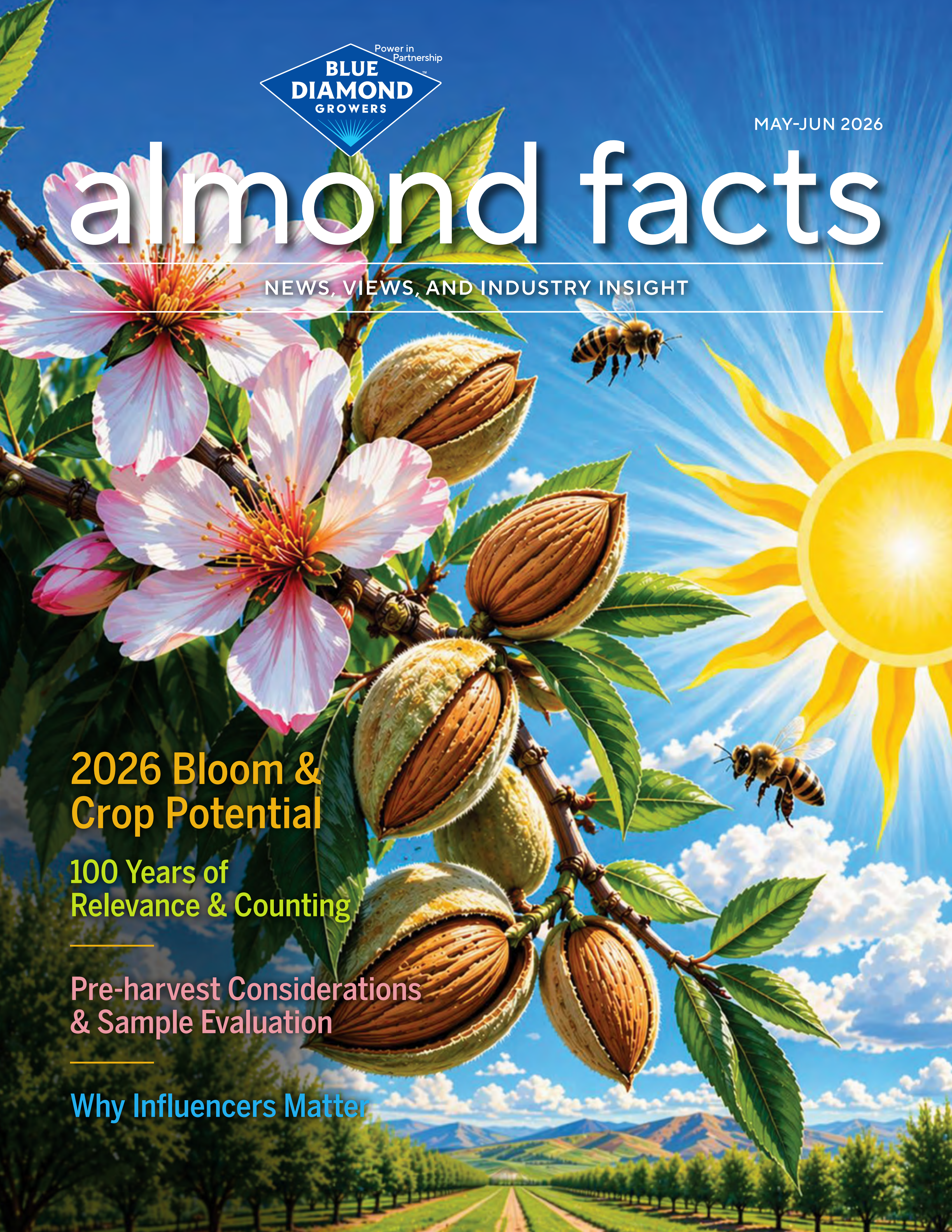


Power in Partnership

BLUE DIAMOND GROWERS

MAY-JUN 2026

almond facts

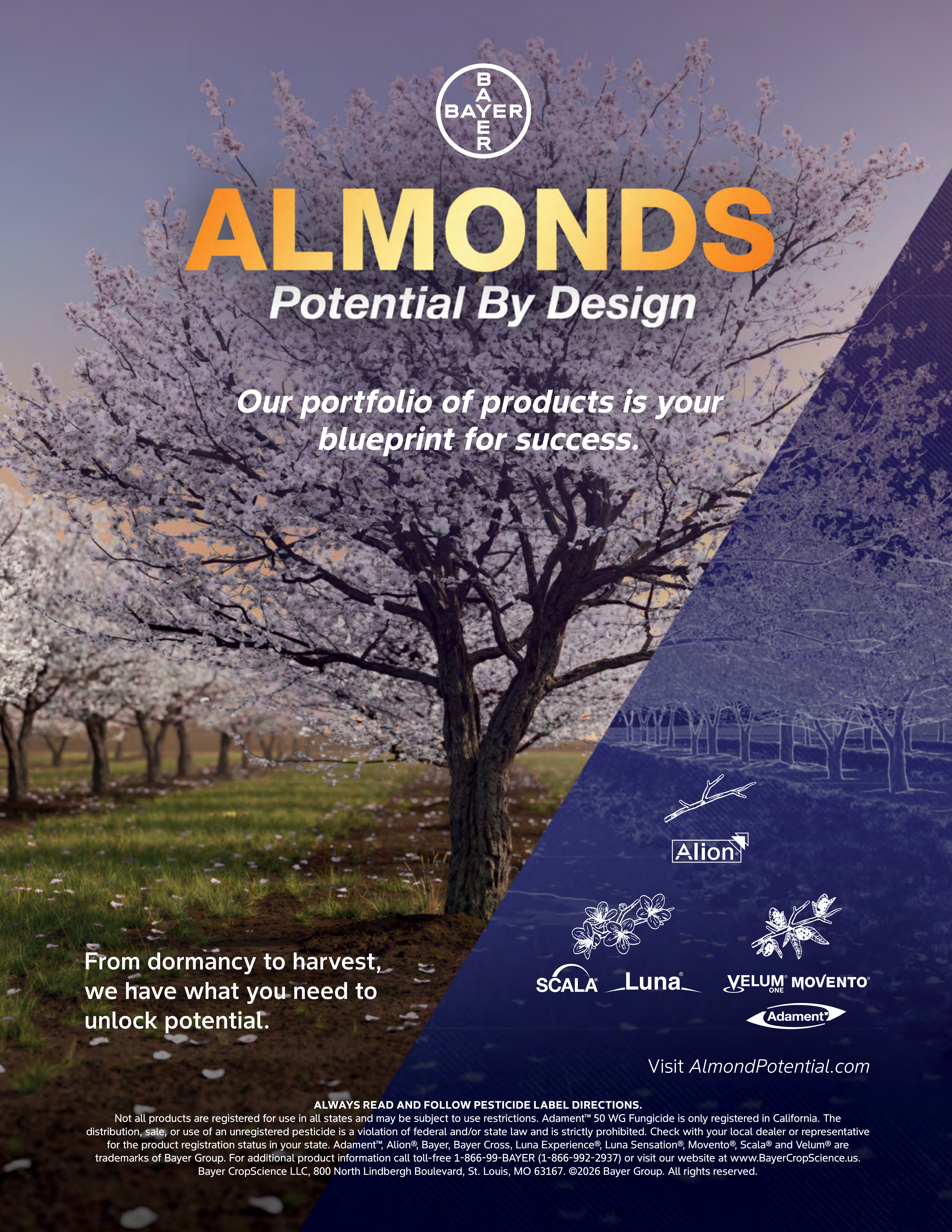
NEWS, VIEWS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHT

2026 Bloom & Crop Potential

100 Years of Relevance & Counting

Pre-harvest Considerations & Sample Evaluation

Why Influencers Matter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ON THE COVER:
Blue Diamond looks forward to another crop as the spring months wane and summer approaches.

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

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Kai Bockmann
President & CEO

As the days get longer and the summer season ramps up, we continue to push forward on all fronts toward the end of our fiscal year. These next three months will be important ones for us as we approach the finish line to harvest season.

It was great to see many of you at the Grower Liaison Committee meetings earlier in May. Our goal is for you to come away with valuable information and feel confident that your questions were answered. During those conversations, we shared updates on our next-generation variety efforts and the USDA grant, which is now underway with implementation planned for the fall. I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at the District Meetings in July where we'll continue the discussion.

