



For Immediate Release
September 23, 2021

Contact:
Lynn Machon, Director, Corporate Communications
(916) 446-8372, lmachon@bdgrowers.com

**Blue Diamond Growers Names New Chief Operating Officer,
Transition in Global Ingredients Division Leadership**

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Blue Diamond Growers has named Dean LaVallee as the new Chief Operating Officer (COO) for California’s largest almond cooperative. In addition to serving as COO, LaVallee will continue to operate in his current role as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and will report directly to Blue Diamond Growers’ President and Chief Executive Officer, Mark Jansen. As COO/CFO, LaVallee will oversee the Finance, Global Ingredients, and IT divisions within Blue Diamond Growers. He joined the cooperative in 2011.

“We are so pleased to expand Dean’s responsibilities to include that of Chief Operating Officer,” said Jansen. “His strategic and proven leadership over the last decade within our organization has established a crucial foundation for Blue Diamond’s success in ensuring maximum returns to our grower-owners. In his new role, Dean will bring together the needed infrastructure, technology and resources for our continued growth and prosperity.”

In other leadership news from the cooperative, long-time Blue Diamond Growers’ employee, Bill Morecraft, has announced his retirement at the end of this year after 35 years of service. Morecraft joined Blue Diamond Growers in 1986 working in Finance, Production Planning, and Sales Planning. He assumed leadership of the Global Ingredients Division in 2008 where he is credited with streamlining the product line, introducing a focus on value-added ingredients, and developing a close relationship with Blue Diamond’s Operations Team to increase profitability. Blue Diamond now processes and ships premium almond products to more than 90 countries.

Effective September 1, Laura Gerhard was promoted to Vice President to assume leadership responsibilities for Blue Diamond’s Global Ingredients Division. Gerhard will lead day-to-day operations of the division, which supplies almond ingredients for processed and prepared food manufacturers, as well as for bulk purchase, around the world. She will also oversee the commercial success of the division’s global product portfolio, which includes a growing array of almond-based ingredients, such as almond protein powder, almond flour, and almond butter. Gerhard began her career with Blue Diamond Growers in 2017 as Director, Strategy and Planning with Global Ingredients. She added responsibility for Global Ingredient Division Marketing in 2020.

“It is leaders such as Bill who have helped to make Blue Diamond Growers the global leader in almonds that it is today,” said Jansen. “All of us at Blue Diamond sincerely thank Bill for his hard work, dedication, and numerous contributions over the years and wish him the best in his well-deserved retirement. I also want to congratulate Laura on her promotion. I have great trust in her leadership. Laura has been instrumental to our success in the Global Ingredients Division, where she has helped drive business growth, develop a strong team, and organize our business and strategic planning. I’m confident Bill, Laura, and their team will work closely to ensure a seamless transition for our customers.”

###



About Blue Diamond

Blue Diamond Growers, a grower-owned cooperative representing over 3,000 of California's almond growers, is the world's leading almond marketer and processor. Established in 1910, it created the California almond industry and opened world markets for almonds. Blue Diamond is dedicated to delivering the benefits of almonds around the world and does so by providing high-quality almonds, almond ingredients and branded products. Headquartered in Sacramento, the company employs more than 1,800 people throughout its processing plants, receiving stations and gift shops. To learn more about Blue Diamond Growers, visit www.bluediamond.com and follow the company on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).