that area. I'm pleased to share with you that year's Ambassador of the Year is Gurcharan Dhillon from District 9. Congratulations, Gurcharan!

I know you share my confidence in the future and in the leadership we have in place to guide us. Great leadership is vital at any time in an organization. But in unprecedented times like we've witnessed this past year, the importance of a strong, experienced, innovative leadership team is more apparent than ever. With that, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I'd like to acknowledge the 10-year anniversary of *Blue Diamond's* President and CEO Mark Jansen. Thank you Mark for your 10 years of leadership!



I want to wish you and your families a happy holidays!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Cummings".

Dan Cummings
Chairman of the Board

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 Glenn, Colusa, Yolo
 and Solano Counties
 Cell: 530.338.6440
 tsanchez@bdgrowers.com



Christine Ivory
 Butte, Tehama, Placer,
 Yuba and Sutter Counties
 Cell: 530.518.9109
 ivory@bdgrowers.com



KC Stone
 San Joaquin County East of Austin Rd,
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 River; Merced County, North of Merced
 River, West of Hwy 99
 Cell: 209.596.5375
 kstone@bdgrowers.com



Brian Noeller
 Stanislaus County South of
 Tuolumne River, East of Hwy 99;
 Merced County East of Hwy 99,
 North of Westside/Bellevue Road
 Cell: 209.417.2010
 bnoeller@bdgrowers.com



Justin Elam
 Merced County from the
 Merced River to Hwy 140
 Cell: 209.303.7306
 jelam@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
 Cell: 559.474.2996
 ereichmuth@bdgrowers.com



Mike Griffin
 Southern Madera County South
 of Avenue 18-1/2; Northern Fresno
 County North of Highway 180
 Cell: 559.779.6400
 mgriffin@bdgrowers.com



Michael Grindstaff
 Central Fresno County between
 Highway 180 and Kamm Avenue
 Cell: 559.470.9731
 mgrindstaff@bdgrowers.com



Matt Willson
 Southern Tulare County,
 South of Lindsay Highway;
 Kern County
 Cell: 559.554.4118
 mwillson@bdgrowers.com



Other Inquiries

Salida Membership Dept.
 Phone: 209.545.6225
 Fax: 209.545.6215

Sacramento Membership Dept.
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2020 Grower Liaison

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- John Nock
- Raymond Antonowich
- Daren Rice **!**
- P. Samantha Lewis
- Chris Alves
- Luke Konyn
- Robert Thill **!**
- Dan Cummings ******
- W. Howard Isom *****

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- Bobby Deol
- Alan Sano **!**
- Frank Fagundes
- Jeffrey Baize
- Tim Lohman **VC**
- Rick Scoto **!**
- Joe Sansoni
- Dan Mendenhall ******
- Robert Weimer *****
- David Zollinger *****

DISTRICT 8

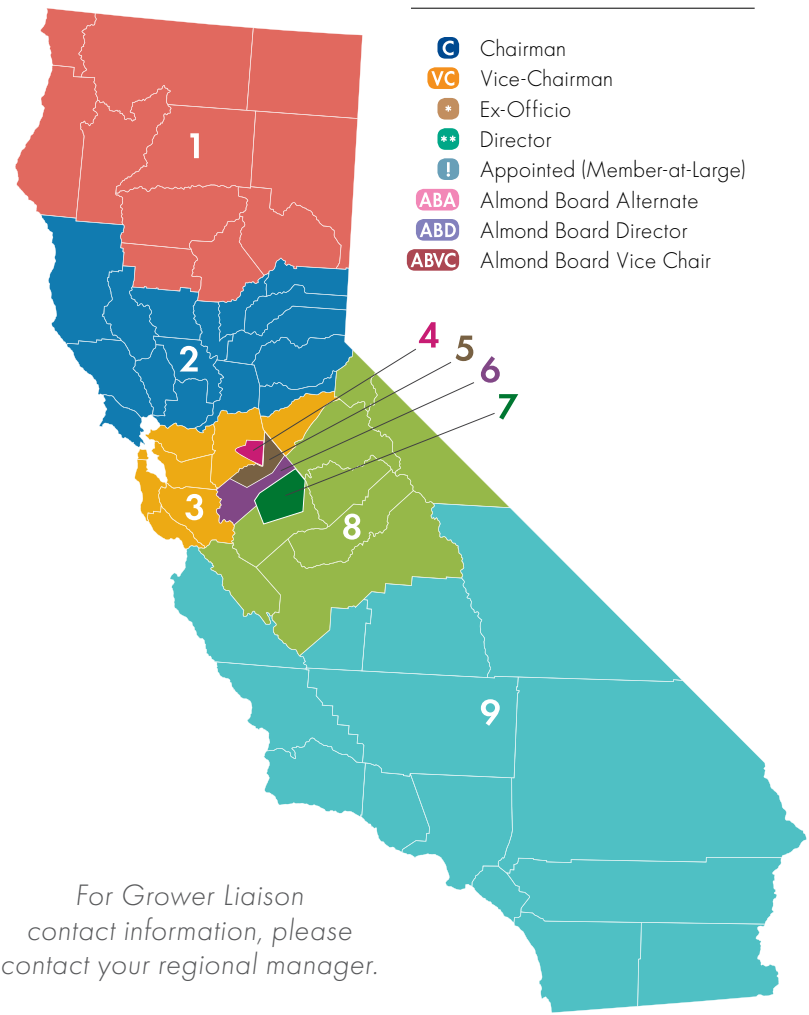
- Bruce Chapman **VC**
- Gary Thompson
- Baljit Boparai
- Tom Chandler **!** **C**
- David Massaro
- Jerry Rai
- Anthony Basila
- Dan Wattenbarger **!**
- David Tolmosoff
- Robert Allen
- Jens Finderup **!**
- RJ Maan **!**
- Ranbir Grewal
- Matt Efird ******
- George Goshgarian *****
- Aldo Sansoni *****

DISTRICT 9

- Ben Wilson **C**
- Karam Guron **VC**
- Jason Dhillon
- Ryan Clark **!**
- David Snell
- John Allen
- Don Davis
- Chris Vanborg **!**
- Mark Fanucchi
- Doug Kindig
- Ray Van Beek
- Keith Gilbert **!**
- Gurcharan Dhillon
- Kyle Balakian
- Kent Stenderup ****** **ABVC**
- Clinton Shick *****

LEGEND

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



Co-op Election Results

The results of the election for District Board Director and Grower Liaison Committee have been reviewed and certified. The results are as follows:

FOR DISTRICT DIRECTOR

- District 3 - Mr. Dale Van Groningen
- District 5 - Mr. Steve Van Duyn
- District 7 - Mr. Dan Mendenhall

Congratulations to the elected District Directors and Grower Liaison Committee members. ♦

FOR GROWER LIAISON COMMITTEE MEMBERS

DISTRICT 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brian Erickson • Stacy Gore • Jerry Mantz 	DISTRICT 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don Bransford • Brian Cahill • Ryan Finnen 	DISTRICT 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rick Phillips • Louie Tallerico • Don Van Vliet
DISTRICT 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kevin Van Laar • Rick Morris • Paul Adrian 	DISTRICT 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John De Visser • Manuel Furtado • Lucas Van Duyn 	DISTRICT 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frank Borba • Michael Mora • Trent Voss
DISTRICT 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jimmi Atwal • Galen Miyamoto • Joe Sansoni 	DISTRICT 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lee Erickson • Ryan Indart • Norman Pretzer 	DISTRICT 9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kyle Balakian • Gurcharan Dhillon • Keith Gilbert

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Almond Breeze® Teams Up with Rachel Ray

Blue Diamond Almond Breeze® was thrilled to be part of a very heartwarming segment of Rachel Ray that aired on October 21. *Almond Breeze*® partnered with Rachel Ray to honor Isaiah Torres, Jasmine Saenz and Stephan Torres, teens from Pearland, Texas, who started the Drive By Heroes. Isaiah, Jasmine, and Stephan dress as superheroes to cheer up the Pearland community during the coronavirus pandemic and, instead of charging for these visits, the heroes ask for donations to their local food pantry at the Pearland Neighborhood Center. In the past few months, they've collected over 5,000 pounds of food and gift cards, making a huge impact in their community. The Drive By Heroes were on the show to share their amazing story and chat with Rachael, as well as receiving a special surprise from *Almond Breeze*®. ♦

Did You Catch *Blue Diamond* on Jeopardy?