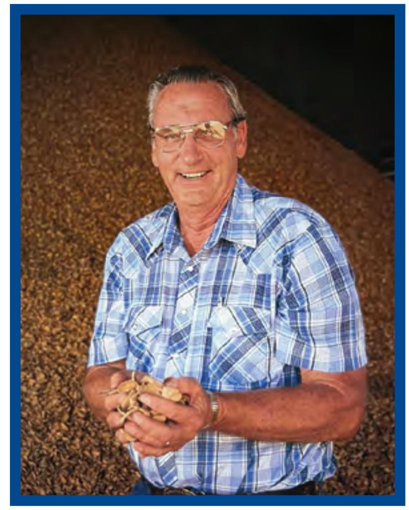
By now, many of you may have read through our first Crop Estimate Report. In the report, we estimate the 2026 almond crop at about 2.69 billion pounds, which falls right in the expected range of 2.675 to 2.72 billion pounds and lines up with what we've seen in recent seasons. A huge thank you goes out to the teams who worked hard to pull this together. Just so you can get a sense of how much effort went into the report, our Membership team covered more than 12,000 miles across the valley collecting information. We will share further updates in our June Market Report and July Crop Forecast Report, and keep you informed as we get closer to harvest.

Across the business, the next few months are important, and we're staying focused. Activities tied to our strategic plan are either on schedule or ahead of schedule, including the Sacramento plant closure work. Even though the non-dairy beverage category has been under some pressure, we're continuing to grow, and *Almond Breeze*® has moved into the number one spot among non-dairy brands. Our *Blue Diamond* Almondmilk, which comes in a premium bottle and is offered in four flavors, is made with 75% more almonds per serving than leading almondmilk brands. It is making its mark, attracting new consumers and reinforcing our momentum in the non-dairy category.

