



JAN-FEB 2026

almond facts

NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

JONAS *Blue Diamond's New Partner:* BROTHERS



Moving the Business
Forward with Kai

Coming Soon:
Dill Pickle Nut Thins

Policy Shifts
Shape Culture



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Zesty new Nut Thins flavor coming to Amazon and Kroger this April! (Pg. 20)

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New branding, new products and new energy. Kai shares how *Blue Diamond* is charging into 2026 with momentum, innovation and a strong connection to both growers and consumers.

14 Jonas Brothers Partner with Almond Breeze®

Blue Diamond announced a new partnership between *Almond Breeze*® and the Jonas Brothers, launching a creative campaign that playfully pokes fun at AI-generated advertising while emphasizing the value of authentic celebrity collaboration.

20 Coming Soon: Dill Pickle Nut Thins

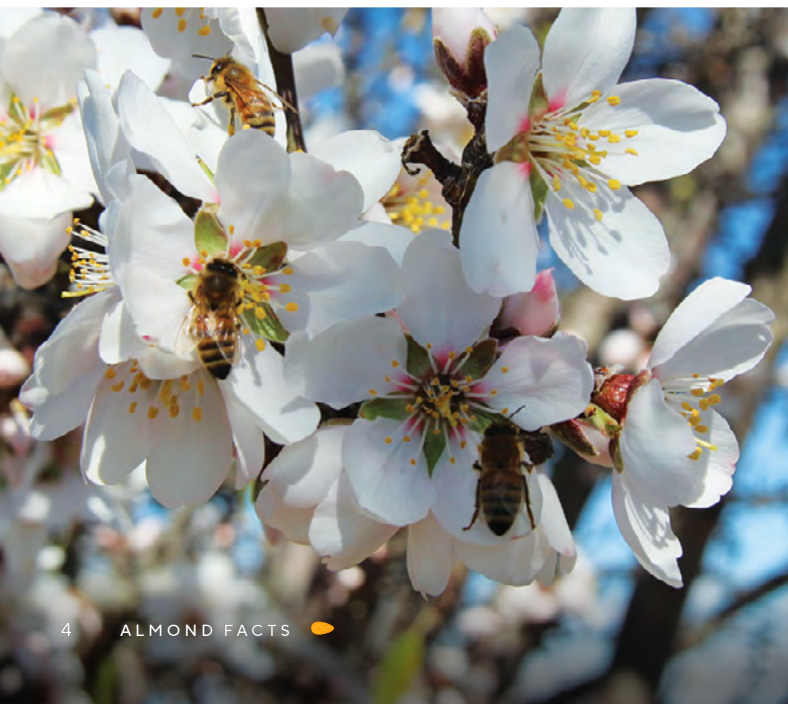
Blue Diamond is launching Nut Thins – Dill Pickle this spring on Amazon and at Kroger, inspired by the viral pickle craze and strong early feedback. The tangy, dill-forward crackers are gluten-free, Non-GMO Project Verified, and made with California almonds.

28 Policy Shifts Shape Culture

Learn what our advocates have to say as the historic government shutdown ended with partial FY26 funding, full-year USDA support and Farm Bill extensions through 2026. Trade uncertainty continues amid new agreements, tariff challenges and ongoing USMCA review efforts.

ON THE COVER:

We're suckers for a great partnership. See how the Jonas Brothers are teaming up with Almond Breeze®!



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Kai Bockmann, *President and CEO*

● ALMOND FACTS STAFF

Blue Diamond Growers Communications Department,
communications@bdgrowers.com

Jillian Luna, Managing Editor

Mel Machado, Contributing Photographer

Gray Allen, Advertising Sales
916.783.4334 & 916.765.3234

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

Almond Facts, established in 1922, is published bimonthly by *Blue Diamond Growers*, 1802 C Street, Sacramento, California 95811. Address all correspondence to the Editor, Almond Facts, P.O. Box 1768, Sacramento, California 95812. Advertising subscription rates provided upon request.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Kai Bockmann
President & CEO



We have kicked off 2026 with clear direction, strong focus, and a solid base to build on. While 2025 required significant pivots, the work we accomplished has positioned us exceptionally well for the year ahead, and we are in a very different place than we were at the start of 2025. While we still need to keep an eye on market volatility, we're entering the year stronger and better positioned to move with speed and intent.

Since the Annual Growers Meeting, we've stayed focused on execution. Our teams have continued moving key initiatives forward, and you'll soon see our updated branding roll out broadly across our full portfolio. This refresh is all about our commitment to strengthening our brand and introducing a new look that stands out.

I cannot wait for you all to see the new face of our almondmilk when it hits shelves. We are so excited about this launch, and the positive trends we are seeing in the category are incredibly encouraging. It truly highlights the team's deep expertise and understanding of the market. In the meantime, our much-loved *Almond Breeze®* remains the clear leader in the almondmilk category, backed by unmatched distribution, reach and retention from our consumers.

Meanwhile, we are connecting with a new generation of consumers while staying true to the strengths that have defined us for decades. Our partnership with the Jonas Brothers, which is already generating strong feedback and impressive engagement, is a powerful example of how we are engaging with the next generation of almondmilk drinkers. It is the kind of bold, relevant storytelling that keeps Blue Diamond front and center. Read on to find more details in this issue!

Looking ahead, our 2026 product pipeline is designed to reach new audiences and expand our market share. We're leaning into innovation, building on what makes us unique, and driving new consumption across multiple categories. We continue to build customer engagement, and our efforts are fueling both demand and momentum.

In January, leadership and I had the opportunity to sit down with the Grower Liaison Committee and engage in productive conversations. It was great to meet with them, hear about the challenges growers are facing in the field, and share our plans for the year ahead. Their insights are invaluable, and they continue to represent grower interests with clarity and commitment. Thank you to those who joined us, shared your questions, and contributed to the conversation. I look forward to seeing you all again in the near future.

With so much momentum across *Blue Diamond*, we are ready to continue driving our business forward. The commitment you bring every day strengthens our work as we share the goodness of almonds with the world. I'm looking forward to the year ahead and wish you and your families a strong start to 2026! ♦

Kai Bockmann
President & CEO



Regional Managers



Director, Supply Chain Strategy & Membership

Kabir Tumber
(916) 291-8342

Chief Agricultural Officer

Mel Machado
(209) 545-6222 – Salida
(209) 531-6352 – Cellular

Tehama, Butte, Glenn, Sutter, & Yuba
Christine Ivory, (530) 518-9109

Colusa, Yolo & Solano
Nicole Jansen, (530) 338-6440

Sacramento County, San Joaquin County, North of Hwy 205 & East of San Joaquin River
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Justin Elam, (209) 303-7306

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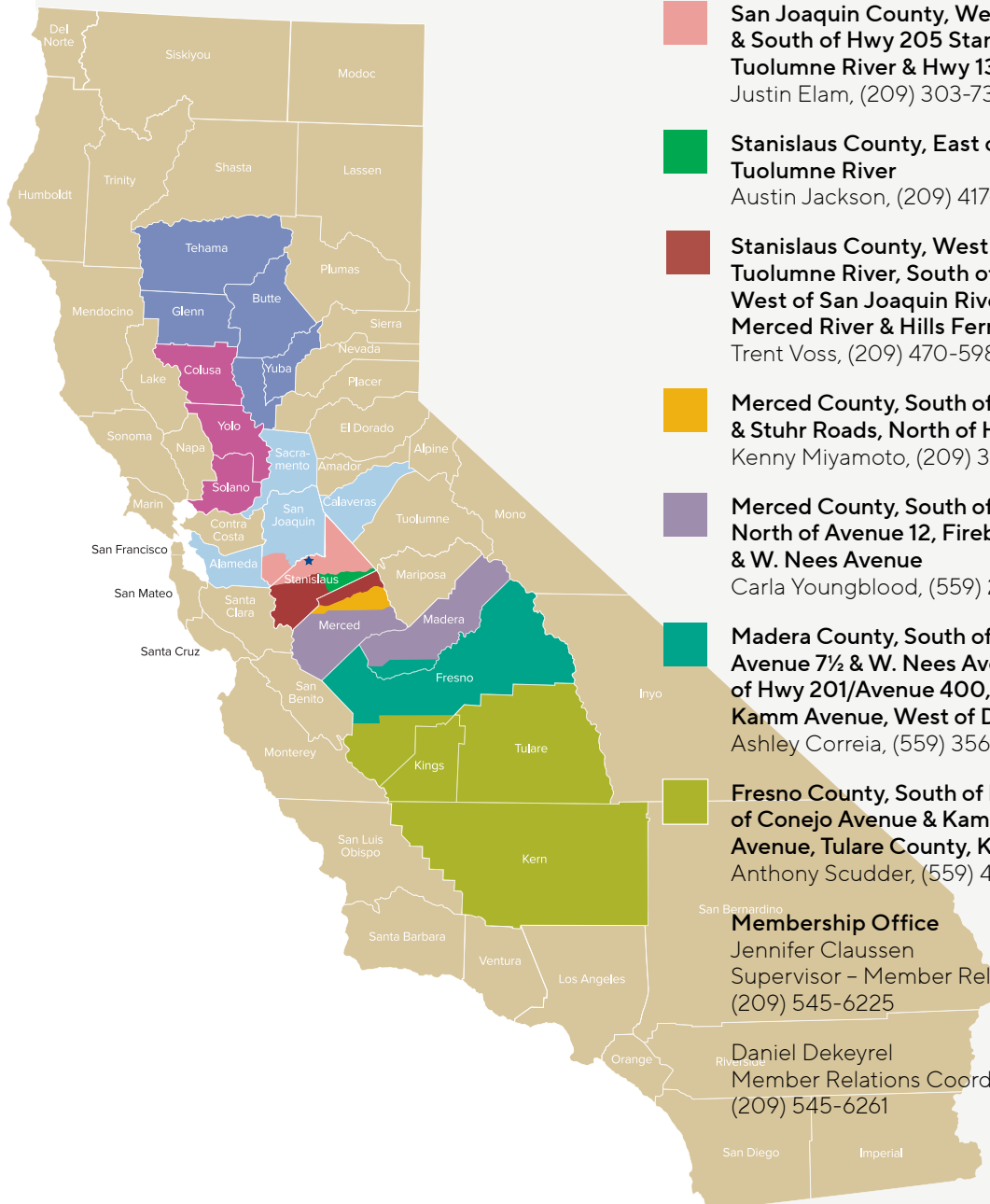
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Ashley Correia, (559) 356-1584