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Our very own Smokehouse® Almonds and Nut-Thins® products were featured on an episode of the long-running game show Jeopardy! The question appeared in the "a 'Diamond'" category of the episode, which aired on October 21. The episode is part of Jeopardy!'s 37th season. With over 8,000 episodes aired, the show has won a record number of Daytime Emmy Awards, and viewership ranges from one million to as high as 12 million per episode. ♦

Blue Diamond Growers Salida Celebrates Becoming Green Business Certified

Originally printed in *Progress Magazine*, Modesto Chamber of Commerce



Blue Diamond Growers celebrates becoming a certified Green Business through the California Green Business Network with the support of the Modesto Chamber of Commerce.

With all the challenges for businesses this year, *Blue Diamond* did not let it stop them from prioritizing sustainability and becoming a Green Business. Certified Green Businesses implement sustainable practices that lead to cost savings in energy, water, and waste bills, and create healthier communities with cleaner air and less pollution. To become certified, *Blue Diamond* registered their business with the California Green Business Network and was provided a checklist for their business type. After completing the checklist of sustainability measures, *Blue Diamond Growers* — who recently celebrated their 110th anniversary — verified that their operations are sustainable and received the Green Business certification. As a large facility, *Blue Diamond* demonstrates that a business can be prosperous while caring for the Salida community and environment.

When businesses become a certified Green Business, it shows their community and customers that sustainability is a priority. It shows commitment to conserving resources and preventing pollution in their facility and operations. It sets an example to their community and leads the path to inspire other businesses to become Green Business certified by implementing sustainability measures. Examples of these measures include upgrading lighting and equipment to save energy, promoting and incentivizing alternative transportation for employees, eliminating and/or properly disposing of harmful

chemicals, eliminating unnecessary packaging, and so much more.

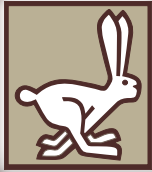
We [Modesto Chamber] look forward to the celebration of *Blue Diamond's* success and working with them on future sustainability initiatives.

Congratulations to *Blue Diamond Growers Salida* and thank you for a wonderful year. ♦

Snacks Nourish Troops Overseas



Members of the Army 82nd Airborne Field Artillery enjoy *Blue Diamond* snacks. ♦



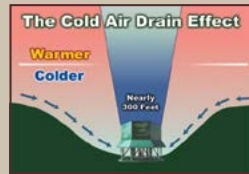
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2020 Crop Quality; Future Challenges

The annual meeting virtual Grower Seminar delivered a full package for growers to think about as they plan for their 2021 crop. It began with good news about the 2020 almond harvest, then strong encouragement to adopt Integrated Pest Management practices where possible, and the evolving consumer attitudes and government policies regarding growers' use of pesticides. Changing consumer attitudes and tightening government regulations are expected to continue to drive changes in grower practices, the panelists agreed.

Good Quality Crop

The 2020 almond crop is getting a good grade from Mel Machado, Vice President of Member Relations for *Blue Diamond Growers*. Reviewing the harvest, he reported, "Looking at Nonpareil meats, the quality is quite good this year. I consider a low reject year a good quality year. This year, we are running right at 86 percent of deliveries qualifying for the High-Quality Premiums."

However, the harvest season is far from over. Machado added that while we are done in the field, there are still a lot of Nonpareils in stockpile. "We will be receiving product from stockpiles well into January. In the case of inshell, rejects are even lower. About 90 percent are qualifying for the High-Quality Inshell Program. We are seeing some really good quality come in."

With high-quality inshell in demand, Machado noted that *Blue Diamond* field staff work closely with grower-owners to make sure that their inshell deliveries qualify for the premium program.

In most years, growers in the southern San Joaquin Valley face bigger challenges from rejects than growers in the central and northern districts, largely due to damage by Navel Orange Worm (NOW), said Machado. "But this year, the reject level in the south has been less than in the past. It's down to one-and-half percent on average. That is something to be proud of."

This year, an analysis requested by growers of their deliveries revealed a one-percent reject level, but, interestingly, the rejects were due to a variety of issues, not just NOW. For many years, NOW was blamed for about 80 percent of the reject damage, but this year

it is just about one-third. Other causes have appeared most notably from ants. Brown spot has also become an increasing challenge. While brown spot is usually associated with feeding by plant bugs, either Leaf-footed Plant Bug or Stink Bugs, that is being questioned and work is underway to track down other causes. In many cases brown spot is also associated with gum, which is thought to be the result of late season feeding by plant bugs. However, gum is frequently observed without any apparent damage from plant bugs and other causes may be at play.

Heat and wind complicated harvest, Machado said. Hull split occurred during a hot spell resulting in some withered kernels in water-stressed orchards and high winds shook pollinators onto Nonpareil drying on the ground. Withered nuts do not process well, resulting in an inferior product, Machado explained. Questions arose over the effect of California's record-setting fires and long periods of smoke blanketing the almond producing region. Machado reported that the smoke did not affect the trees or nuts except to block the sun during harvest, lengthening the time it took for nuts to dry. In some cases, nuts remained on the ground for as long as two to four weeks, which hindered growers' ability to irrigate.

The high humidity caused hull rot, which not only damages trees but can also darken kernels. "But this year we have not seen any degradation of kernel quality due to hull rot," Machado reported.

Big Year for Stockpiling

The large 2020 crop sent a large portion into stockpile. "Stockpiling is a way of life for growers in the southern



San Joaquin, but it is not used as much in the north,” said Machado. “This can be good for kernel quality, because it tends to equalize the crop in the stockpile. However, problems can arise from excess moisture in piles.” Machado advises growers to be sure their crop is dry enough before stockpiling it. He cites the Almond Board’s Best Management Practices on stockpiling, which recommends inshell kernel moisture below six percent and hull moisture below 12 percent before stockpiling. Considering the difficulty in getting an accurate, usable moisture test on kernels, Machado recommends the following rule of thumb, “If you have to ask, they are too wet.”

Doubles Increasing

The incidence in doubles is on the uptick. Machado reported that all almonds have multiple embryos, but normally one withers leaving no trace. However, some varieties are prone to retain the double kernel, the Monterey in particular. Environmental factors can influence retention of the double, and so can growth regulators such as Retain. Monterey production is increasing and as a result, *Blue Diamond* is seeing more doubles in almond deliveries. Doubles create problems with slicing and slivering, do not blanch well and substantially increase processing costs.

Efficient Almond Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

“From a cost/return standpoint, almond growers face major challenges in 2020 and long term,” said Franz Niederholzer, UC Farm Advisor for Colusa, Sutter and Yuba Counties. “Net return per acre is shrinking as crop size and costs rise while returns per pound of crop decline. These trends compel growers to focus on efficiency in order to maintain economic stability.”

Niederholzer advises making sure that dollars spent on inputs bring the highest possible return without harming future crops. “It’s important that growers recognize which practices are basic investments in almond growing and which ones can be addressed as needed.” This is

where Integrated Pest Management comes into play in an important way, he said. “IPM focuses on long-term prevention of pests and pest damage in a way that allows the grower to stay in business,” he said. IPM uses cultural practices to help control pests with the application of pesticides only when economic thresholds are met. When sprays are used, it is done carefully and with materials selected for the least impact on beneficial organisms.

“IPM efficiencies can help a grower’s net income and even provide a marketing edge as an increasing number of buyers show an interest in sustainable practices and IPM,” he noted. IPM practices that lower costs include careful monitoring to pinpoint where money has to be spent and approaching each orchard according to its needs instead of a one-size-fits-all approach. A complete program includes engaging good partners, such as PCAs, and *Blue Diamond* field staff who provide critical information for efficient operations. A key piece of efficiency is to carefully calibrate and maintain sprayers to put the material where it is needed to get the control that is needed.

The advantage of biological control — the use of beneficial insects and mites — is that it can make a big difference in control of certain, important pests. “The beneficials work cheap while you are working on something else,” Niederholzer observed. “And with them, spray coverage is not an issue. They find the pests. And you don’t need to import them, just be careful with what you spray and they will show up.”

NOW an Increasing Concern

NOW damage is a major concern up and down the Central Valley as damage from the pest continues to rise, Niederholzer said. Control of the pest is challenging and expensive. NOW overwinters inside mummy nuts and there is no effective dormant spray control for it. Winter sanitation is the foundation of a NOW control program.

As NOW damage has become the primary pest/reject concern for almond growers, standards for orchard sanitation have tightened, said Niederholzer. While two mummies per tree was the target some years ago, the standard today is less than one mummy per tree and only four grounders per tree. Those targets yield a 1.56

percent average insect damage. Research has shown that if mummy shaking is required near bloom, you can shake into bud swell without a significant loss of yield. However, shaking must be completed prior to the start of bloom.

Other NOW control measures include mating disruption, timely harvest, and hull split treatments. Spring spray may be useful if the neighbors don't have high populations flying. "But if that is the case, spend the spring spray money on an additional hull split spray," said Niederholzer.