On the snack nut side, overall, the category is still facing headwinds, but we're seeing encouraging signs. Our spring and summer rebrand campaign is running through July with new packaging on shelves designed to attract customers to our delicious almonds. If you haven't come across it yet, our Sour Cream & Onion Snack almonds are now in Walmart for a limited time and well worth a try!

Right now, our team is on the ground at INC World Nut and Fruit Congress, connecting with customers and keeping *Blue Diamond* front and center. Despite some of the disruption we're seeing internationally, we've continued to move business forward and we're staying on track. We'll have more updates when the team returns from their travels.

Finally, and on a different note, although I did not have the privilege of working directly with him, I want to take a moment to remember Ken Roos, who recently passed away and served on the *Blue Diamond* board for 15 years. Many of you who worked alongside him saw firsthand the deep sense of duty to his family, his community, and his work. He built a thriving farming operation, used his engineering and Army background to innovate equipment still used today, and, during his time on the board, pushed for greater stability and stronger returns for growers. His legacy remains a defining part of who we are today as *Blue Diamond*.



As we reflect on his legacy, I want to thank you for your continued partnership and support. Looking ahead, there's meaningful work before us, and I'm confident in the path we're on and grateful to be on this journey together. I look forward to continuing the conversation with many of you at our District Meetings in July. ◆

Kai

Kai Bockmann
President & CEO

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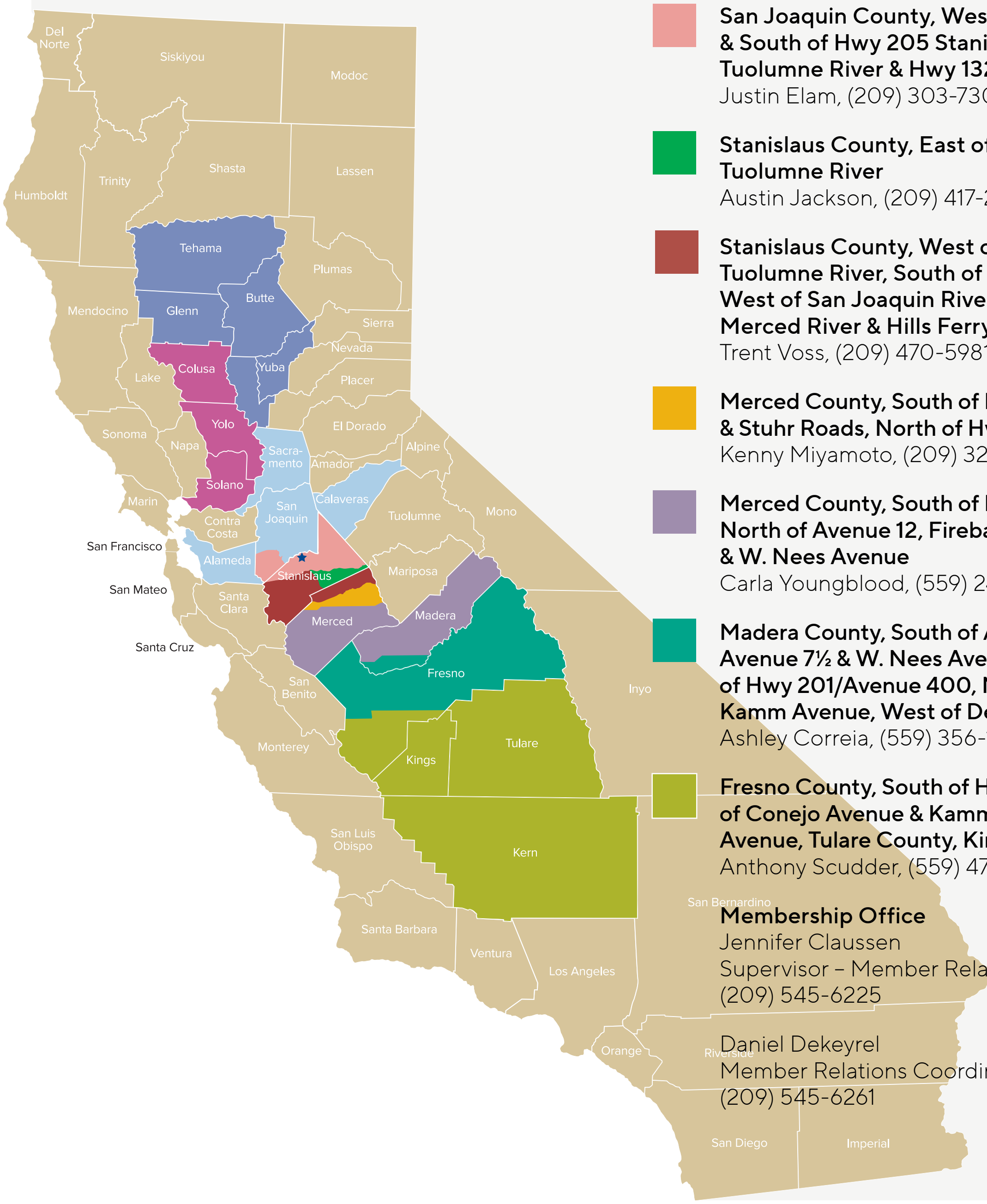