Fresno County, South of Hwy 201/Avenue 400, South of Conejo Avenue & Kamm Avenue, East of Derrick Avenue, Tulare County, Kings County, & Kern County
Anthony Scudder, (559) 470-9731

Membership Office

Jennifer Claussen
Supervisor – Member Relations Administration
(209) 545-6225

Daniel Dekeyrel
Member Relations Coordinator (Delivery Tags)
(209) 545-6261



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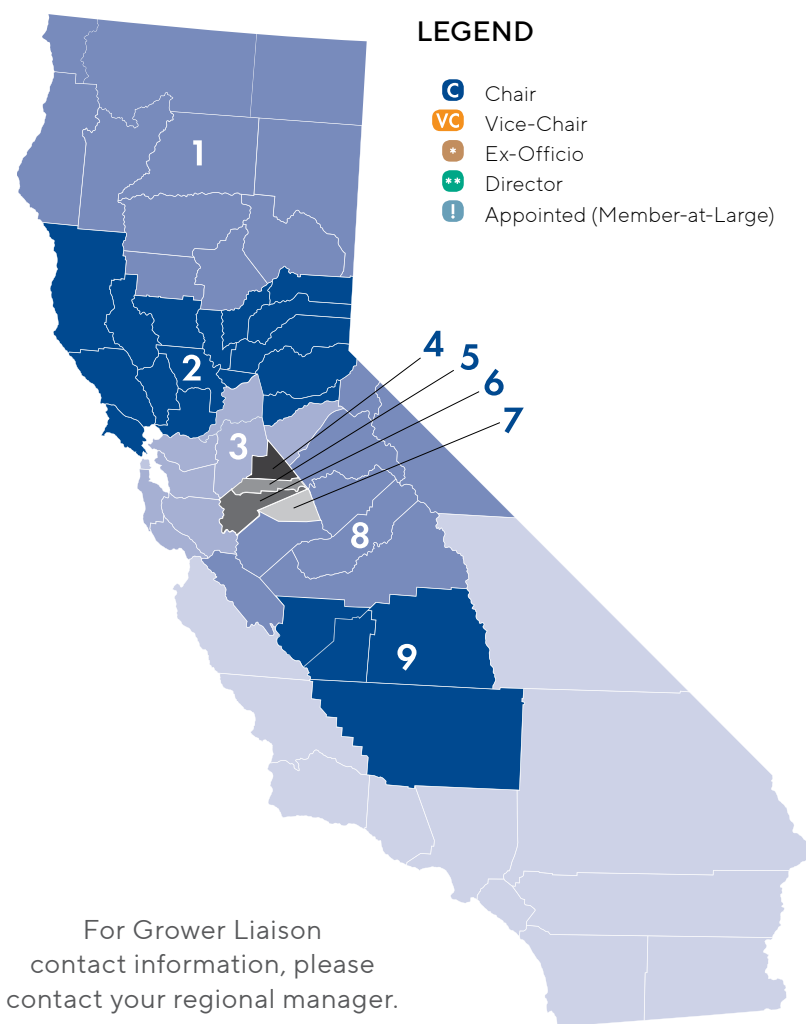
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ALMOND MARKET UPDATE



Blue Diamond Almond Market Report – January 14, 2026

OVERVIEW

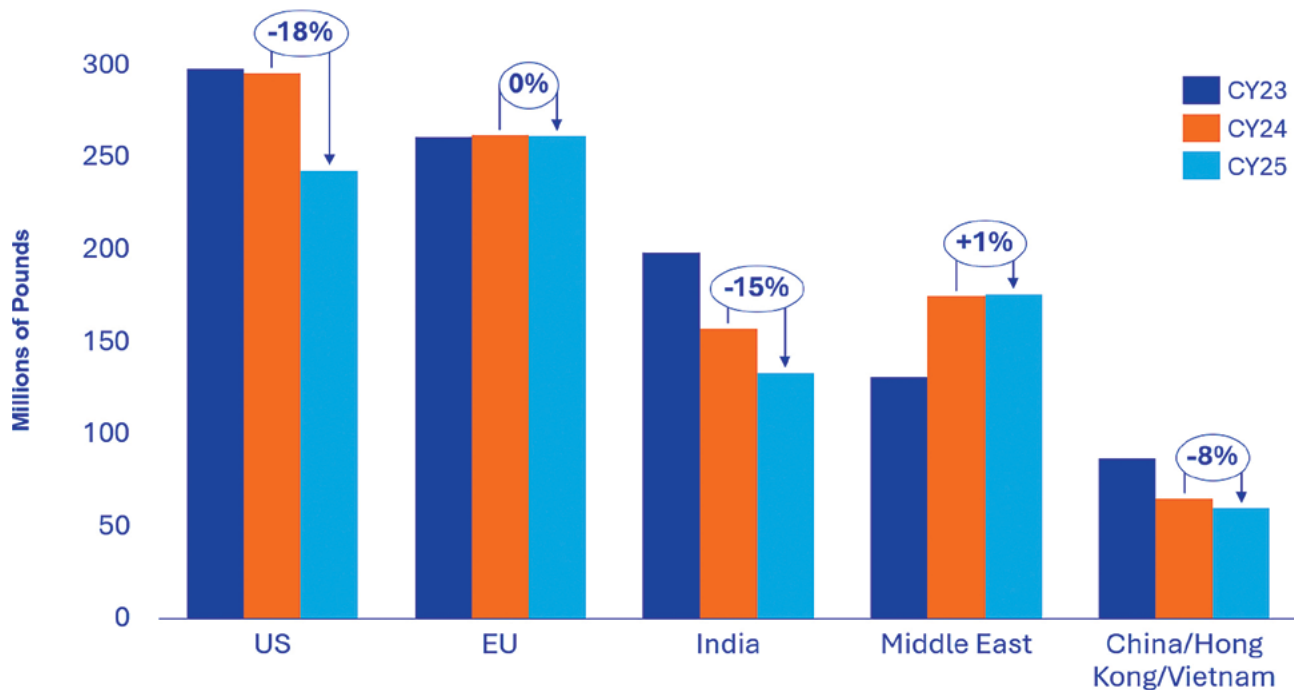
For the last month of calendar year 2025, December's position report reflected industry shipments totaling 245.7 million pounds, up 5.4% year over year, supported by strength in export demand. December exports set a record, reaching 196.7 million pounds, an increase of 11.1% versus last year. Export shipments are now only 2.5% below last year's pace, reinforcing the role of international demand as the primary stabilizing force for the market. Domestic shipments remained subdued at 49.1 million pounds, down 12.4% year over year. Year-to-date shipments through December stand at 1.07 billion pounds, down 6.5% versus last year. Overall, December results confirmed increased momentum in exports and a steady underlying demand base, offset by continued weakness in domestic consumption.

SHIPMENTS

India:

December shipments to India totaled 33.8 million pounds. Year-to-date shipments total 132.8 million pounds versus 157.0 million pounds at the same point last year, underscoring a deliberately slower procurement cadence rather than a demand shortfall. India remains structurally under-covered relative to historical norms. While buyers continue to manage purchases carefully, inventory levels remain lean, and the timing and scale of restocking activity will be a key driver of global pricing and sentiment into the first part of calendar year 2026.

Year-to-date Shipments (Dec)



China/Hong Kong/Vietnam:

December shipments to China/Hong Kong totaled 4.8 million pounds, nearly a 31% increase versus December 2024. Despite the strong month, year-to-date shipments stand at 13.4 million pounds, representing a 64.8% decline compared to the same period last year. Shipments to Vietnam were 3.63 million pounds, up 6.8% year over year. Vietnam continues to show strong cumulative growth, with year-to-date shipments of 46.1 million pounds, up 73% versus 2024, further reinforcing its role as a key growth market for U.S. almonds. On a combined basis, December shipments increased 19% year over year, while year-to-date shipments are now down only 8% against prior year, which is the smallest deficit seen all season. This signals the continued narrowing of the regional gap.

Europe:

Total shipments to Europe reached 261.4 million pounds year to date, essentially flat versus last year. Within the region, Spain continues to outperform, while the Netherlands and parts of Northern Europe remain softer. European buyers remain selective and value driven, maintaining near-term coverage while limiting forward exposure. Demand fundamentals remain intact, but purchasing behavior continues to emphasize cautious buying strategies.