For best results, he suggests rotating chemistry classes when spraying for NOW in order to minimize chemical resistance. Change materials with each generation of NOW. For example, if making a mummy spray with Proclaim, consider Altacor® for the June/July generation, and Intrepid® for the third generation in



Mummies Per Tree	Mummies Per Acre	Eggs/a Spring	Eggs/a in June/July	Eggs/a in August with hull split spray	Eggs/a in August (no hull split spray)
2	250	465	2,168	23,000	92,000
5	620	2,900	13,550	144,00	576,000

These totals set a grower up for severe reject levels.

August. Each of those products is based on a different chemistry.

Scale and Spider Mites

Scale can sneak up on you, Niederholzer warned. "They are not strong fliers, but they can build up over time. And if predatory wasps are not present, scale can multiply quickly and kill lower branches and reduce yield. A dormant spur sample can reveal whether healthy scale is present. If they are, treat with oil and an insect growth regulator, such as Sieze or Centaur, for example. Oil can suppress low to moderate scale populations. Four gallons of oil with Bravo used for scab will also suppress scale, he said.

Spider mites can be controlled with beneficial insects and mites, while the use of miticides can harm beneficials. It is advised to wait for the economic threshold to be reached before applying miticides. Then spray carefully. Niederholzer cautions that unsprayed plant tissue is unprotected tissue.

Peach twig borer (PTB) continues to be a major pest in almonds. There are no economic thresholds for PTB but there are numerous effective control options, says Niederholzer.

Dormant season offers good opportunity for excellent coverage; delayed dormant spray offers the same good opportunity. In both cases extra caution should be taken to avoid drift or runoff. Bloom is the time to use B.t which offers very good control of PTB depending on the number of times it is sprayed. Other materials can be toxic to bees, so caution is advised. PTB are strong fliers so early sprays don't eliminate them but help manage the pest.

Ants were a major cause of rejects in many orchards in 2020. Ant bait can be very effective, but it must be used when it is fresh or the oil becomes rancid and the bait is much less effective. Wet bait is also less attractive. Good weed management is essential because some weeds are more attractive food sources to ants than baits.

Spraying for leaffooted plant bugs is tough on an IPM program. Treatment starts in March or April with a material that controls the leaffooted bug, but is disruptive to mite and scale control programs. For more information on IPM for almonds visit the website <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/>.



Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Scholarship

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Scholarship Requirements:

- Must currently live in Almond Growing Regions of California
- Must intend to pursue college major in Agriculture related field
- Must have 3.3 GPA or higher
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- Application deadline: **March 31, 2021**

This is a one-time award. Applicants who have applied and not previously been awarded a Blue Diamond Growers Foundation Scholarship may re-apply.

Scholarship is available to applicants entering any year of a four-year degree program.



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Worldwide, Regulations Tightening

Customer and consumer surveys worldwide reveal increasing concern about pesticides and other chemicals being harmful to the environment and food safety. The implications for growers are worrisome. Thus, the panel's emphasis on IPM. The third speaker, Gabriele Ludwig, Ph.D. and Director for Sustainability and Environmental Affairs at the Almond Board of California, reported that surveys reveal high levels of concerns about pesticides globally, with respondents ranking them among their top three. As a result, major markets worldwide are tightening their tolerances for chemical use and residues on food products, even banning some common pesticides outright.

"Consumers regard pesticides and chemicals as harmful farming practices which, along with GMOs, are associated with 'careless big ag,'" Ludwig said. In response to these concerns, governments worldwide have adopted International Maximum Residues Limits (MRLs) that set pesticide residues tolerances for foods traded domestically and internationally. Each country sets its own MRLs or uses CODEX MRLs. Food products are required to have an MRL (or an exemption) in place to be in the marketplace. Attention to MRLs is increasing and tolerances are tightening, Ludwig noted. "There is a growing emphasis on food safety worldwide."

In Europe, which accounts for nearly one-third of California's almond sales, regulators apply "Cut-off Criteria", which are more stringent and arbitrary risk assessments. The European Union (EU) is reviewing all pesticides to determine if they have endocrine disruptor, carcinogen, mutagen, or toxic for reproduction properties. If a material meets one of those criteria, its use is banned in the EU, and for use on imports as well. The EU considers the hazard of the chemical only, not the human exposure to it, which presents an incomplete picture of risk to human health.

The EU is also working its way through their European Green Deal which seeks to improve the well-being of people, making Europe climate-neutral, and protecting the natural habitat for the good of people, planet and economy. It seeks to transform the EU's economy for a sustainable future while

leaving no one behind. The goal is to reduce chemical use and risk by 50 percent by 2030. Plans for implementing enforcement decisions are expected by end of 2021.

The application of MRLs is underway in Asian markets. Turkey is moving toward meeting the EU standards, Egypt expects all lots to comply with EU or EPA standards, and Mexico applies U.S. MRLs to U.S. imports.

In the U.S., the EPA is vulnerable to lawsuits for not meeting Endangered Species Act standards. The agency is reviewing pesticide registration requirements and is tightening standards on a long list of widely used materials, including pyrethroids, phosphine, paraquat, chlorpyrifos, Triazine and Simazine, for example.

California continues to tighten its oversight and regulations, as well. Telone is under review due to high levels in air quality monitoring sites. New rules are expected by fall of 2021. Ludwig announced that the Department of Pesticide Regulation has set up a Sustainable Pest Management Workgroup to develop a "Roadmap" for decreasing chemical pesticide use in the state. That project starts in January 2021. In addition, with populations of the Western Monarch butterfly declining, surveys have found two leading NOW insecticides on the insect's milkweed host plant in the Central Valley. Ludwig cautions, "Expect more focus on pollinators."

What this Means for Almond Growers

Ludwig pointed out that the worldwide crackdown on agricultural chemical use is making pest management decisions more difficult. Moreover, government decisions are being made on a hazard-based or fear-based set of criteria, raising the question, "If there are no residues, is there a reason to have an MRL?"

What you can do, Ludwig suggested, is check the MRL database as a part of pest management decisions (GlobalMRL.com), check with Blue Diamond about new issues and concerns, use IPM whenever possible, and calibrate sprayers regularly and drive slowly to reduce drift. ◆

To watch a full recording of the Grower Seminar, visit www.youtube.com/bluediamondgrowerscoop.

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Sorting Out the 2020 Election

With a record voter turnout, stark choices, and control of Congress and the White House on the line, the 2020 election provided no shortage of suspense, and surprises. A panel of Washington insiders spoke to the historic election and more during the Government Affairs Seminar. Led by Julian Heron, Principal in the Washington, D.C. law firm SJ Lake & Heron, which represents Blue Diamond Growers in the nation's capital, the panelists shed some light on the election outcome — as far as it was known at the time — and possible policy directions and leadership changes.

Guest panelists included Dave Juday, Chief Economist, SJ Lake & Heron; Congressman Jimmy Panetta, representing District 20 along California's Central Coast; former Congressman Jeff Denham, with the Washington, D.C. law firm K & L Gates; with Alicia Rockwell, Director, Government and Public Affairs, hosting.

Juday opened with his take on the winners and losers in the election. "The losers were the pollsters. In 2018 they were within the margin of error, but on the wrong side, and it got worse from that point on. The winners were the fundraisers. This was the most expensive federal election, by double, that we have ever seen — \$14 billion, and that is before the Georgia Senate runoff election in January that is expected to consume another half-billion dollars."

Sharply contested state races added huge sums to the tally as the parties fought for crucial seats — with this being a census year, potential redistricting is on the line. Redistricting is a once-a-decade process of redrawing political boundaries for elective offices following the U.S. Census. Roughly half of the states

assign redistricting to the state legislators. The remainder leave it to the courts or special panels. For the years 2011 to 2021, Californian voters approved assigning the task to the California Citizens Redistricting Commission.

Potential Changes in Trade Policy

With a new incoming administration under President-elect Biden, the panel offered thoughts on presidential appointments and policy directions. Juday noted that replacing California Senator Harris will be an immediate task, but several of the candidates are members of the House, which cannot afford to lose many Democrat members. The same goes for the Secretary of Agriculture and U.S. Trade Representative posts.

Under President-elect Biden's administration, Juday thinks the trade agenda and approach would likely shift from President Trump's "America First", bilateral trade deals, aggressive tariffs, and renegotiations of trade deals to a "carrot instead of a stick" approach with an emphasis on multilateral trade deals. Juday also noted that trade would not likely

be an early priority under President-elect Biden, who would emphasize domestic policy.