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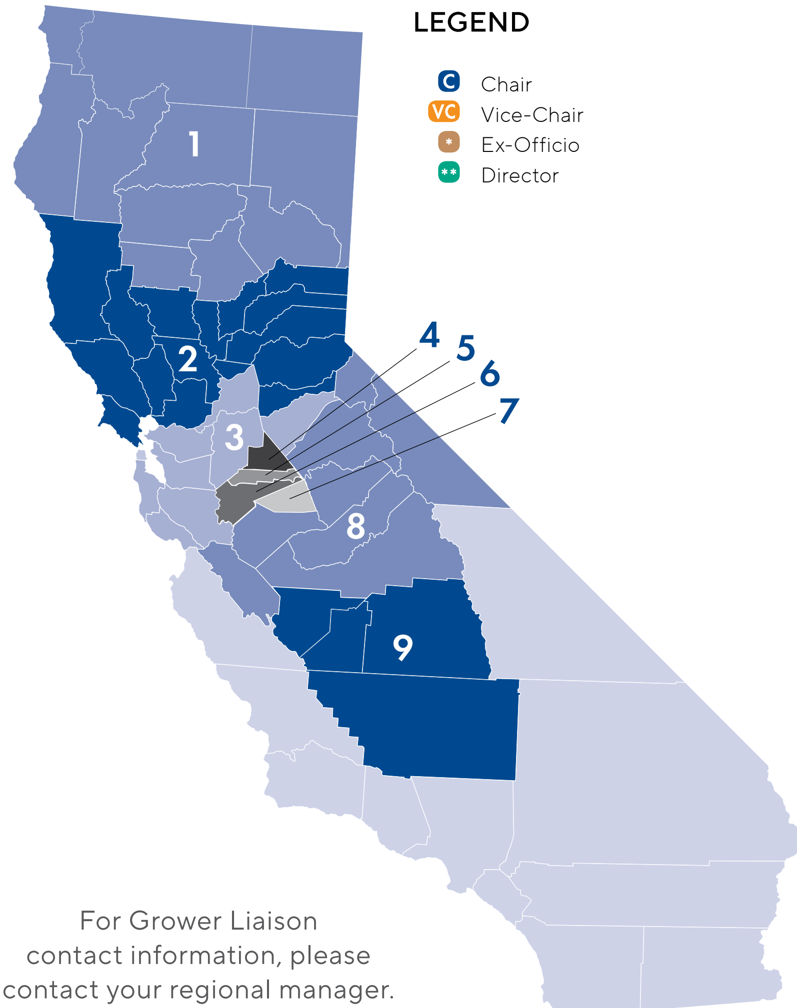

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A Century of Relevance...and Counting

Would you be surprised to hear someone say that the core challenges facing agricultural producers today are not all that different than they were 116 years ago?

At first pass, that claim feels naïve. Today's growers operate in a world of global markets, rapidly advancing technology, and increasingly complex supply chains. But step back and ask a more fundamental question: What is at the heart of the challenges growers, producers, and ranchers face?

Market risk. Price volatility. Concentrated market power. Disparate influence in policy and regulation relative to larger, integrated competitors. And intense, and growing, capital requirements.

In 1922, Congress passed the Capper-Volstead Act. It was a defining moment for agricultural producers and their associations. The Act established that farmers "may act together" to collectively process, handle, and market their products, providing a limited exemption from antitrust laws that would otherwise prohibit such coordination. Before its passage, producers risked legal action under existing antitrust laws simply for working together to improve their market position. Capper-Volstead recognized the structural imbalance between fragmented producers and concentrated buyers, and it provided a lawful pathway for growers to build countervailing power while still preserving safeguards against monopolistic outcomes.

But the economic logic and wisdom for cooperation did not wait for regulatory recognition in 1922.

The month of May marked an important milestone: the founding of The California Almond Growers Exchange ("The Exchange"), *Blue Diamond Growers'* original name. In 1910, almond growers organized in response to their realities: fragmented selling, inconsistent quality, limited access to reliable buyers, and price volatility driven by intermediaries who held disproportionate market power. Individually, growers lacked the scale and coordination to influence outcomes. Collectively, they could pool product, standardize quality, invest in processing and marketing, and approach the market with greater consistency and leverage. In doing so, they addressed the same core challenges producers face today: market risk, power imbalances, coordination constraints, and the need for capital to move beyond the farm gate.