Middle East:

Year-to-date shipments to the Middle East reached 175.8 million pounds, up 1% versus last year. Turkey emerged as a notable bright spot in December and is now 12% ahead of last year's pace. Lebanon and Israel have also shown robust year-over-year growth. Saudia Arabia, conversely, is down 42% year over year. The region continues to show improving demand with buyers increasingly focused on premium grades and larger kernel sizes.

Domestic:

December shipments reached 49.1 million pounds, down 12.4% from the same period last year. The domestic market continues to experience softer demand with year-to-date results down 18% in total. Forward commitments for the domestic market stand at 202.6 million pounds, down from prior year by 7.96%, demonstrating the continued near-in booking strategy we have seen from buyers. Anticipation is that buyers will become more active in the coming weeks to cover remaining Q1 & Q2 needs.

COMMITMENTS

Total commitments currently stand at 496.2 million pounds, trailing last year by 11.6%. New sales for the month totaled 196.7 million pounds with the domestic market securing an additional 42.8 million pounds, while export added an additional 153.9 million pounds of new coverage. In total, commitments for the domestic market are now just over 202 million pounds while exports are hovering just above 293 million pounds. Uncommitted inventory is up 4.4% from last year, sitting at 1.38 billion pounds versus 1.32 billion pounds.

CROP

Receipts through December reached 2.51 billion pounds, reflecting a 2.5% decline compared to previous crop year. Overall crop size after observing the December receipts will likely finish around 2.7 billion pounds. This season, the slower receipt pace was amplified by the late fall and early winter rains. All hullers and shellers will wrap up by the end of January. Growers continue to focus on postharvest orchard activities. The next key milestone that will provide the first insight into the 2026 crop is bloom in February. ♦

Market Perspective

The December position report reinforces a market that is transitioning toward a more balanced supply-and-demand profile. Export demand continues to strengthen and diversify geographically, while domestic softness remains the primary headwind for overall shipment growth. Supply visibility has improved meaningfully, and receipts continue to validate a smaller crop than originally projected.

As the industry moves into Q1 and approaches bloom, market fundamentals support a stable-to-firm trajectory, particularly if India and other key export markets begin to accelerate coverage. With inventories balanced, conservative commitments, and global buyers under-covered relative to historical norms, the market is increasingly positioned for improved confidence and steadier price discovery.

Discipline remains critical as the industry works toward a sustainable equilibrium that supports long-term demand development and grower returns. We look forward to connecting with you all at the Peanut and Tree Nut Processors Association, MEWA India and Gulfood.



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NEWS IN A NUTSHELL



“Partnering with Blue Diamond Almond Breeze® felt natural because it’s a product we genuinely use and love.”

— Joe, Nick and Kevin Jonas



Jonas Brothers Agree *Blue Diamond Almond Breeze*® is “Really Good” — No AI Needed

Blue Diamond is proud to announce an exciting new partnership between *Blue Diamond Almond Breeze*® and the iconic Jonas Brothers. The all-new collaboration brings the brothers’ signature humor and authenticity to a creative campaign that takes a playful jab at the rise of AI-generated content in advertising, showcasing why genuine celebrity endorsements and creative collaboration still reign supreme.

From concept to final cut, the Jonas Brothers were deeply involved in every step of the creative process, ensuring the campaign reflects their unique personalities and comedic chemistry while authentically celebrating *Blue Diamond Almond Breeze*® as the leading almondmilk brand in the United States.

“This partnership with the Jonas Brothers represents everything *Blue Diamond Almond Breeze*® stands for—authenticity, creativity, and a commitment to bringing real, meaningful connections to our consumers,” said Maya Erwin, vice president, Innovation and R&D, *Blue Diamond Growers*. “The brothers’ involvement in every creative decision made this collaboration truly special and uniquely resonant.”

“Life on the road means being intentional about what we put into our bodies,” said Joe, Nick and Kevin Jonas. “Partnering with *Blue Diamond Almond Breeze*® felt natural because it’s a product we genuinely use and love. We have really enjoyed the creative collaboration to build something that felt true to who we are.”



Almond Breeze

The media campaign will be active on Connected TV (Peacock, Hulu, Amazon Prime), social media (Instagram, TikTok), digital audio (Spotify, Pandora) and various digital websites, which will all drive to the long-form commercial. The long-form video lives on YouTube and can be found via the QR code or here: bit.ly/3Z9h6PO.



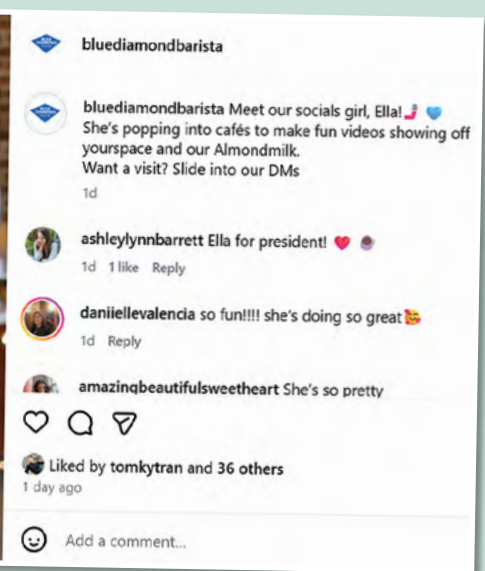
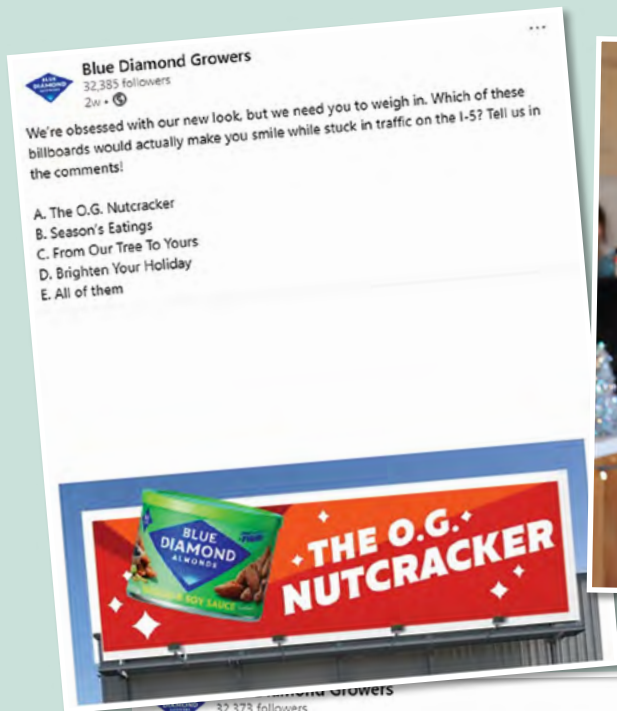
Along with the amazing videos, fans will be pleased to know that in-store Jonas Brothers/*Almond Breeze*® signage is coming to over 9,000 U.S. stores like Target, Walmart, Kroger, Absco and Wakefern. The presence will include floor talk and Superfridge signage, so keep an eye out on your next trip to the store! You’re sure to fall head over heels for this partnership. After all, you’re only human. ♦



#WeAreBlueDiamond Social Media Activity



This month, *Blue Diamond* polled social media on their favorite potential holiday billboards. The Co-op buzzed with excitement as the new partnership with Jonas Brothers and *Almond Breeze*® launched and set fire to social media! Finally, our marketing intern, Ella, jumped in with both feet as a Barista Blend advocate in local coffee shops and beyond! ♦





BLUE DIAMOND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

Current Investment Rates available as of January 1, 2026

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

The objective of these programs is to serve as a competitive investment alternative for our members and provide *Blue Diamond Growers* with a steady source of funds. The interest rates effective January 1, 2026, for the program are listed here:

	Short-Term Investment Certificate (STIC)	Long-Term Investment Certificate (LTIC) (Maturity Date of 6/30/2028)
Initial Investment Required	\$10,000	\$50,000
Interest Rate	4.00%	4.00%
	(Variable, subject to change)	(Fixed rate)

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

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



Carrot Cake Cookies with Cream Cheese Filling

Prep Time: 45 minutes Bake Time: 12 minutes Difficulty: Easy Serves up to: 24

Ingredients

Cookies:

½ cup butter, softened
 ⅓ cup packed brown sugar
 ⅓ cup sugar
 1 egg and 1 egg white
 ½ teaspoon pineapple extract (*optional*)
 2 cups *Blue Diamond* Almond Flour
 ½ cup rolled oats
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
 1½ cups coarsely shredded carrots

Cream Cheese Filling:

2 cups powdered sugar
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 4 ounces ⅓ less fat cream cheese, softened
 ¼ cup butter, softened

Directions

Cookies:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
3. Beat together butter, sugars, eggs and extract until creamy.
4. Stir in almond flour, oats, baking soda, salt and nutmeg until well mixed, then stir in carrots.
5. Drop teaspoons of dough two inches apart on prepared baking sheets.
6. Bake for 12 minutes or until lightly browned. Let cool completely.

Cream Cheese Filling:

1. Beat all filling ingredients together in a large bowl until light and fluffy. Spread equal amounts of filling over half the cookies, then top with remaining cookies.
2. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.
3. These cookies are very delicate. Keep refrigerated to maintain firmness.