China is the big issue, Juday said. Under President-elect Biden, the U.S. approach to China would be different, but it is not clear what that could be. Foreign policy with China could become a bipartisan effort on issues like Hong Kong, Uighurs, technology transfer and other issues. The Biden administration would likely be more engaged with U.S. allies, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and possibly rejoin the regional Asian Trade Agreement — Comprehensive and Progress Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The CPTPP, also known as the TPP11, evolved from the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiated in the Obama administration.

Juday cautioned, "The big question is what China will challenge the U.S. with? They recently signed two big trade agreements in two weeks. Obviously, they are testing the waters!"

Other areas of potential change in trade policy include the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). President-elect Biden's



administration would likely focus on enforcement, Juday believes, perhaps banning imports produced with foreign labor, supporting and funding labor organizing, enforcing actions on labor wages and organizing, and enforcing auto/parts rules of origin. There are issues with Canada regarding the dairy products trade that could be addressed. In addition to USMCA, there are unresolved trade issues in Japan, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and India that the incoming administration would inherit. President-elect Biden may seek to punish Brazil over environmental issues. Pushing on these concerns could hinder America's relationship with Brazil who is a major player in beef, pork, corn, and soybeans. Of particular importance to almonds, are issues within India. Currently negotiations have stalled, the matter of taxes on steel, aluminum and digital services needs to be addressed, and the Trade Promotion Authority expires July 1.

President-elect Biden would likely be more engaged with Congress due to his long service there and positive relationship with Senator Mitch McConnell, Juday suggested.

There are some policies that will not change with the new incoming administration. "What won't change is monetary policy. The Fed is locked into an expansive monetary policy and low interest rates. Easy money will continue which is very helpful for trade," Juday concluded.

Emphasis on Bipartisanship

Congressman Jimmy Panetta, observing the slim margin held by the Democrats in the House of Representatives, predicted a 2021 legislative agenda that appeals to the interests of moderate members as well as the Democrat base. "We will also consider what type of bills that we can send to the Senate and reasonably expect them to accept and pass," he said.

"People want us to get things done," Congressman Jimmy Panetta noted. "They are not particularly concerned about political ideology. They just want us to get things done. So, we will need to focus on ways to work together to get things done. We can't think about hitting home runs. We have to go for base hits, areas that offer good promise of being enacted."

Some promising areas for successful bills include COVID-19 relief, similar to the CARES Act passed last spring — "to keep the economy afloat," Congressman Jimmy Panetta said. He believes the Problem Solvers Caucus, of which he is a member, would be a good vehicle for accomplishing sound legislation in the upcoming 117th Congress.

"Our caucus is made up of 25 Democrats and 25 Republicans. We come up with nonpolitical packages designed to get important work done," Congressman Jimmy Panetta explained.

He hopes to address immigration reform in a way that provides a reliable farm workforce, along the lines of the Farm Workforce Modernization Act that stalled in Congress this year. Congressman Jimmy Panetta will be paying attention to our partners' compliance with the terms of the USMCA, especially Mexico's adherence to the labor reforms and environmental cleanup provisions of the Act. "We need to keep good oversight so that we have an equitable trade relationship. That's very important!"

Opportunity for Infrastructure

During the panel, Jeff Denham agreed that now is not the time to "swing for the fences" but instead to focus on bipartisan issues such as infrastructure. "Now is the time to redefine our infrastructure system, including not just highways and airports, but also future technologies such as autonomous vehicles, drones, hyperloops, new rail technologies, ports and 5G internet, schools and hospitals," he suggested. The way to get that done, he said, is to make infrastructure a part of the COVID-19 package, thereby bypassing the back and forth over funding. "That would be a big win for infrastructure and the country while getting people back to work," Denham said. "If we do that, it could pave the way to resolving issues with tariffs and other trade challenges."

On immigration, Denham observed, "With the border more secure, we will be able to fix problems with H2A, H1B, DACA and the Visa program while overhauling immigration for agriculture. I expect big things to happen, but in a bipartisan way. That is the only way we can accomplish it."



At the Table or On the Menu

Alicia Rockwell, *Blue Diamond's* Director of Government and Public Affairs, fielded questions from the audience. One questioner asked, how the industry can work with Climate Change legislation such as the Green New Deal? Congressman Jimmy Panetta responded, "I emphasize to my grower constituents that they have to be at the table. You need to be at the table pointing out that if anyone is concerned about air, water and soil, it is you — and show everything that you are doing to use less water and chemicals and take care of the soil. Be sure your voice is heard."

Denham added, "We are not looking for any handouts from the government, but we want some recognition for the good that we do. We plant more trees than anyone else, so don't put us out of business. Look at what we are doing already."

Rockwell noted that this could be an opportunity for California growers to proactively showcase what they have already done in areas such as water efficiency, dust minimization, zero orchard waste and pest management. ♦

To watch a full recording of the Government Affairs Seminar, visit www.youtube.com/bluediamondgrowerscoop.



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Sustainability Equals Market Access

“Consumers care about how their food is made and the care that goes into the ingredients,” stated Mary Gallagher, Senior Manager for North American Responsible Sourcing at the Kellogg Company. During the Sustainability Seminar held as part of the cooperative’s 2020 Annual Meeting, Gallagher laid out the importance of a sustainability program to food producers and marketers, and how Kellogg’s program serves farmers, consumers and the company. Kellogg is a major customer for Blue Diamond® Almonds.

Gallagher emphasized, “We are committed to sourcing almonds responsibly, to addressing issues like water scarcity, soil health, and biodiversity. We employ industry tools to track continuous improvement, and we align our programs with industry standard tools such as CASP (California Almond Sustainability Program), which provides proof points showing how almond growers farm responsibly. With almonds one of our high priority ingredients, we must be able to assure our customers that the almonds we use are grown responsibly.”



Starting in 1906, W. H. Kellogg, the company’s founder, established the values and practices

that now underpin the philanthropic and sustainability programs at Kellogg. “Those practices deliver business security, enhance our reputation, minimize risk and build trust and loyalty with our employees, suppliers and customers,” Gallagher explained.

Consumers Expect It

In this era of heightened consumer awareness and concern about food quality and the impact its production and processing have on the environment and health, consumers expect food producers and processors to adhere to sustainable practices and to be transparent about it, she explained. “Over 75 percent of the stakeholders who we interviewed about their concerns talked about climate urgency. Nearly half mentioned deforestation and over 40 percent were concerned about farmer livelihoods and equity. They were also concerned about emissions from agriculture, soil health and carbon, and protecting ecosystems and biodiversity.”

The stakeholder insights validated Kellogg’s responsible sourcing priorities, according to Gallagher. “Our priorities include supporting farmers and agriculture, responsible ingredient sourcing, reducing food waste, and promoting natural resources conservation and human rights. We have programs focused on farmer livelihoods and financial resiliency, climate, biodiversity, packaging and deforestation. However, it is not enough to simply run the programs, as valuable as that is,” she said. “It is also important to tell our story to consumers. We build trust with consumers through storytelling and reporting.”

Kellogg markets over one thousand products in 180 countries around the world. “We have programs in every market to tell our story by engaging people in ‘heart & soul’ commercials and digital campaigns,” said Gallagher. Kellogg tells its story through its brands in advertising and on packaging, and through the media in what it calls “Heart & Soul” stories delivered through television, news publications and online. “We are getting growers into our ads to put a face on the source of our ingredients — to establish a connection with the consumer,” she said.

Blue Diamond Sustainability Program

Blue Diamond has been using its grower-owners as spokesmen for *Blue Diamond*® Almond products for decades, points out Micah Keith, Senior Brand Manager at *Blue Diamond*. “Now our sustainability program enables us to expand on that approach by creating positive stories backed by credible information to communicate to customers and consumers how our almonds are produced in our fields and facilities.”

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² Velum One applied at 6.5 oz./A, spring 2017, via drip irrigation. Trees planted in January 2017. Increase in green canopy pixels based on an average of two rows of untreated trees compared to an average of two rows of Velum One-treated trees.

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That is an important element in marketing. “Sustainability is becoming a bigger factor in food choices. In fact, a recent study found that nearly 50 percent of U.S. adults agree that environmental responsibility is an important factor in their food choices. This preference is even more important to the younger generations. They have an even stronger attraction to brands that promote their environmental responsibility. At *Blue Diamond*, we have been communicating our sustainability story, but we have to do even more.”

Keith notes that package recycling is a big issue with consumers, and in response to that, *Blue Diamond* will begin promoting ‘How to Recycle’ on our *Almond Breeze*® packages in January 2021. Consumers also ask about almond growing practices, such as bee health, water usage, and carbon footprint, issues that have been prominent in the news over the past years. He says the trend in environmental and sustainability concerns among consumers has been rising and expects it to continue to be at the forefront with consumers in the years ahead.