That 1910 decision by 230 almond growers fundamentally reshaped their trajectory and that of today's grower. It created a platform for coordination, investment, and market participation that would not have been possible otherwise. At its core, a cooperative is — and indeed, The Exchange was — an investment made by producers into their own supply chain. It extends ownership and control beyond the farm gate into processing, branding, distribution, and market development where a significant share of value is created from commodities. Without such ownership and control, much of the margin generated downstream accrues elsewhere. With it, producers protect their pathway and mechanisms to participate in that value creation and benefit from it. But the model is defined by more than ownership and control. Cooperatives exist to improve producer outcomes by putting them at the core of their purpose.

Which brings us back to the opening question.

The pressures that defined agriculture and the experiences and choices of producers in the early 1900s still define it today, only now at a different scale with arguably higher stakes. If the fundamental challenges facing producers have not materially changed, then neither has the relevance of the cooperative model. The conditions that led almond growers to organize in 1910 – and that were formally recognized in 1922 with passage of Capper-Volstead – are still with us.

The collective decisions made today by growers will shape whether and how they continue to invest in their shared future: strengthening their position in the value chain and ensuring that the value they create continues to return to their farms, their families, and their communities for generations to come.

Happy birthday, *Blue Diamond Growers*, and wishes for a successful next 100 years!

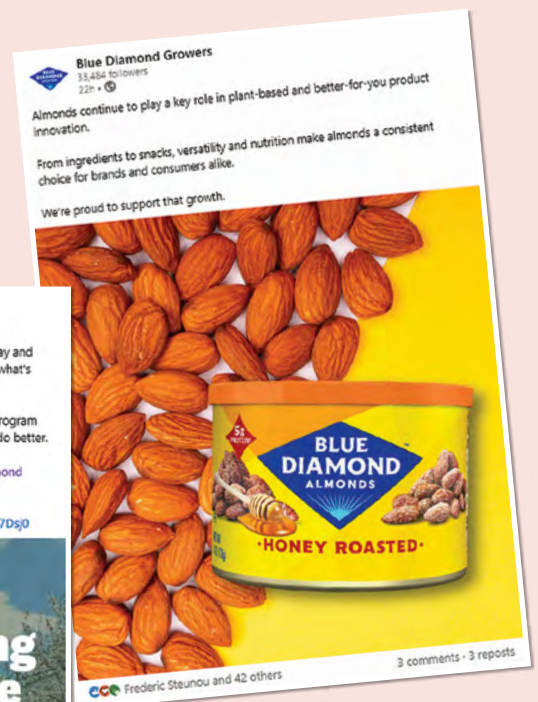
Dr. Keri L. Jacobs is Executive Director of the Graduate Institute of Cooperative Leadership (GICL), associate professor of agricultural and applied economics, and Partridge Chair in Cooperative Leadership at the University of Missouri. She works with cooperative CEOs, management teams, and boards across the agricultural sector on governance, financial oversight, and the board's role in strategy development. Through GICL, she designs and facilitates director and leadership development programs and regularly engages with cooperative boards on complex organizational issues.

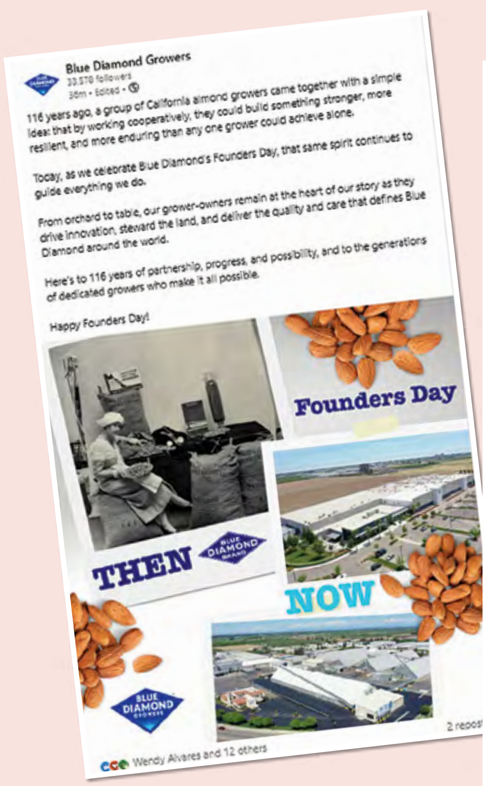
Her research and outreach are grounded in sustained collaboration with cooperatives and industry partners and focus on how collective action and cooperative structures can strengthen producers' position within agricultural supply chains. Dr. Jacobs serves on the NCBA CLUSA Cooperative Economics Council and the Nationwide Board Council and is North Central Director for the Extension Section of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association. Raised on her family's hog and row-crop farm in eastern Iowa, she holds a B.A. in economics from Coe College and a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from North Carolina State University.