Detox Broccoli Cheese Soup

Prep Time: 30 minutes Cook Time: 30 minutes Difficulty: Easy Serves up to: 5

Ingredients

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ onion, chopped
- 1-2 stalks celery, chopped
- 4-5 large carrots, chopped
- 1 large potato, peeled and chopped
- 2-3 cups broccoli florets in large pieces for easy removal
- 2-3 cups vegetable broth
- 2 cups *Almond Breeze®* Original Almondmilk
- ¼ cup nutritional yeast
(optional – see notes)
- 1 ½ – 2 teaspoons sea salt
- Croutons (see notes)

Directions

1. Heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the mirepoix, garlic, and potatoes. Sauté until softened, about 10 minutes.
2. Add broccoli, vegetable broth and almondmilk. Simmer until bubbly and broccoli is bright green, about 5 minutes.
3. Using tongs, pull out most of the broccoli pieces and set aside. Blend the soup, without broccoli, to a super creamy, cheesy-looking consistency, and then add the broccoli and just pulse a few times to mix it in. This will likely need to be done in batches.
4. Return to pot, stir in nutritional yeast and salt. Taste and adjust if necessary. Serve!



Courtesy of: Pinch of Yum

Notes

Croutons: Heat ¼ cup olive oil (more as needed) in a skillet over medium high heat. Add a clove of smashed garlic and let it sit for a couple minutes without browning. Remove garlic. Add cubed bread (about 6 thick slices cut into chunks) and toss around in the pan until golden brown and chewy/crispy. Drain on paper towels. Season with salt.

If the blended soup looks too thick for you, just add an additional ½ cup or so of liquid.

Nutritional yeast is not necessary for texture, but it adds a nice, salty, cheesy flavor and some extra vitamins, too.



Bringing Zesty Back: Dill Pickle Flavored Nut Thins Launching this Spring

For those who attended *Blue Diamond's* 2025 Annual Meeting, you got a head start on sampling a zesty, new Nut Thins flavor, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. *Blue Diamond* is proud to announce the launch of our brand-new Nut Thins — Dill Pickle, coming this spring to Amazon and Kroger stores! This first-of-its-kind, nut-based cracker flavor was born from the tangy, bold pickle craze that has made waves on TikTok. Pickle flavored snack launches continue to grow, so it made absolute sense to marry this popular flavor to our beloved Nut Thins.

Tangy on the front end, garlicky in the middle, and delightfully dill-y at the finish, this Nut Thins flavor experience is sure to be a welcome addition as you gather with friends around your next charcuterie board. Along with amazing taste, these crackers boast bold wellness claims as well; they are gluten-free, Non-GMO Project Verified, kosher dairy, contain no artificial colors, offer two grams of protein per serving, and of course, are made with the highest quality California almonds.

Start stocking up on Nut Thins — Dill Pickle via Amazon and Kroger stores beginning April 2026.

Give them a try. Your taste buds will thank you. ♦



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Leading for the Future: Elizabeth Vander Weide on the Almond Leadership Program

Elizabeth Vander Weide, senior supply chain analyst for Blue Diamond Growers, is a 2025 graduate of the Almond Board of California (ABC) Almond Leadership Program. Vander Weide joined Almond Facts to discuss her rich growth experience in the program.

Almond Facts (AF): Elizabeth, thank you for joining Almond Facts! Please tell us about ABC's Almond Leadership Program and what inspired you to participate.

Elizabeth Vander Weide (EVW): When I hit my two-year mark at *Blue Diamond* last year, I wanted to get more involved in the almond industry and the community while developing my own leadership skills to benefit my role. I grew up in the almond community; my family farms, so I've always been acquainted with the Almond Board's year-long leadership program. I interviewed for it in November and was accepted in December.

The program kicks off in January. My 2025 class and I graduated and were recognized at the 2025 Almond Conference. At the beginning of the year, you choose the special project that you'll work on throughout the year. In November you present it to ABC staff, then provide

a summary poster board at the Almond Conference. Program members are assigned a mentor, which is unique to the program, and you meet with your mentor throughout the year. We attended monthly seminars where we learned about each ABC committee and the inner workings of the marketing order. These seminars included a visit to the Port of Oakland, educational field days for grade schoolers, and overnight leadership training in Pinecrest! The program is robust.

AF: Do you feel like the program was manageable on top of already working a full-time job?

EVW: I thought it was a good balance. We met monthly, except for a few months we did an overnight, but it wasn't overwhelming. ABC's Rebecca Bailey and Jenny Nicolau lead it, and they made it manageable and doable.

AF: What was your special project? Was it in correlation with your work here at *Blue Diamond*?

EVW: I tailored it to what I do here. I completed a water analysis covering the Central Valley, looking specifically at all the groundwater sustainability agencies (GSAs) to determine almond acreage in the future with an emphasis on the most impactful areas.

AF: How would you describe the program to someone who's interested/applying?

EVW: The year goes by goes by quickly, so make sure you work ahead, especially on the special project. The other big component is you'll get out what you put into the program, so take it seriously and with intention. Absorb each seminar, training and opportunity that comes your way because it's highly valuable. Because



Elizabeth Vander Weide receives program completion award from ABC's industry relations specialist, Rebecca Bailey

ABC itself and the leadership program have been around for a while, they have a lot of value and respect from the industry, so people are willing to be a resource for you.

AF: What was the most valuable takeaway from the program?

EVW: I'd say it was the people I met along the way. I had 18 people in my cohort, and I loved learning and growing with them for 8+ hours a month. Growing and learning with like-minded individuals who are working across different ag and almond sectors in California who all have the universal goal of bettering the industry for the farmers in California was amazing. We're all doing various jobs in different parts of the industry, but with a shared goal. It was very powerful.

AF: How has the program and your learnings influenced your role here at *Blue Diamond*?

EVW: It built my confidence in my role at *Blue Diamond*. I translate crop and grower-centered data into information the business needs. This program influenced the way that I can effectively communicate different priorities, and I'm able to lead more intentionally throughout the season.

AF: What skills did you develop or strengthen during the program?



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EVW: The main one was the confidence building and asking questions. I further developed my ability to align project actions with company values and long-term goals. Being able to better explain my decision-making process and ensuring priorities are well defined was quite valuable.

AF: What was the biggest challenge you faced in the program?



Elizabeth Vander Weide (second from left) with the 2025 Almond Leadership Program cohort

EVW: The main component of the entire program was the special project, and Rebecca and Jenny did a good job of reminding us of project deadlines and milestones to hit throughout the program to keep us on track. The year goes by quickly, and we all have work priorities, so you just need to be sure that the correct items are ready when they need to be. But I'm happy to say I hit all the milestones on time.

AF: Could you share an example of how you've applied something you learned in the program to your work at *Blue Diamond*?

EVW: One of the first seminars we did was media training in February. It taught us to effectively communicate with reporters and podcasters and how to do interviews. Rick Kushman, media relations manager for ABC, did spotlight questions and acted like a reporter and asked us tough questions on controversial topics

in the ag industry, and we learned how to effectively communicate without pushing any hot buttons. So, while not immediately applied, I do feel more prepared if and when that opportunity should arise.

AF: Why is leadership development important in the almond industry?

EVW: Leadership development is what moves the almond industry forward in an ever-evolving world. One of the main reasons I decided to participate in the program was due to its easy access to the Almond Board's committees. Their committees meet quarterly and are fully run by volunteers in the industry that then drive influence up to the board of directors and the decision-making process. Being part of the Leadership Program provides an easy access point to those committees. Ultimately, I hope to drive influence from my unique perspective, since I come from an

almond farming background and serve as an industry member, working here at *Blue Diamond*. Participation in leadership development is essential for the industry because, as part of the next generation, I want to help lead our progress. By sowing into the next generation, we bolster the next group of almond industry advocates.

AF: Tell us about the committee you joined during your time in the program.

EVW: ABC's crop year starts in August, so it's aligned with our fiscal year. So, we all joined specific committees that we wanted to sit on for the crop year. I'm currently sitting on the Strategic Ag Innovation Committee (SAIC) and I'm committed to that for a year. We work mainly with Almond Board funded researchers to ensure their projects are beneficial to the industry and to growers.

AF: How do you feel the program aligns with *Blue Diamond*'s commitment to leadership and innovation?

EVW: *Blue Diamond* graciously allowed me to participate in this program, which speaks volumes to our alignment.

It has allowed me to learn from other industry members and become more involved in ABC as well. I'm grateful for that and happy to represent *Blue Diamond* within ABC. *Blue Diamond* has allowed me to grow in my current role this year. Through *Blue Diamond*'s support and the learnings I gained, I hope to have an influence down the road.

AF: Finally, what would you say to any other *Blue Diamond* team member who is considering applying for the program?

EVW: It's very beneficial, and you get out of it what you put into it. The industry is evolving, and we're at a turning point with changes to acreage, receipts and demand. Being involved in pushing us to the next level is crucial. The more activities we can be involved in as industry members, the better. As part of California almonds and ag, *Blue Diamond* needs to be represented well in that space. Finally, if anyone wants to learn more about ABC's Almond Leadership Program, please reach out to me at evanderweide@bdgrowers.com ♦





Christine Gemperle presenting at The Forum

Christine Gemperle Presents at The Forum

Last month, *Blue Diamond* grower Christine Gemperle delivered an engaging presentation on sustainability in agricultural systems with a focus on almond production to members of The Forum at Rancho San Antonio. Her talk and question-and-answer session captivated the audience from start to finish. The members at The Forum (also a cooperative) even asked how *Blue Diamond* farmers are encouraged to employ sustainable practices. This provided Gemperle with the great opportunity to discuss *Blue Diamond*'s Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program (OSIP) and the benefits it brings to

growers and consumers. Fellow grower and former *Blue Diamond* board director, John Monroe, was in attendance and expressed his own pride in being a *Blue Diamond* member listening in the audience.