“Having a thoughtful and specific message on that topic will be increasingly important over the coming years,” Keith said. “There is a strong business case for a well-developed sustainability program for a brand. It is a critical piece in building a brand. With it comes growth, a price premium and consumer brand loyalty. If you are going head-to-head with a brand that is as good as yours in every way, but you are able to better share the great things that you are doing to take care of the environment, consumers are going to choose your brand.”

As a result, *Blue Diamond* is promoting its sustainability story to consumers — the great things that growers do to take care of their orchards, their almonds, their bees and the other facets of almond production. “But there is more we can do,” Keith said.

“And the better off we will be if we do more and tell those stories to consumers so we can be more relevant to consumers, and they feel that they can trust that we are being the best stewards we can with what we are given. So, any effort we can make on sustainability will be a great advantage in the marketplace.”

2020 Sustainability Incentive Program

Ben Goudie, Membership Development Manager at *Blue Diamond*, highlighted an emerging trend of major brands purchasing ingredients exclusively from suppliers with robust sustainability programs. The producer of KIND snack bars, for example, announced that it is committing to sourcing almonds from bee-friendly farms exclusively by 2025.

Blue Diamond has been developing a sustainability program over the past several years, Goudie said. The program Mission Statement reads, “The *Blue Diamond* Sustainability Program enables us to create positive stories backed by credible information to communicate to customers and consumers how our almonds are produced in our fields and our facilities.” What the program does,” said Goudie, “is create transparency, trust and confidence for the brand among customers and consumers. This translates to market access and strong brand identity.”



The sustainability program is increasingly important to *Blue Diamond*, Goudie said, because customers are requesting information on a wide range of sustainability issues. "Each buyer has unique interests," he said. "We need to develop credible information on all those issues from field through processing to be able to be completely transparent and support our sales and marketing teams, domestic and international."

Blue Diamond's sustainability program categories of interest include field practices, distribution, water, packaging/recycling, community giving, facilities, and bees. To be able to systematically address these issues, *Blue Diamond* has adopted the CASP (California Almond Sustainability Program) platform from the Almond Board of California as its data source for creating a *Blue Diamond* sustainability narrative. CASP is a ready-to-go online program that growers can opt-in and complete on their own. It includes support from the Almond Board and *Blue Diamond* field staff, and helps characterize *Blue Diamond* information in comparison to the rest of the industry. "It gives us vital, credible data to create our own sustainability story," Goudie said.

Incentive Program

As a means of encouraging *Blue Diamond* members to get involved with the CASP program, the board of directors authorized an incentive program that pays growers prescribed amounts for their participation, based on their degree of involvement. Details of the CASP and Incentive programs are available from your field supervisor or the *Blue Diamond* Membership Office in Salida. ♦

To watch a full recording of the Sustainability Seminar, visit www.youtube.com/bluediamondgrowerscoop.

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Recipes

Enjoy these holiday-themed treats made with *Blue Diamond* products featured during our Annual Meeting virtual food demo. Recipes by Patty Mastracco. ♦



Double Chocolate Almond Brownies

Prep Time: 15 minutes • Cook Time: 40 minutes

Ingredients

- ½ cup butter
- 4 oz. semi-sweet chocolate
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 1½ cups *Blue Diamond* Almonds Finely Sifted Almond Flour
- ⅔ cup white chocolate chips

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and lightly butter an 8-inch baking pan.
2. Melt butter and chocolate in a medium saucepan over very low heat. Stir in sugars and vanilla; set aside to cool. Add eggs and beat well to incorporate. Stir in almond flour until no lumps remain then stir in chocolate chips. Spread evenly in prepared pan.
3. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Let cool completely before cutting into squares. Makes 12 brownies. Store in a container with a loose fitting lid.

Holiday Tip:

Sprinkle chopped chocolate mint candies while still warm. Drizzle with melted white chocolate and top with crushed peppermint candies.



Vanilla Almond Flour Cupcakes

Prep Time: 20 minutes • Cook Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients

- ½ cup sugar, divided
- ½ cup *Blue Diamond* Vanilla Almond Breeze®
- ¼ cup butter, melted
- 2 egg yolks + 4 egg whites, divided
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 cups lightly scooped *Blue Diamond* Almonds Finely Sifted Almond Flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F and line 10 muffin cups with paper liners or lightly butter.
2. Beat together 6 tablespoons sugar, *Almond Breeze*®, butter, egg yolks and vanilla in a medium bowl. Stir in almond flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt.
3. Beat egg whites with remaining 2 tablespoons sugar until stiff peaks form and fold into batter. Spoon into prepared cupcake tins and bake for 20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Let cool completely. Makes 10 cupcakes.

Holiday Tip:

- Scoop out a small amount of the center of each cupcake and pipe in chocolate, vanilla or cream cheese frosting. Decorate with holiday sprinkles, crushed peppermint candies or shaved chocolate.
- Drizzle or frost each cupcake with chocolate, vanilla or cream cheese frosting. Decorate with holiday sprinkles, crushed peppermint candies or shaved chocolate.



Almond Streusel Coffee Cake

Prep Time: 15 minutes • Cook Time: 40 minutes

Ingredients

- ⅔ cup sugar
- ¼ cup butter, softened
- 2 eggs plus 3 egg whites
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- ⅓ cup sour cream
- 2 cups *Blue Diamond* Almonds Finely Sifted Almond Flour
- ¼ cup all-purpose gluten-free baking mix
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Almond Oat Streusel:

- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup old fashioned oats
- ¼ cup *Blue Diamond* Finely Sifted Almond Flour
- ¼ cup butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ cup sliced almonds

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and butter a 9-inch square baking pan.
2. Beat sugar and butter in a large bowl until fluffy. Add eggs, egg whites, and extracts and beat until well mixed; stir in sour cream. Stir in flour, baking mix, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Stir together all streusel ingredients in a medium bowl.
3. Spread half the coffee cake batter evenly onto the bottom of prepared pan. Sprinkle with half the streusel. Repeat layers. Bake for 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, tenting with foil if surface browns too quickly.
4. Let cool completely then cut into squares. Store in a container with a loose fitting lid. Makes 12 servings.



Spicy Chile Cheese Corn Cups

Prep Time: 30 minutes • Cook Time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

- Olive oil cooking spray
- 36 round potsticker wrappers
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup each: fresh corn kernels and minced onion
- ⅓ cup minced red bell pepper
- 1 (4 oz.) can diced green chiles
- 1¼ cups shredded chipotle Cheddar or Mexican blend cheese
- 1 cup *Blue Diamond* Original Unsweetened *Almond Breeze*®
- 2 teaspoons Mexican blend seasoning
- 3 eggs
- ⅓ cup minced *Blue Diamond* Extreme or Bold Almonds
- Guacamole, salsa and snipped fresh cilantro (optional toppings)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F and coat 36 mini muffin cups with nonstick cooking spray. Press a wonton wrapper into each cup, pressing firmly into the bottom.
2. Melt butter in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add corn and onion and cook for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Stir in chiles and bell pepper. Place equal amounts of cheese and corn mixture into each cup. Beat together *Almond Breeze*®, seasoning and eggs and carefully pour into cups; sprinkle with almonds.
3. Bake for 15 minutes, tenting with foil if tops brown too quickly. Garnish with guacamole, salsa and cilantro, if desired. Makes 36 appetizers.

Grower Sustainability Incentive Plan

Introducing the Grower Sustainability Incentive Program! This plan will reward growers enrolled in the California Almond Sustainability Program (CASP) who are employing sustainable practices that support a thriving orchard. By enrolling a majority of our growers into the program, we will be well poised to answer customer requests for grower sustainability information, tell data-backed stories about how our growers are stewards of multi-generation orchards, and meet consumer demands for sustainable information.

The plan builds on our current CASP participation. For a full review of CASP please see the March/April 2019 Almond Facts, page 22. The Grower Sustainability Incentive Plan will reward grower-owners for reporting on their sustainable practices that they are already doing and for employing new ones. There are three incentive levels – bronze, silver, and gold – which require completion of specific CASP modules and at the gold level, Bee Friendly Certification, and a Cool Farm Tool Assessment.

The CASP program benchmarks to the international Sustainable Agriculture Initiative’s Farm Sustainability Assessment (FSA) system. This system is known worldwide for validating sustainability practices. It has been universally accepted by major consumer packaged goods companies, and sustainability organizations around the world. By standardizing to FSA levels, it will bring universal credibility to our program.

The levels of the *Blue Diamond* Sustainability Incentive program provide a pathway for growers to achieve increased incentives and coordinates with the corresponding FSA benchmark level. The chart below,

INCENTIVE LEVEL	MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	FSA BENCHMARK
GOLD	9 CASP Modules Bee Friendly Certification Cool Farm Tool Assessment	Gold
SILVER	6 CASP Modules	Silver
BRONZE	4 CASP Modules	Bronze (optional)

provides the details and benchmark for each level of the incentive program.