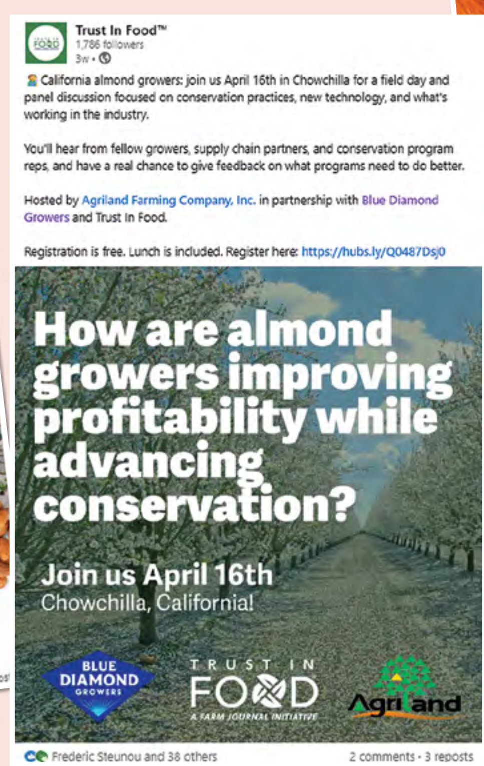
Dr. Keri Jacobs,
Executive Director,
Graduate Institute of Cooperative Leadership, and Partridge Chair in Cooperative Leadership,
University of Missouri

#WeAreBlueDiamond Social Media Activity

Blue Diamond leaders participated in a panel hosted by Agriland Farming with Trust in Food in Chowchilla. We celebrated our new packaging hitting store shelves, released our first crop estimate, and celebrated 116 years as a cooperative on May 6, our Founders Day! ◆







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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:

BLUE DIAMOND GROWERS	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.

Charcuterie Cones

Cook Time: 10 minutes   Difficulty: Medium   Serves up to: 1

Ingredients

Parchment paper

Fresh rosemary sprig

Olives

Blue Diamond Wasabi & Soy Sauce flavored almonds

Blue Diamond Hint of Sea Salt Nut-Thins

Clementine segments

Sharp cheddar

Dried orange

Directions

Parchment Paper Cone

1. Start by creating a parchment paper cone. Fold a square piece of parchment paper in half to create a triangle shape.
2. Rotate the triangle so that the top tip points toward you.
3. Then, take the far right tip, and fold inward until it meets with the top tip and creates a cone shape.
4. Hold these tips together as you grab the far left tip with your other hand and tuck/wrap it underneath the cone.
5. Tighten all the tips until the three of them form an "M" shape — then fold the "M" inside of the cone, and press firmly to seal.
6. Take your parchment cone and set it into a small shot glass.

Snack Sprigs

1. Next, create your rosemary snack sprigs. Remove all but the top leaves of a fresh rosemary sprig.
2. Skewer olives, or desired snack, onto the sprig and push them toward the top leaves. (*If sprig is weak, use a small skewer to create holes in the olives before placing them onto the rosemary.*)
3. Fill your parchment cone to the top with *Blue Diamond* Wasabi & Soy Sauce Almonds. Insert your rosemary snack sprig into the almonds. Follow with a toothpick of clementine segments.
4. Lastly, balance *Blue Diamond* Nut-Thins Hint of Sea Salt crackers, sharp cheddar, dried orange, and a few more Wasabi & Soy Sauce almonds.
5. Serve alongside other flavor options, if desired!

Coconut-Lime Banana Bread

Cook Time: 82 minutes   Difficulty: Medium   Serves up to: 8

Ingredients

1 cup *Almond Breeze®* Unsweetened Original Almondmilk Coconutmilk

1½ cups mashed ripe banana (*about 3 bananas*)

2 cups all-purpose flour

¾ teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon salt

1 cup granulated sugar

2 Tablespoons butter; softened

2 large eggs

1 Tablespoon plus ¼ cup lime juice; divided

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

½ cup plus 2 Tablespoons sweetened flaked coconut; divided

Cooking spray

1 cup powdered sugar

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Bring coconut blend almondmilk to a boil in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Reduce to a high simmer. Cook until reduced to ¼ cup (about 7 minutes). Cool slightly. Combine with mashed bananas and set aside.
3. Combine flour, baking soda, and salt.
4. Combine granulated sugar and butter in a large bowl with a mixer at medium until well blended.
5. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in reserved banana mixture, lime juice and vanilla.
6. Add flour mixture and beat at low speed just until combined. Stir in ½ cup coconut.
7. Spoon batter into a 9"x5" loaf pan coated with cooking spray. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons coconut.
8. Bake at 350° for 1 hour or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Loosely cover with foil during the final 15 minutes of baking if the top is getting too browned. Cool in pan 10 minutes on a wire rack. Remove from pan.
9. To make the glaze, combine powdered sugar and ¼ cup lime juice; drizzle over warm bread. Cool completely on wire rack.

Inshell Operations to Stay in Sacramento

Although *Blue Diamond*'s Sacramento site is winding down most manufacturing and selling much of the property, inshell almond processing, which is critical to export demand and supply chain flexibility, will stay at the Sacramento campus, preserving about 90 employees.

This adjustment reflects the ongoing effort to optimize *Blue Diamond*'s processing network across California. While most of the production is transitioning to the Turlock and Salida facilities, the Sacramento site provides value for inshell processing, which already has a concentrated, efficient footprint.