Gemperle was pleased to discuss the work being done across the industry stating that events like these highlight the importance of face-to-face conversations that increase understanding and inspire ongoing, open dialogue. Those discussions, she noted, often extend beyond the room as attendees share what they've learned within their own circles.

Gemperle also highlighted the value of having the Almond Board of California communication materials on hand to reinforce key messages. With that, current *Blue Diamond* data will allow her to provide even more precise insights in the future on the growing number of members engaging in sustainable practices. ♦



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Federal State of Play

Farm Bill authorizations and programs not included in the July One Big Beautiful Bill Act reported on in the previous Almond Facts edition were set to expire September 30, 2025. While conversations continued in the House and Senate, with the failure of Congress to finalize a plan to fund the U.S. government by the end of the current fiscal year, the government began its longest shut down in history on October 1, 2025. After 43 days of significant disruption to federal programs, Congress managed to pass a bill that fully funded three government agencies for the 2026 fiscal year and extended funding for the remaining agencies at current levels through January 30, setting up the potential for another shutdown early this year. Fortunately, USDA was one of the three agencies to receive full-year funding. In the FY26 appropriations bill, signed into law November 12, 2025, USDA received \$26.65 billion in authorized funding, essentially the same level as in FY25 and \$3.65 billion more than requested in the FY26 President's Budget Request. The bill also extended remaining Farm Bill authorizations and programs through September 30, 2026, given the lack of progress on a new Farm Bill. As a result, the Market Access Program will maintain its \$200 million level funding for 2026 as efforts continue to double its authorization in the Farm Bill. House Ag Committee Chair GT Thompson has announced his intent to move a bill early this session while efforts for Senate action remain unclear.

In December, the President along with Secretary Rollins, announced a \$12 billion Farmer Bridge Assistance Program (FBA) to provide economic assistance to the hard-hit industry. \$11 billion will be allocated to row crop commodities by the end of February based on a per-acre calculation of economic harm. The remaining \$1 billion has been set aside for all other industry sectors, including specialty crops, with no timeline or criteria for

allocation announced yet. Efforts continue to expand funding assistance to specialty crop producers.

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Brooke Rollins, recently announced five new priority areas for USDA research and development programs for 2026: increasing profitability of farmers and ranchers, expanding new markets and uses for agricultural products, prevention and eradication of invasive species, preserving soil health and productivity and precision nutrition for food health.

Congress began its second session the first week of January with many of the same challenges it faced last session. Government funding took priority in light of their January 30 deadline. Mid-term elections will loom large with many state's primaries beginning in March. Also, the House Republicans will have an even smaller majority since the death of California congressman, Doug LaMalfa, and the departure of Congresswoman Greene. This leaves a mere two-vote cushion.

Trade State of Play

Uncertainty around tariff implementation, reciprocal action and impact on our growers continues. The Administration announced a trade deal with the EU in July with few details available at the time, but with additional details released in the fall. Also in the fall, trade deal frameworks were announced with Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam and Korea. Julie Callahan was Senate approved and sworn in as Chief Agriculture Negotiator for USTR in December while USTR was beginning its process of soliciting public input prior to the July 1 United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement review deadline. Alicia Rockwell of *Blue Diamond* testified at the first USTR public hearing on December 3, offering recommendations for the continuation of the treaty's beneficial provisions. The U.S. Supreme Court issued a "writ for cert" and heard oral

arguments in November in the closely watched case challenging the President’s imposition of tariffs under International Emergency Economic Powers Act without Congressional approval. A final decision is possible within the next few months. ♦



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2025 Crop Reflections

By the time this issue of Almond Facts arrives in your mailbox, the last loads of the 2025 crop will have been received. While handlers will be reporting their receipts for a few more months, enough is known to provide a good evaluation of crop quality and yields, allowing us to take stock of the year and look forward to 2026.

Total Production

While the determination of the final crop total is still a few months away, all indications are pointing to a crop in the low 2.7-billion-pound range. Several factors can influence the ultimate volume of any crop, and as I've noted in a previous article, crop estimating includes some art to accompany the science.

Regional Yields

When evaluating crops, regional variation is a prime consideration. At *Blue Diamond*, we break the Central Valley into three regions.

North – All Sacramento Valley counties

Central – Alameda, Contra Costa and San Joaquin to Merced counties

South – Madera, south to Kern County

Lowest yields as a percentage of each year's statewide average are found in the northern areas of the Valley. Yield potential increases traveling to the south, with greatest yields reported in the southern San Joaquin Valley. The charts to the right show the relative yields expressed as a percentage of the industry average, and the actual yields from 2014 through 2024.

Note that the northern region was adversely impacted by the bloom-time freeze in 2022.

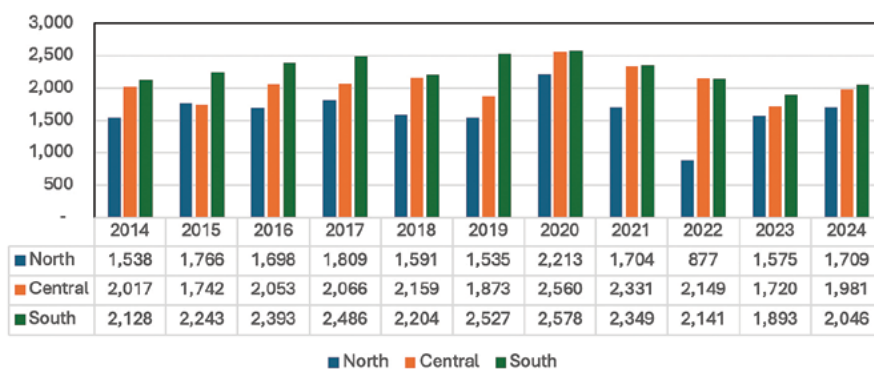
Recent data shows that growers in the southern San Joaquin Valley have endured comparatively reduced yields, the result of environmental factors, and higher production costs inspiring growers to reduce crop inputs. This trend has continued into the 2025 crop. Many observers expected

yields, particularly in Kern County, to recover from previous years. However, while Kern's production has risen above other southern San Joaquin Valley counties, it appears that it may fall short of expectations.

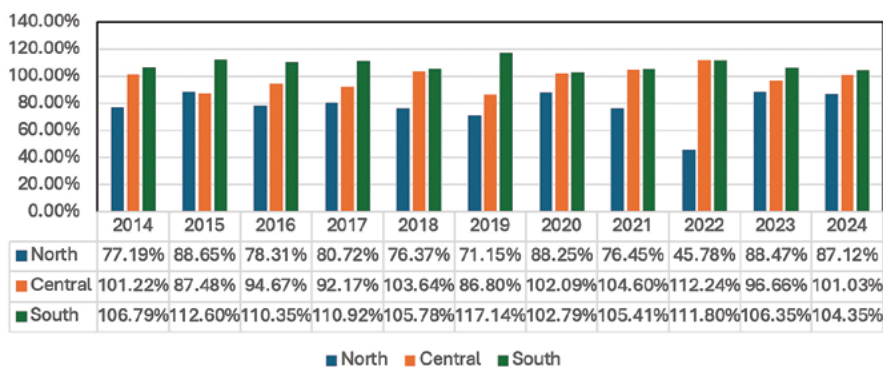
Turnout Percentages

Probably the most misrepresented and misunderstood factor in crop evaluations, turnout percentages, played a major role in the 2024 and 2025 crops.

Regional Yields



Regional Yields as Percent of Average



Turnout is the total meat weight as a percentage of the in-**hull** weight delivered to the huller, not to be confused with “crackout,” which is the total meat weight as a percentage of the in-**shell** weight.

So, why even think about turnout since it includes all the debris that comes from the orchard? *Turnout is an early and important indicator of the total crop potential.* Turnout can vary widely between varieties and from grower to grower. Those who condition their crops will experience higher turnout values as conditioning removes much the debris from the windrow, providing for a cleaner harvest.

How does turnout impact the final crop volume?

The example below shows the impact of a 1% change in turnout on the total crop.

Estimated Crop	3.00 Billion Pounds
Turnout	24.0%
In-Hull Field Weight	12.5 Billion Pounds
Revised Turnout	23.0 %
Revised Crop	2.85 Billion Pounds
Variation	4.2%

There are several theories as to what causes the trees to store more weight in the hull instead of the kernel. I don’t know anyone who truly understands this. It remains one of the mysteries of almond farming.

Orchard Health

While water supplies were generally sufficient to support the crop, economics also played a role in orchard health during the 2025 growing season. Unfortunately, the most efficient irrigation methods, drip and micro-sprinkler, are also the most expensive due to the cost of electricity needed to pressurize the water. Pumping costs approaching \$1,000 per acre are not uncommon. Because of this, I consistently witness growers regularly under-irrigating their orchards.