Growers will be financially rewarded for dedicating their time and making the extra effort to participate in this plan. The incentive amounts will be calculated using a base incentive per incentive level and a per pound incentive that increases for growers completing more modules and hitting higher sustainability benchmarks. See below for incentive amounts.

INCENTIVE LEVEL	BASE INCENTIVE (PER CONTRACT)	PER POUND INCENTIVE	AVERAGE INCENTIVE PER ACRE
GOLD	\$1000	\$0.01 / POUND	\$34-40
SILVER	\$750	\$0.005 / POUND	\$18-23
BRONZE	\$500	N/A	N/A

Note: At least 75% of the contract’s acreage must qualify for the highest rank to be paid out at that level.

One key step in participating once joining CASP is to “Opt-in” and select *Blue Diamond* as your handler. This enables data sharing with *Blue Diamond*. Your data is secure and individual answers to practices remain anonymous. Only a summary of results is reported to *Blue Diamond* which helps to justify and validate sustainable claims about grower field practices.

Blue Diamond Growers looks forward to sharing more about our growers’ sustainable practices with customers and consumers. Key customers and consumers are increasingly asking for information on *Blue Diamond* growing best practices around water use, carbon footprint, bee health, and more. With more grower summary data aggregated through CASP, the better we will be able to answer these questions and educate our consumers on the process for growing almonds. Data-backed storytelling is a powerful tool for shaping the story around sustainability. Thanks to our 110-year history as a cooperative of multi-generational growers, we already have inspiring anecdotal stories to share. We

know that our growers are doing many incredible sustainability practices on the farm now. By participating in the Grower Sustainability Incentive Plan, growers will have the opportunity help shape the sustainability story at *Blue Diamond*.

To learn more about the Grower Sustainability Incentive Plan, check out the recording of the 2020 Annual Grower Meeting's Sustainability Session where *Blue Diamond* introduces the plan, Kellogg's shares the business value of sustainability, and we provide a *Blue Diamond* brand perspective on the importance of sharing our sustainability story. You can watch the recording at www.youtube.com/bluediamondgrowerscoop.

Stay tuned for the official rollout of the Grower Sustainability Incentive Plan in the new year! Support will be provided by *Blue Diamond* Regional Managers, the field outreach team from the Almond Board and upcoming workshops that will include detailed instructions and one on one assistance.

Let's step into sustainability and walk into the new year!

To get started today, go to: www.sustainablealmondgrowing.org to enroll in CASP. ◆

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Writing Our Future

Amid this unparalleled year, Ag Council continues its core mission to provide a voice to cooperatives and farmer-owned businesses in the state legislative and regulatory arenas.

Ag Council consistently takes a proactive approach to forge new partnerships and create alliances to achieve positive outcomes. Writing our future in California requires taking a unique and sometimes unconventional approach to politics as usual, and it involves working with traditional and non-traditional allies.

This effort also requires investments in elections to carve a strategic path for our members and agriculture, and we must take risks to make a difference.

California Voters Reject Prop 15

In 2020, one of those risks Ag Council vigorously took on was to successfully oppose Prop 15 — the largest property tax increase in state history.

We are pleased voters rejected this massive property tax hike, which would have devastated family-owned farms.

Thanks to *Blue Diamond* and other Ag Council members who stepped up to provide needed funding to inform voters about the dangers of Prop 15 to the agricultural community. Ag Council raised over \$557,000, and this significant commitment assisted in the defeat of the measure.

Unity among statewide agricultural associations was crucial to help stop the measure. Ag Council collaborated with California Farm Bureau Federation and Western Growers, under the coalition umbrella, Family Farmers Against Prop 15.

Ag Council also supported the larger statewide No on Prop 15 committee comprising hundreds of unique partners from throughout California.



Rob Lapsley, president of the California Business Roundtable and co-chair of the No on Prop 15 campaign said, “Prop 15 was defeated as a direct result of the agricultural coalition co-chaired by Ag Council. You were one of the earliest leaders to oppose split roll and your efforts with agriculture and the business community reflect true leadership to protect all Californians from the largest tax increase in California history. We could not have been successful without your help.”

State Legislature

Though a massive “Blue Wave” did not occur as predicted by pundits, the outcome of the 2020 Election did result in an expanded supermajority for Democrats in the State Senate. This is because two seats in Southern California “flipped” in favor of Democrats.

In the Assembly, much remains the same with just one seat switching from Democrat to Republican.

Post-election, the political makeup of each chamber reflects the following:

- Democrats in the State Senate now hold 77 percent of the seats — well over a supermajority
- Assembly Democrats have a 75 percent supermajority

A supermajority means the party in charge has the votes to more easily pass tax increases, suspend legislative rules, approve emergency legislation and overturn vetoes.

However, there is not universal alignment on legislative issues because Democrats in the State Legislature hold a wide spectrum of political and policy views.

Moderate Democrats (Mod Dems)

In the Assembly, a group of business-friendly Democrats operate as a caucus, and they work to influence some of the most challenging bills, often on labor and environmental issues. Mod Dems have been helpful in amending or stopping certain measures and their leadership is essential in securing key wins.

After the legislative session adjourned this year, two dynamic legislators were selected to lead the Mod Dems, Assemblywoman Blanca Rubio (D-Baldwin Park) was chosen as Chair and Assemblyman Jim Cooper (D-Elk Grove) was chosen as Vice Chair. Both are well-known to many growers at *Blue Diamond*.

Each has demonstrated not just an interest in our policy issues, but both have proven they are active advocates for agriculture.

One of the challenges facing Mod Dems is to ensure the caucus holds firm when political pressure from party leadership comes down to bear. That's where strong management of the caucus is critical. With Assemblywoman Rubio at the helm, we believe the Mod Dems will have an organized, focused, and strategic chair, and Ag Council looks forward to continuing to work with her and Assemblyman Cooper.

Over in the Senate, Ag Council has solid Democrat partners in Senator Anna Caballero (D-Salinas), Senator Steve Glazer (D-Orinda), Senator Melissa Hurtado (D-Sanger), Senator Susan Rubio (D-Baldwin Park) and many others who have helped lead the way to more practical policies within that chamber.

Building Bridges

California's political environment means building bridges among diverse interests is integral to our members' success. Having "go-to" people in the State Capitol is important. At the same time, it is crucial we connect with legislators from across the political spectrum.

One such legislator emblematic of our broad advocacy is Senator Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco). He has demonstrated a genuine interest in learning more about agriculture, our policy perspectives and has attended farm and food processing tours with our members. Dr. Richard Pan (D-Sacramento) is another legislator who is representative of broad partnerships. He authored Ag Council's Buy American measure relating to school food purchases, which was signed into law, and his district includes *Blue Diamond's* Sacramento facility.

Such examples illustrate the importance of implementing a politically balanced approach in the agricultural communities' best interest while recognizing the political realities in front of us.

Our team is motivated to work on behalf of *Blue Diamond* and all our members to pave the way toward meaningful success for California agriculture in 2021 and beyond.

Thank you for *Blue Diamond's* support and membership over the past 110 years. ♦

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or comments at emily@agcouncil.org.



Emily Rooney,
President, Agricultural
Council of California

THE BEE BOX

Beekeeper Best Management Practices

Every spring, The Bee Informed Partnership (BIP) administers the Annual Colony Loss and Management Survey to beekeepers across the country. The survey began in 2006 to keep close track on U.S. honey bee colony mortality rates after many of the country’s beekeepers began reporting alarmingly high overwinter colony losses. The survey was amended a few years later to include questions about beekeeper management practices, in order to record trends in management strategies and evaluate the link between those practices and risk of colony mortality. As part of her Ph.D. thesis at University of Maryland’s Bee Research Lab, BIP’s Science Coordinator, Dr. Nathalie Steinhauer, in collaboration with Dr. Dennis vanEngelsdorp and Dr. Claude Saegerman, undertook a project to do just that.

The group used the 18,791 loss and management survey responses collected between 2012–2015 to measure the relative impact of different management practices on colony health outcomes, which has been recently published in the journal *The Science of the Total Environment* (vol. 753).

The beekeeper survey respondents reported information about their use of 82 unique practices that span the range of beekeeper management categories — from handling equipment to feeding, queen management, and *Varroa* control practices. With the assistance of 14 honey bee health and epidemiology experts, each management practice was assigned a score, which allowed the researchers to calculate a total score for each beekeeper reflecting how closely their overall management practices reflected expert opinion of “best practices.” In short, the higher the score, the closer beekeeper management practices aligned with what the experts thought best.