The decision helps balance two priorities: maximizing return on cooperative assets while ensuring continuity for vital international market product streams.

The broader consolidation will reduce long-term operating costs and reinvest in areas that directly support grower returns. Modernizing operations across the more efficient sites is expected to improve throughput, reduce handling costs, and align production closer to the core grower supply area.

Local Developer to Transform 35 Acres of *Blue Diamond*'s Sacramento Campus into Landmark Mixed-Use Community

Blue Diamond has selected Bardis & Miry Development, LLC, a Sacramento-based developer, to acquire approximately 35 acres of its midtown campus for a mixed-use project with 1,000 to 2,000 homes, ground-floor retail, and community amenities.

Bardis & Miry Development is a local firm with a strong track record in residential and historical infill development. Katherine Bardis-Miry and Bay Miry are accomplished independent developers with proven success in residential, historic infill, and urban revitalization projects.

Bardis & Miry Development is completing its due diligence investigation, and more on design, phasing, and community engagement will be shared in the coming months.

"We're excited about this next chapter for the site. *Blue Diamond* has been part of Sacramento's story for generations, and we're proud to play a role in shaping its future," said Kai Bockmann, president & CEO for *Blue Diamond*.

"The *Blue Diamond* plant site has been a part of Sacramento for over a century, and we are grateful for the opportunity to build on that legacy in a way that will serve the community for many years to come," stated Katherine Bardis-Miry of Bardis & Miry Development.

"The Blue Diamond plant site has been a part of Sacramento for over a century, and we are grateful for the opportunity to build on that legacy in a way that will serve the community for many years to come."

—Katherine Bardis-Miry of Bardis & Miry Development

Bay Miry added "We are still in the preliminary stages, and all redevelopment options remain on the table as we thoroughly evaluate the site. Our initial vision includes a walkable, mixed-use community that feels authentic to Sacramento while delivering lasting economic and social value."

As part of the agreement, *Blue Diamond* has secured a three-year leaseback, ensuring corporate headquarters remain on the campus until at least April 2030. *Blue Diamond* will retain about 19 acres for inshell almond processing, and its corporate headquarters will remain in Sacramento. The cooperative is represented by Ken Turton of Turton Commercial Real Estate in the transaction.

The city of Sacramento has expressed strong enthusiasm for the development. Mayor Kevin McCarty and Councilmember Phil Pluckebaum, whose district includes the site, have also been key champions. Both have strongly supported the project for its potential to advance Sacramento's housing goals while honoring *Blue Diamond*'s legacy. *Blue Diamond* thanked both leaders for their partnership. With support from city, county, and state partners, the project can create a lasting Sacramento legacy that reflects its long investment in the community. ◆

Why Influencers Matter: The Growth of *Blue Diamond* Almondmilk's Trust and Reach

Blue Diamond farmers know that producing high-quality almonds is only part of the success equation. Reaching consumers and earning their trust requires meeting them in more places and in more ways than ever before.

That's why *Blue Diamond* continues to enhance its marketing mix by not just including traditional advertising vehicles, but following consumer behavior to incorporate more digital video, social media, and even launching this brand with a thriving network of influencers who help bring the goodness of almondmilk to life.

Building Trust Through Multiple Voices

Today, consumers engage with brands across a vast array of channels. While traditional advertising, such as streaming TV and digital video builds awareness, influencer content addresses the vital relatability factor and provides a trusted voice in the form of the new word-of-mouth.

As consumers reconsider what products deserve a place in their refrigerators, influencers help demonstrate the practical, everyday role almondmilk can play in their coffee, breakfast, smoothies, and family routines. That kind of storytelling reinforces our brand's messages in a more personal, experience-driven way. Consumers increasingly trust recommendations that feel integrated into real routines rather than traditional advertising alone.

Industry research consistently shows that consumers place a high level of trust in recommendations from people they follow online, especially when those recommendations feel authentic and aligned with their lifestyles. Creators will showcase key product benefits, from the simple ingredient list in our simple flavors to the plant protein in Chocolate Protein. For almondmilk, that's a powerful opportunity to connect with consumers through everyday, relatable moments.

The New Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth has always been one of the most effective ways to build trust. Today, digital platforms allow that same dynamic to reach millions of consumers at once. *Blue Diamond* is leaning into that opportunity through a thoughtful influencer strategy designed to complement our overarching efforts to reach more people.

Beginning in February and concluding in August, the entire advertising program is expected to generate approximately 555 million impressions, driven largely by influencer content across Instagram and TikTok. At the same time, a brand-new *Blue Diamond* video, which is running across Connected TV platforms and online video, will deliver 81 million impressions, ensuring consistent visibility across both premium and social channels.