Poor economics have caused growers to reduce, and sometimes, eliminate critical crop inputs. Limiting fertilizer and water can save money, but at the expense of yield and/or quality. Many fail to realize that the nutrient applied to any crop in the greatest quantity is water.

Huller/sheller managers reported experiencing a relatively high percentage of sticktights in the crop, most likely due to reduced irrigation. Depending on how severe the cutbacks were, these actions can also impact the potential of the 2026 crop.

Conditioning can reduce hulling/shelling costs

Conditioning involves lifting the previously windrowed crop, removing soil and debris and spreading the crop back onto the orchard floor in a clean, flat windrow. While some growers consider conditioning an additional cost, there are several benefits that can lead to lower total harvesting costs.

- Potential faster drying time in the orchard, enabling speedier harvest and lower damage potential from ants.
- Cleaner crops reduce the weight and volume of field-run volume removed from the orchard, thus reducing trucking costs.
- Lower hulling/shelling costs at facilities charging on incoming or field-run weight.
- Reduced chipped and broken damage due to removal of sticks from the windrow, providing better quality.

Huller/sheller managers reported lower than normal turnout values in the 2024 crop. Surprisingly, many also reported that turnouts were even lower in the 2025 crop. No doubt, this contributed to the lower than forecast 2025 crop volume.

FIELD NOTES

with MEL MACHADO

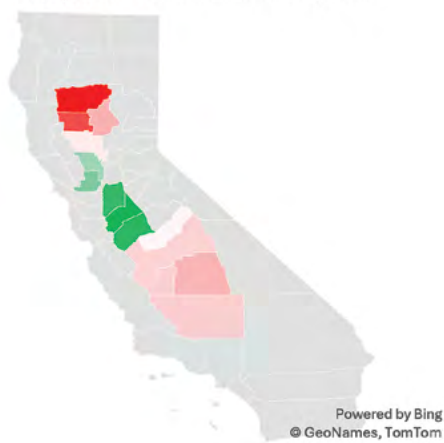
Crop Quality

Once again, growers suffered excessive rejects in many areas of the Central Valley. The charts below show 2025 Nonpareil and Monterey reject levels compared to those in the 2024 crop.

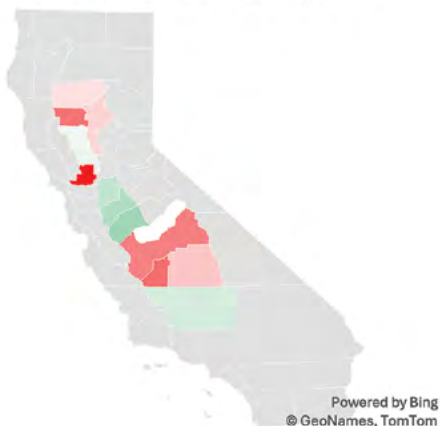
- Green counties: reject levels lower than in 2024
- White counties: similar reject levels to 2024
- Pink to red counties: increasingly higher reject levels than 2024

Navel orangeworm continues to be a dominant cause of rejects in nearly all varieties. However, brown spot, the result of the feeding by plant bugs (predominately stink bugs), is on the rise. While brown spot is found in all varieties, Independence, Price, Fritz, Butte, Padre and Aldrich are affected most.

Nonpareil 2024 vs 2025 Rejects



Monterey 2024 vs 2025 Rejects



The discovery of carpophilus beetles in California orchards two years ago concerned University of California researchers. Several species of carpophilus beetles exist within California orchards, but *Carpophilus truncatus* is the single species that feeds on almonds. This species has caused significant damage to almonds in Australia. While the insect has been reported in every Central Valley county, identifying *Carpophilus truncatus* is not easy for the casual observer.

Despite the damage reported in Australia, our records show that damage from these beetles has been quite low. Orchard sanitation is the best method for reducing damage with total destruction of the almonds on the ground being the most critical. The condition of mower blades and the speed of travel must be slow enough to fully destroy the affected nuts. It's vital that you step off the tractor to confirm that the nuts are destroyed.

Looking Ahead to 2026

Observing growers over the years has taught me a very simple principle: Master the Basics.

Producing the top yields and highest quality doesn't happen by accident. Paying attention to the details and mastering the basics of crop production are key to optimizing production and profitability.

NOW Management

Sanitation: Mummy shaking and destruction is the foundation of NOW management. Many growers deal with orchards planted on heavy soil that are inaccessible when wet. However, moisture (preferably fog), is critical to successful mummy removal and destruction.

Timing the shaking is not particularly critical, but moving equipment into the orchards between rain events can be tricky. Some growers find that they simply "run out of time" to complete the shaking before bloom, and do not want to shake too late for fear of removing buds from the trees.

Studies conducted in Merced County by Wes Asai, a former University of California farm adviser, and a



Collecting buds shaken from the trees during late season sanitation. Photo courtesy of Wes Asai

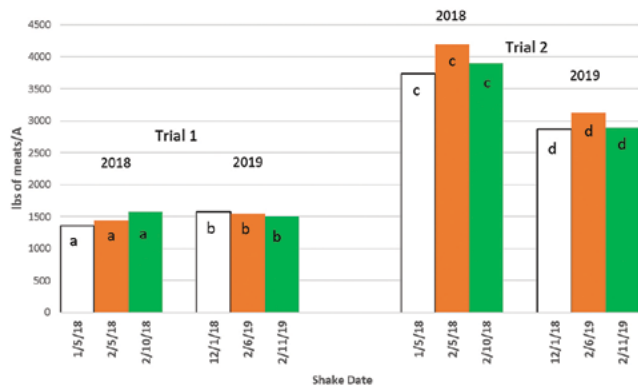


Flower buds shaken from the trees. Photo courtesy of Wes Asai

researchers believe hull split treatments would be unnecessary if disruption were employed in every orchard. However, in the current environment, disruption alone will not effectively control NOW.

Dormant Shaker Trials on Nonpareil Almond 2018 and 2019
Yield Per Acre

Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different DMR 0.10



Blue Diamond member and private researcher discovered that you can safely mummy shake orchards up to the first week of February. The data shows that even if shaking is done into early February, yields do not decline, even with significant bud drop.

In replicated trials, Asai placed tarps under trees to capture the flower buds removed by the shaker. As many as 12,000 buds per tree were removed, a number that would surely stun any grower. Asai's measurement of the crop harvested from the trees showed no yield reduction. In fact, yield increases were recorded in three of the four replications.

Mating disruption, the use of pheromone releases within the orchard, can be an effective link in the chain of managing NOW. Mating disruption works best in orchards of 40 acres or more in size. However, growers with smaller plantings can create larger blocks by working with neighboring growers to create an environment where disruption can be more effective.

Please note that mating disruption is one link in the chain of managing NOW. Many pest control advisers and

Abandoned/Low Care Orchards

There are abandoned or low/minimal care orchards throughout the Central Valley. Many growers have done everything right to control insect pests within their orchards only to suffer high reject levels because they are near an orchard that is not receiving proper care. Mating disruption is not effective for damage prevention due to a bad neighbor.

As of January 1, AB 732, authored by Assemblymember Alexandra Macedo, (R-Tulare) and signed by Governor Newsom, allows county agricultural commissioners to levy fines against landowners who maintain pest-related public nuisances. This will provide ag commissioners with more efficient enforcement tools to manage abandoned acreage that harbors pests or diseases. Fines start at \$500 per acre.

Farming in California involves managing many details, and no one has all the answers to growers' questions. Knowing what you don't know is an important consideration. Working with a good pest control adviser/certified crop adviser can go a long way to filling in the blanks and successfully producing a profitable crop.

Finally, neighbors matter. Please be a good one. ♦



Mel Machado,
Chief Agricultural Officer,
Blue Diamond Growers

THE ALMOND BOARD

2025 State of the Almond Industry: A Year of Resilience

After years of challenges, the California almond industry is finally catching its breath. At this year's 53rd Annual Almond Conference, the mood amongst growers, handlers, industry partners, and allied supporters felt cautiously optimistic that a market rebound is on its way.

The conference theme, “Cultivating a Healthier Future,” was a reminder that with innovation, stewardship, and expanded global demand, there is a promising outlook ahead. The conference also provided a moment to reflect on the past, as this year marked the 75th Anniversary of the Almond Board of California (ABC).

“Over the last 75 years, the industry truly evolved,” said Clarice Turner, CEO at ABC, during the State of the Industry session. “We remain focused on growing demand for California almonds, both domestically and globally, with new products, new markets, new innovations, and new partnerships, as well as equipping growers with practical tools and resources.”

Signs of Rebound

That forward-thinking vision comes at a pivotal time in the industry, as the market begins to show signs of

recovery amid ongoing economic pressures. According to UC Davis's Dr. Brittney Goodrich, in the last five years, operating costs have increased between 27 and 40%. Earlier this year, Goodrich discussed these findings in detail on The Almond Journey podcast here: <https://bit.ly/4jzSn0G>.

Encouragingly, the supply and demand balance within the California almond industry is returning to a point of equilibrium, prompting a market rebound. Total almond acreage has decreased (1) for the fourth consecutive year, along with new plantings. Even with a reduced supply, the industry recorded its third-largest shipping year.

“Average grower returns have improved from the \$1.60s in the 2023 crop (average all varieties), to the \$2.30s per pound in the 2024 crop (average all varieties),” said Bob Silveira, chair of the Board of Directors. “That's roughly a 40% increase.”