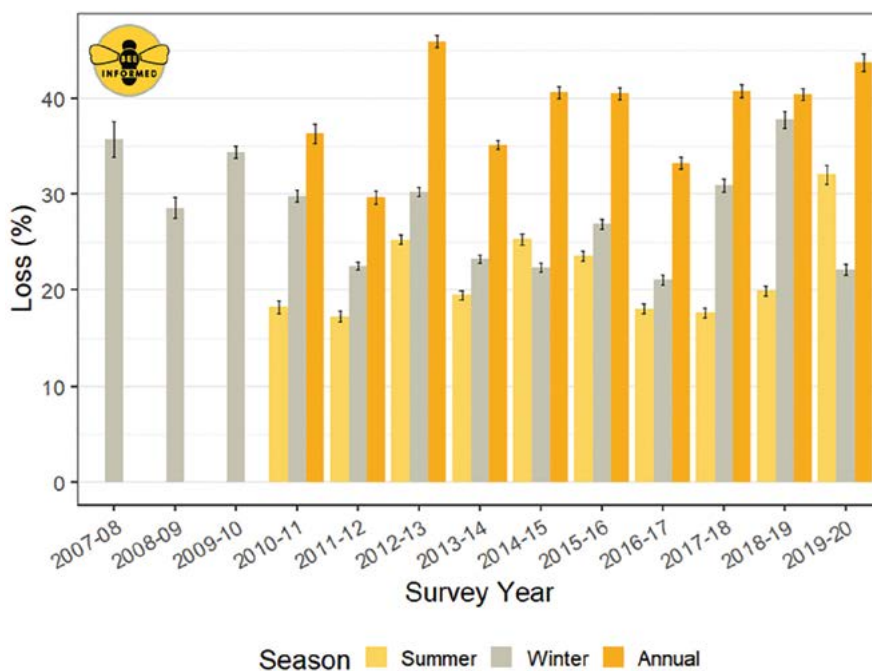


Figure 1: Percent Colony Losses in the Summer, Winter and Annually from 2008 until now.

Were the Experts Correct?

Now equipped with an index of management practice “quality” (at least according to expert opinion), Dr. Steinhauer *et al.* then wanted to test if this index correlated with higher colony survival rates. Were the beekeepers that experts identified as using “best” management practices also experiencing the lowest losses? Indeed, beekeepers reporting combined management practices that more closely mirrored expert recommendations experienced lower colony loss rates than the yearly average loss rate.



Photos of honeycombs, old comb on the left and newer comb on the right. Photo credit: The Bee Informed Partnership



Ben Sallmann, BIP Field Specialist sampling honey bee colonies in Idaho (left) and Nelson Williams, BIP Field Specialist sampling honey bee colonies in North Dakota (right). Photo Credit: Anne Marie Fauvel

Replacement of old comb and implementation of a Varroa management plan increased colony survival rates, while new colonies started using packages was correlated with higher loss rates compared to those created by splitting existing colonies.

From here, the next task was to tease apart the relative importance of all 82 management practices on colony loss rate reduction. Data were grouped by operation size (“small scale” operations owning less than 50 colonies versus “large scale” operations owning more than 50 colonies) and then further divided by geography, with “small scale” operations divided into north or south geographic locations and “large scale” operations divided based on whether they operated in a single state (likely stationary) or multiple states (likely migratory).

What Management Matters Most

Overall, there were three management categories where changes to these behaviors had the greatest impact on colony survival rate across all operation types: comb management, *Varroa* management (which was captured in multiple management criteria) and source of new colonies. This is particularly relevant for small-scale beekeepers, who use this method more often than large-scale operations, and because they often establish these new colonies on bare foundation, which requires additional time and resources for bees to draw new comb.

Large-scale beekeepers had higher management index scores than small-scale beekeepers because their management practices more closely aligned with expert recommendations. There was also greater variation between large-scale operations in terms of the relative importance of management practice modifications on loss rates compared to small-scale operations. This highlights the importance for large-scale beekeeping operations to work with specialist consultants, such as BIP’s Field Health Specialists, to develop an individualized management plan tailored to the operation’s unique needs.

Dr. Steinhauer and her colleagues have successfully developed a method for analyzing comprehensive management data and this is the first study to show an association between overall operational management practices and colony mortality risk. Management practices are not the only factors affecting honey bee colony losses, but unlike the weather, improving management practices is something that beekeepers can control, and this project helps identify where beekeepers can best direct their efforts. ♦



Jeri Parrent,
The Bee Informed Partnership
Grants Coordinator

THE ALMOND BOARD

Interest in Pollinator Health Continues to Grow

2020 marks 25 years of bee health research funded by the California almond industry, via the Almond Board of California (ABC). Over the past quarter of a century, the Almond Board has invested research dollars in a variety of areas, from learning how to combat pests that harm honey bees, such as Varroa mites, to understanding how applications during bloom impact the pollinators we rely on, and so much more.



Photo credit: Almond Board of California

There has never been a crop year, never a bloom season, when commercial almond growing in California has not relied on honey bees, and the industry remains

dedicated to improving pollinator health through best practices and continued research. Further, the industry is increasing its understanding of how implementing bee-friendly practices not only supports pollinators but also the almond crop itself. For instance, research increasingly demonstrates that planting cover crops not only supports honey bee and native pollinator health, but also provides a plethora of benefits to growers' crop and orchards: reduced soil compaction, increased water infiltration, increased soil organic matter, etc.

Beyond the topic of bee health within the California almond industry itself, or even the broader agricultural

community, one reality is becoming clearer — while the reasons for adopting bee-friendly practices start in the orchard, they certainly don't end there. More and more, attention on this topic is coming from key almond industry stakeholders, such as policymakers, consumers and food companies, groups who are asking if growers are doing enough to protect honey bees, native pollinators and other beneficial insects.

California is home to about 1,600 species of native bees, butterflies, ladybugs and many other natural pollinators. Increasingly, there has been growing attention around the role agriculture can play in helping these species by providing habitat, implementing integrated pest management and other strategies.

"There is an opportunity for agriculture to be seen as part of the solution," said ABC's Chief Scientific Officer Josette Lewis, Ph.D. "Agriculture has done a lot of good work to address honey bee health in the orchard. Now, we also have an opportunity to be seen as part of the solution on native pollinators."

In order to ensure California almonds are at the table and actively participating in pollinator discussions, ABC is working with Pollinator Partnership, Project Apis m., and other agricultural groups to develop win-win strategies for demonstrating that agriculture can provide benefits to these native pollinator species.

According to the 2018 California Biodiversity Initiative report, "The future of biodiversity protection requires partnerships with California's agricultural and ranching communities to minimize land conversion...The California Department of Food & Agriculture (CDFA) can identify

¹ ABC's Honey Bee Best Management Practices offers a complete guide to all pollination stakeholders on how to best preserve honey bee health. View the complete guide at Almonds.com/Pollination.

financial and regulatory support needed for ranges and other working landscapes to remain viable and productive across generations.”

Further, on Wednesday, October 7, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed Executive Order N-82-20, which is focused on climate and conservation. Among other key points, under this guidance “CDFA will protect pollinators and native species while promoting healthy soils to farmers and ranchers, similar to programs already in place. It did not allocate any funding or call for new regulations,” according to AgriPulse.

For this reason, growers are urged to continue to participate in programs like the California Almond Sustainability Program (CASP), which not only provides growers useful information about how they can improve their practices but also gathers data, in aggregate, that can be used to report the industry’s overall progress in responsible growing practices to customers and stakeholders worldwide.

Growers interested in participating in CASP are encouraged to contact ABC’s Senior Manager of Field Outreach and Education, Tom Devol, at tdevol@almondboard.com to get started. ◆

Article contributed by the Almond Board of California






Photo credit: Almond Board of California

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Introducing Blue Diamond's Grower Sustainability Incentive Plan!

This Plan will reward growers currently enrolled in the California Almond Sustainability Program (CASP) who are employing sustainable practices that support a thriving orchard. Stay tuned for the official rollout of the Grower Sustainability Incentive Plan in the new year. For more information about the Plan, read this issue's Cultivating Sustainability column on page 36.

TIME TO CONSIDER

Chilling units are finally starting to accumulate. With dormant trees, cooler temperatures and shorter days, there is more time for needed maintenance and planning along with some field work. The following are some practices for your consideration.



Planning

Careful planning and execution will be critical for success in what could be a challenging growing season in 2021 due to concerns, largely, for surface water availability and market/price conditions. Now is the time to set up orchard operations to deliver the maximum net grower return per acre that field and market conditions allow. (It's net grower return per acre, not yield per acre that is the measure of economic success in almond production.) Prioritize inputs (water, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) based on a positive return on investment for the coming years. Quality irrigation water is a critical priority and this year looks to be a budget wild card with the La Niña forecast unchanged as of November 12.

Winter is a good time to line up good, strong hives for bloom, if this hasn't been done already. A contract stating the minimum average number of frames of bees/hive is strongly recommended. Strong hives containing eight or more frames covered on both sides with bees deliver pollination service significantly better than weaker hives. For example, hives with eight or more frames covered on both sides with bees collected 300 percent more pollen

than hives with four to five frames covered with bees in UC research. Those same UC researchers concluded that hives containing less than three frames covered with bees are "of no practical value to almond growers for pollination purposes."

Pest Control

A dormant spray can help manage or control two significant pests of almond — scale and almond scab. Severe San Jose scale infestation can kill wood and so reduce yield; severe scab infection can defoliate trees in the summer, reducing return bloom, yield and tree health. The dormant season is an excellent time for scale control and scab management where needed. Careful spur sampling and analysis provides the information needed to make a treatment decision. Economic thresholds have been developed to aide in the decision making.

Be careful when using oil in a La Niña dormant season. Dormant treatments for both scale and/or scab benefit from or require horticultural oil in the tank mix. Oil is a smothering agent and a deposition aide and so adds significant value

to a dormant spray. However, with below average rainfall forecast, be careful with horticultural oil in dry (soil and/or trees) orchards to avoid oil burn. Consult with an experienced PCA regarding rates, materials and timing when planning a dormant spray.

Reducing navel orangeworm (NOW) damage at harvest begins now, with orchard sanitation before bloom. There is no effective dormant spray for navel orangeworm control as the pest is protected from spray inside the mummy nut. NOW survive in the orchard in mummy nuts from the previous crop. These nuts are also food and housing for the first NOW generation in the coming spring. Getting rid of as many mummy nuts as possible this winter is critical to keeping NOW numbers (and nut damage) down next year.

There are four steps to effective sanitation: monitoring, shaking/poling, windrowing/shredding and monitoring after sanitation. Before January 15, check 20 trees per acre across an orchard, counting mummy nuts still in the trees and those on the ground. Include all varieties in the orchard in the survey as NOW can use all varieties for shelter, including hardshells where they survive between the hull and the shell. If there are more than two mummies per tree, on average, then the recommendation is to sanitize the orchard — shake/pole, windrow and shred all nuts with a flail mower. The trees should be shaken by the end of January, perhaps stretching into early February in a normal year, and the nuts shredded by March 1. The shredding must be slow and deliberate so that no nuts survive intact. Monitor the orchard after sanitation to confirm that there are less than two mummies per tree. In the southern and central San Joaquin Valley, the



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recommendation is a post-sanitation target of 0.2 mummies per tree and eight mummies on the ground under a tree. This recommendation was developed in 2003–2006 when NOW pressure was generally greater in the southern San Joaquin Valley than in other regions and has not been repeated in more northern districts. However, in the last decade, central and northern almond growing regions have seen growing NOW pressure/damage. Growers in those areas should consult with their PCAs regarding the target mummy count after sanitation.

If it is a warm, drier-than-average winter as forecast, buds may push earlier and sanitation may need to be finished sooner (by late January) to avoid excessive bud loss. Watch the buds, not the calendar, to decide when to stop shaking and/or polling.

Winter weed control is an important part of year-round orchard floor management. The degree of weed control using herbicides varies with weeds present and herbicide(s) used. For the best weed control, survey your orchard ahead of herbicide selection and spraying.

Pre-emergent herbicides offer long lasting weed control compared to post-emergent (“burndown”) herbicides with fewer applications. Bare soil and incorporation with a small amount (0.25 to 0.5 inches) of water (rain or irrigation) are needed for best weed control. Large storms with high rainfall totals are not good for herbicide efficacy as inches of water following spraying can push some amounts of certain herbicides down in the root-zone and below the area near the soil surface where most weeds are found (and controlled with pre-emergent materials). Small rainfall or irrigation events (0.25 to 0.5 inches) move the herbicide into the soil where it is fixed and not affected by any large rainfall events.

Longer lasting weed control with the same rate per acre of pre-emergent herbicides can be achieved by changing how the product is used. In recent research by Dr. Brad Hanson and his lab, sequential applications (December and March) of two lower doses of an herbicide produced longer weed control than the same total rate per acre applied once

in December. This overall strategy may help reduce costs while delivering excellent weed control.

If planting an orchard this winter or spring, consider using a pre-emergent herbicide to help manage weeds in the first season. Weeds compete with young trees for water and nutrients and controlling weeds in the first year is challenging with post-emergent herbicides due to herbicide resistance, label limitations, tree damage risk and the cost of repeat applications needed for long-term weed control. Only a handful of pre-emergent herbicides are labeled for use in the first leaf. Check with your PCA regarding materials, rates and timings and always read the label ahead of application.

Gophers can kill almond trees and are active 365 days a year. Manage gopher populations with at least two control strategies (fumigation and trapping, fumigation and bait, etc.) year round, but especially in the winter to limit the jump in gopher numbers following the late winter breeding season. Better gopher control is achieved when workers are trained in trapping and baiting.

Pruning

Pruning young almonds, especially those in their first and second dormant season, is particularly important to orchard success. Careful scaffold selection, with attention to spacing around and up and down the trunk as well as branch angles, is critical to supporting large crops while limiting the chances for scaffolds to tear out in high wind and/or heavy crop load.

First dormant pruning of summer planted, potted trees can be a challenge; especially those on vigorous rootstocks. To drive overall tree growth, potted trees planted late are often not pruned, despite the often ugly group of multiple shoots clustered at the top of the trunk. When the winter arrives, the tree trunks are thicker, shoots have extended and the root system has expanded but the branch angles are still ugly. Cutting the shoots back to the trunk — leaving the tree looking like a newly planted, pruned bareroot tree — is an important step in establishing good, sound tree structure. In my experience, the trees grow strongly in

the year following this seemingly drastic step, pushing multiple shoots from up and down the trunk and providing lots of scaffold options for the next dormant season. Trunk and root suckers in the spring may be a result of this practice, but can be managed. However, this practice is not a step back, but rather provides a path to good tree structure (and solid crop support) for the life of the orchard.

Equipment Maintenance

Trouble-free equipment saves money, time and headache. Winter is a great time for equipment maintenance and repair ahead of the new season. Preventative maintenance can be scheduled with independent or dealer service departments, sometimes at a discount.

Sprayer repairs and calibration are particularly important in a year where growers may wait to “pull the trigger” on a pest until there is an obvious need — for example, the

Need or want an airblast sprayer calibration refresher? Check out the free, 2.5 CE hour airblast sprayer training course developed by UC IPM at: campus.extension.org/course/view.php?id=1787

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weather forecast firms up to warn of a real spring storm or mites reach the economic threshold for treatment, etc. Under those conditions, the sprayer needs to be ready to work smoothly to deliver good spray coverage without breakdowns or delays. Now is the time to go through the sprayer to get it ready for those times.

Best wishes for a restful Holidays for all.



Franz Niederholzer,
UCCE Farm Advisor,
Colusa and Sutter/Yuba Counties

I would really appreciate your help in understanding where my efforts in this column are helpful or not helpful to your work. This will assist me in doing a better job writing future columns and, hopefully, help my bosses understand how the time I spend on this column benefits almond growers and, so, local economies. The link to the survey is:

ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=32515

and the QR code appearing below will take you to the same survey through your phone or tablet. Thank you very much for taking the time to let me know what works and what doesn't work for you when reading this column.



Web Resources:

- National Weather Service: www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/
- Sampling and Thresholds for Pests: ipm.ucanr.edu/agriculture/almond/Dormant-Spur-or-First-Year-Twig-Sampling-and-Treatment-Guidelines/
- Herbicide Efficacy on Certain Weeds in Almonds: ipm.ucanr.edu/agriculture/almond/Susceptibility-of-Weeds-in-Almond-to-Herbicide-Control/
- Weed survey form along with pictures of specific weed seedlings: ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/C003/m003pcweeds02.html
- Sequential Herbicide: ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=29080
- Weed Management in Young Orchards in the Young Orchard Handbook: ccfruitandnuts.ucanr.edu/files/238596.pdf
- Gopher Control: ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/r105600211.html
(it's a cherry IPM page, but gopher biology and control information are the same in almond)
- How-To Video on Trapping Practices with Roger Baldwin, UCCE Specialist: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDW0l6eeG0M
- Tips on Late Planted, Potted Trees: growingproduce.com/nuts/tips-for-late-planting-potted-almond-trees/

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(209) 632-4346 for more info.

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Contact Ron Piazza at:
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