While this improvement indicates good progress, it underscores the importance of having accurate data to back market fluctuations.

In July, market frustrations came to a head when the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Objective Measurement Report was released. Although this year's crop size has yet to be fully determined, industry members are reporting that the measurement is off by a sizeable margin this season and improving the estimate is also not feasible, Silveira explained.



State of the Industry: Almond Board of California president and CEO Clarice Turner addressed industry members at The Almond Conference 2025 in Sacramento

“With the size of the industry, getting a truly representative sample was just impractical, not to mention cost ineffective,” he said.

After much deliberation and discussion with several stakeholders, on December 9, the decision was made by the Board of Directors who voted to cease funding for the Objective Measurement. The Subjective Forecast, however, will continue to be produced and released in May.

Economic Outlook: What’s Driving Consumer Behavior

The challenges faced by almond growers over the last several years are not siloed to the almond industry alone. Across all sectors, farmers are facing hardships because of the broader economic landscape.

Scott Clemons, partner and chief investment strategist at Brown Brothers Harriman, explained that over the past several months, a slow labor market has weighed on consumer sentiment, a key driver of spending, which accounts for 68% of U.S. gross domestic product (GDP).

He attributes the decline in sentiment to three factors: expectations that the labor market will continue to weaken, rising inflation concerns among consumers and the increasing stress of household debt.

Positively, consumer spending remains relatively healthy, and it is expected that the Federal Reserve will gradually reduce interest rates by 1% over the next year. While a slowdown in the economy can be expected, Clemons does not anticipate a recession, though consumer sentiment will ultimately be the deciding factor.

Driving Demand: ABC’s Marketing Priorities

Global market development remains top of mind for ABC’s strategy, accounting for 64% of the overall budget. This year was no different, with marketing efforts focused on four key areas: ingredient innovation, global bakery, emerging markets and healthy foods.

With 14 forms and uses, almonds continue to demonstrate exceptional versatility. This adaptability has performed well in the U.S. and Europe, where 50% of almond volume goes into ingredients used in manufactured products.

Efforts to inspire new applications of almonds among food scientists, chefs and culinary students have also expanded. As a result, almonds remain the number one nut included in new products, appearing in over 9,000 new products throughout the last year.

Earlier this year, the Almond Board unveiled a partnership with Smoothie King (2), the largest smoothie chain in the world, where they encouraged customers to add almonds to their drinks. The campaign was very successful, resulting in almonds being added to 70% more smoothies and creating a lasting impact.

“Five months later, almonds have continued to be added to smoothies even after the promotion ended,” Turner reported. “We changed behavior, and that’s really hard to do.”

Global bakery remains another key focus, with a projected category growth of 40% by 2030. ABC initiatives in this area have accelerated in emerging markets like China, Mexico, Turkey, and Morocco, promoting the use of almond ingredients in traditional baked goods. Momentum in Turkey and Morocco has also picked up significantly, thanks to a newly secured USDA grant awarding at least \$13 million to bolster these initiatives.

Healthy snacking, while still a top priority, has softened as consumers respond to higher prices.

“All nuts are down (in the U.S.), including almonds at 8.7%, but the whole category is down by 6.2%,” explained Emily Fleischmann, ABC vice president, global market development.



State of the Industry: Alexi Rodriguez Panel – Current and past ABC Board members discussed the current almond environment and the need for participation from industry members

To remain competitive, ABC partnered with Deion “Coach Prime” Sanders for the third year in a row. His presence packed a bigger punch for California almonds, delivering “a 90% higher return on investment versus previous campaigns,” Fleischmann said.

Looking ahead, a new, modern campaign is set to launch this spring in India, ABC’s top performing market which receives 400 million pounds of almonds annually.

ABC also continues to capitalize on the health benefits of almonds. A recent partnership with BrightSeed (brightseedbio.com/) identified 530 health-promoting compounds in almonds, four times more than previously known, and ABC’s newly launched nutrition affairs program will help elevate almond’s nutritional profile while influencing scientific stakeholders.

Alliance on the Regulatory Front

Beyond marketing, ABC continues to supply the Almond Alliance with the data they need to ensure grower voices are represented on policy issues affecting almond production in California.

Just recently, the administration announced \$12 billion in farm aid for tariff relief, including \$1 billion designated for specialty crops such as almonds. The Almond Alliance remains actively engaged to ensure almonds are included in these discussions and receives a fair share of the funds.

Ongoing efforts also focus on strengthening relationships with trade partners to promote fair and stable trade and to minimize tariff impacts across the specialty crop sector.

"We are working very closely with the administration and utilizing ABC data to ensure that our needs are heard, and growers get the support that they need," said Alexi Rodriguez, CEO of Almond Alliance. "We are working to ensure policymakers understand the real-world impacts of their decisions before rules are finalized."

A Call for Engagement

A consistent message that resonated loud and clear throughout the conference was that progress depends on participation and strategic action from all players, including the 7,600 California growers who represent the industry.

"As a grower, our work does not end by just producing a crop and paying our assessment," said Dinesh Bajaj, director of sales marketing at Select Harvest USA. "The Board does not work in isolation. We have to do our part and be constructive."

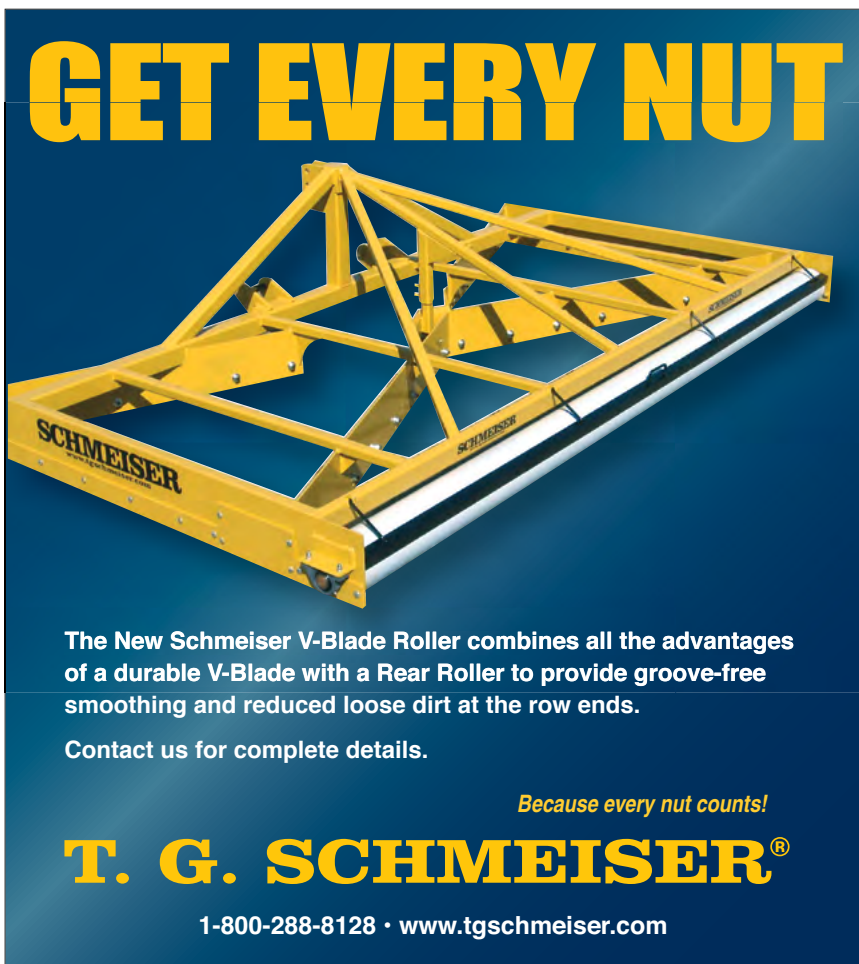
That shared responsibility complements ABC's forward-thinking focus to create long-term value for California almonds.

"Whether you're a grower, supplier, handler or a buyer, our shared commitment to cultivating a healthier future remains essential," Turner concluded. "Success in our industry depends on collaboration, on innovation and on a clear focus on our goals of driving global demand, supporting a favorable trade and regulatory environment and maximizing our industry's value."

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2. <https://www.almonds.org/almond-industry/industry-news/blending-wellness-almond-board-partners-smoothie-king-boost-exercise>

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THE BEE BOX

The Bees Will Soon be Here, and Growers Should be Ready for Them

Keep the bees and your relationship with your beekeeper healthy by clarifying roles and responsibilities. The following talking points will help you accomplish your regular orchard management tasks without posing a risk to bees and their ability to pollinate effectively. The honey bee is a small creature, and attention to small details regarding their health and safety is an important factor in achieving high yields.

Communicating prior to the arrival of the bees and almond bloom helps both grower and beekeeper achieve successful pollination while reducing risk to honey bee colonies and the almonds they pollinate. Starting before bloom, growers and beekeepers should agree upon average frame count per colony, date and location of placement and removal, inspection protocol, and payment terms. A contract is a good way to start the discussion. A pollination contract template can be found at the Project *Apis m.* website (4).

Other things that may need to be discussed between the beekeeper and the grower include field access, clean water for the bees, the potential of pesticide applications, and supplemental bee forage in the orchard.

Growers should evaluate their roadways, drainage and landing areas for accessibility, and if needed, make improvements before the bees arrive. Beekeepers will need to inspect their hives during pollination, as well as place them and then remove them at the end of bloom. Also remember the threat of hive theft or hive damage by other orchard operations when evaluating and discussing your roadways and access points with the beekeeper.

Providing water is an important and easy step to safely and effectively manage bees pollinating almonds. Bees require access to water and will forage for it to regulate hive



Bees arriving in an almond orchard. Photo courtesy of Project Apis m.

temperatures in the heat. Because standing water in the orchard may be contaminated with pesticides that are harmful to honey bees, clean water sources are important to bee health and effective pollination. Place water stations near hives as soon as they arrive and use new or used containers that have been thoroughly cleaned. Be sure to come to an agreement ahead of pollination on who will be responsible for ensuring water stations are clean, and water access maintained. Water stations should be emptied and refilled with clean water after any pesticide application.

When it comes to pesticide applications, proper communication should certainly include the grower, the beekeeper, the pest control adviser (PCA) and the certified pesticide applicator (CPA). California county agricultural commissioners also play a vital role in the communication chain between growers and beekeepers. All colonies are required to be registered with each county agricultural commissioner upon arrival in that county.

The best way to register colonies is through the Bee Where program. This web based program offers beekeepers a dynamic, real-time geographic information system (GIS) where they can mark colonies with a pin drop in the orchard via a mobile app. Bee Where is useful to growers because their notice of intent (NOI) for material applications allows each county agricultural commissioner to notify each beekeeper in the area which allows them the opportunity to move their colonies.

Many of the pesticides commonly used to protect crops can also harm honey bees. Caution should always be taken when applying crop protection products when bees are present. Always read labels and follow directions. Tank mix suggestions should be checked for potential synergistic effects on honey bees. Do not use pesticides with cautions on the label that read “highly toxic to bees,”



Water for Bees bucket near bee hives. Photo courtesy of Blue Diamond Growers

“toxic to bees,” “residual toxicity” or “extended residual toxicity.” Avoid applying any insecticide during bloom. If a fungicide application is necessary, spray in the evening or at night when bees and pollen are not present and avoid directly spraying the hives. Adjuvants should not be used with fungicides unless stated on the label (1). Organosilicone adjuvants have been found to be especially dangerous to honey bees (3).

Beekeepers are facing challenges to keep their hives alive. Varroa mites and loss of habitat/poor nutrition are two of the biggest health threats honey bees face in modern beekeeping. To help mitigate other stressors to their bees, beekeepers often look for orchards with supplemental sources of forage for the bees. Planting cover crops that will bloom before and after almond bloom can help beekeepers maintain healthy hives. The managers of the Seed for Bees™ program (5) can assist with cover crop seed and offer technical advice on establishment and management of cover crop seed blends that will benefit both growers and beekeepers.

Many producers use cover crops to help them achieve their goals of improving soil quality, pollinator health and economic viability. Growers who plant alternative sources of nutrition like blooming cover crops that bloom before and during almond bloom create a positive feedback loop within the hives. This positive feedback loop helps ensure healthy and more bees for pollination. Preliminary



Planting cover crops has exceptional advantages for both beekeepers and farmers by providing valuable soil benefits in the orchard alongside ample provisions for pollinators

results from an Almond Board of California funded study conducted by Dr. Elina Niño measures the impact Seeds for Bees™ cover crops in or near almond orchards has on colonies. She found that hives in orchards with access to the PAm. Brassica Pollinator Mix were, on average, three frames more populous than hives without access to supplemental forage (2).

There are many useful resources about bees, beekeeping and the Seeds For Bees™ program available at www.projectapism.org.

Wishing you an excellent bloom! ♦

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**Tom Johnson,
Seeds for Bees®,
Grower Relations Manager,
Project Apism.
tom@projectapism.org**

TIME TO CONSIDER

Can you believe it's already 2026? It feels like 2025 flew by, but now is the time to look ahead and prepare for the year to come. This winter has been a reminder of the past. At one point, I think we went over three weeks without seeing the sun. Rain has been present throughout the dormant season, but one thing we can almost be certain about is rain during bloom. Growers know what wet weather during bloom means for almond orchards: **disease pressure**.

In this article, we'll cover three key topics:

1. Bloom-time diseases and prevention strategies
2. The critical role of bees during pollination
3. Budget planning for a successful season

Bloom-Time Diseases: What to Watch for in 2026

Being prepared for weather events is essential for effective fungicide applications. The usual suspects remain though.

While **brown rot** does require moisture, it doesn't need much. Brown rot can be present with little to no rain because there is moisture present in the flower itself and even the morning dew can be problematic.

Jacket rot/Green fruit rot diseases, like many others, must have the right conditions to be present. Jacket

rot usually appears later in bloom when the fungus affects the dropping petals, jackets, or other flower parts and because of the moisture, they stick to the young almonds. It is most prominent in dense clusters of almonds because the falling plant material gets trapped in the cluster and can infect the whole cluster.

Shot hole is another common springtime disease but has become less of an issue over the years. It is usually easy to discover as it develops small reddish spots on the leaves and typically has a dark spot in the center. These lesions can show up on other parts of the plant, but most people discover it on the leaves.

Anthracnose is dependent on environmental conditions. Heavy moisture or rain along with warmer temperatures will lead to the development of the disease. Symptoms appear as blossom blight, fruit infections, and spur and limb dieback. Anthracnose is not a disease you want gaining a foothold in your orchard. It can have a multiple year effect because of the infection of spurs and limbs. Growers may have to prune out the infection in combination with a strong fungicide program to eradicate it.

The emerging disease **red leaf blotch** poses a serious threat to almond orchards and can have multi-year impacts on yield and tree health. It follows a single infection cycle, with spores active around petal fall when young leaves are emerging. Rain during this period splashes spores onto leaves, initiating infection. Symptoms appear 35–40 days later as yellow spots that turn orange and then reddish-brown, eventually causing leaf curling and premature drop. This defoliation reduces photosynthesis and carbohydrate reserves, affecting both current and future crops. Effective management includes fungicide applications at petal fall and two and five weeks after if wet weather persists. Cultural practices like removing leaf litter during dormancy also help reduce inoculum. Spraying after symptoms appear is ineffective because infection occurs much earlier.

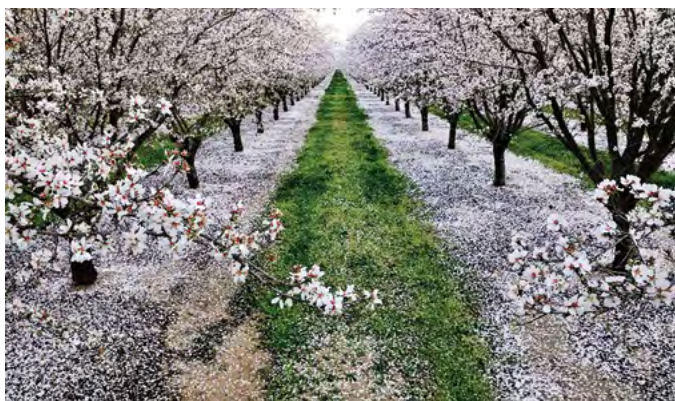


Figure 1: Butte/Padre Bloom by Mel Machado

Disease	Bloom				Spring ¹		Summer	
	Dormant	Pink bud	Full bloom	Petal fall	2 weeks	5 weeks	May	June/July
alternaria	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	3
anthracnose ²	0	2	3	3	3	3	3	2
bacterial spot	1	0	2	3	3	2	1	0
brown rot	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	0
green fruit rot	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0
hull rot ⁷	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
leaf blight	0	0	3	2	1	0	0	0
rust	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	1 ⁶
scab ³	2	0	0	2	3	3	1	0
shot hole ⁴	1 ⁵	1	2	3	3	2	0	0

The key to control is **timing and product selection**. Use efficacy charts like those from UC ANR to match fungicides to disease risk and rotate **FRAC groups** to prevent resistance. For example, if your first spray uses a Group 3 fungicide, follow up with a different mode of action such as Group 7/11. Keeping these rotations in place preserves your toolbox for future seasons. For fungicide efficacy charts, like the one shown, visit: bit.ly/fungicideUCIPM.

Pollination: Setting up for Success

Pollination remains the single most critical step for a strong almond crop. Here's what to focus on in 2026:

- **Hive Strength** – An eight-frame hive collects 2.5 times more pollen than a four-frame hive. Confirm hive strength in your beekeeper contract.
- **Placement** – Space hives no more than ¼ mile apart in sunny spots for early warming. Avoid high-traffic or shaded areas.
- **Water Access** – Bees need water; provide sources like bee buckets near hives to keep the bees anchored in your orchard.
- **Spray Timing** – Apply fungicides at night after the bees have returned to the hives. Cover water sources and never spray hives directly.

For more tips, check the **California Almond Board's Best Management Practices** for pollination.

Budget Planning: Avoid Surprises

Budgets aren't glamorous, but they're essential. Knowing your costs up front prevents sticker shock later. A good budget should include:

- Bees
- Insurance
- Electricity
- Labor
- Multiple spray applications (pink bud, full bloom, post-petal fall, hull split, etc.)
- Fertilizer and weed control
- Post-harvest costs

Track estimated versus actual costs throughout the season and compare against projected revenue. This helps you adjust midyear and plan for profitability. If you'd like an example budget template, I'll gladly share one. Just email me at tvoss@bdgrowers.com. ♦



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

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