These efforts work together seamlessly:

- Traditional and digital advertising establish brand awareness at scale
- Influencer content reinforces those messages in everyday, trusted contexts

Our Influencer Ecosystem

Rather than relying on a single voice, *Blue Diamond* is building a broad "influencer ecosystem" to maximize reach and relevance:

- Mid-tier influencers (6 creators): Established creators with at least half a million followers producing multiple pieces of content across Instagram and TikTok
- Micro-influencers (15–20 creators): Creators with smaller followings who appeal to highly engaged, niche audiences

- User-generated content (UGC): Dozens of additional creators sharing content through platforms like Skeepers and Kale

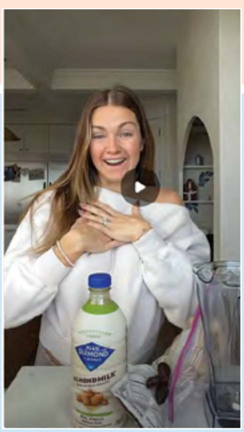
In total, this approach will deliver:

- Over 60 pieces of content from February through August
- Up to 100 creators promoting *Blue Diamond* Almondmilk
- A steady stream of content across platforms, formats, and audiences

The goal is to create consistent visibility, so consumers don't just encounter almondmilk in advertisements, but in real-life moments that matter to them.

Meet the Influencers

A few of the creators helping bring this campaign to life include:



Lindsay Arnold (@lindsarnold)

Followers: ~2M+

Background: Professional dancer known from Dancing with the Stars

Focus: Fitness, family life, wellness routines

Perspective: Lindsay's content reflects a balanced, health-focused lifestyle, helping position almondmilk as a practical choice for busy families and active consumers.

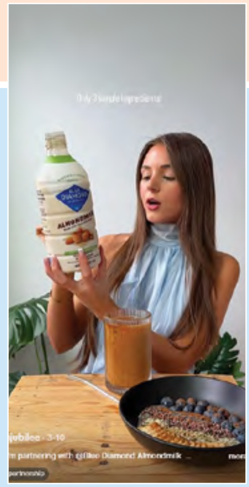
Ashley Paige (@ashley.paiige)

Followers: ~500K+

Background: Lifestyle, food and beauty creator

Focus: Wellness, nutrition, clean eating

Perspective: Ashley connects with consumers who prioritize healthy lifestyles, reinforcing almondmilk's role in supporting everyday wellness routines.



Wren Jubilee (@wrenjubilee)

Followers: Smaller, niche audience

Background: Everyday lifestyle creator

Focus: Relatable routines, authentic product use

Perspective: Micro-influencers like Wren often build strong trust with their audiences, making their recommendations feel personal and credible.

Why This Matters for *Blue Diamond* Member-Growers

Millennials and Gen Z consumers increasingly discover and evaluate food and beverage brands through social platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where creators strongly influence perception and purchase decisions. For *Blue Diamond* Almondmilk, which is still building broader awareness in a competitive plant-based category, influencers are especially important for driving awareness, credibility, and product trial by showing how almondmilk fits naturally into everyday routines. Micro creators are particularly valuable because their smaller, highly engaged audiences tend to see them as more relatable and authentic, making their recommendations feel closer to trusted peer-to-peer endorsements.

This approach isn't about replacing traditional marketing but strengthening it. By combining broad-reach advertising with trusted, real-world storytelling, *Blue Diamond* is working to reinforce consumer confidence in almond-based products while reaching new audiences. Ultimately, this will help keep almonds competitive in a rapidly evolving marketplace. At its core, the strategy builds on something growers have always understood: Trust increases demand. And the more ways we can earn trust, the stronger the future for *Blue Diamond* almonds. ◆

Sacramento's Pop-Up Nut Shop

To continue supporting our growers following the closure of the Sacramento Nut & Gift Shop we hope you enjoy our once-a-month *Blue Diamond* Sacramento Pop-Up Shop!

Pop-Up Shop Details:

- Located in the current Sacramento Nut & Gift Shop space
- Offers *Blue Diamond* almond products only, including gift boxes containing six-ounce cans
- Outside vendor products, gift baskets or trays containing non-*Blue Diamond* items, and taxable items will **not** be available at the pop-up shop

2026 *Blue Diamond* Pop-Up Shop Hours:

9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Pop-Up Shop Schedule:

June 10	October 7
June 30	November 4
August 5	December 2
September 3	

Need to place a special order?

Contact the Salida Nut & Gift Shop via phone (209) 545-3222 or email orders@bdgrowers.com for special orders. Please note there will be a 15-day lead time plus ground shipping.

Subject to product availability

Want to send *Blue Diamond* gifts this holiday season?

Growers who enjoy giving *Blue Diamond* products as holiday gifts are encouraged to shop the Salida Nut & Gift Shop while in Modesto for the annual meeting this fall. For special orders to be shipped or picked up at the December pop-up shop, an order deadline of November 9 will apply. A flyer with available products and current pricing will be distributed ahead of the holiday season.

Happy shopping! ◆

Great Success at the 2026 *Blue Diamond Growers* Foundation Golf Tournament

On a warm, beautiful day at Brookside Country Club in Stockton, California, *Blue Diamond* hosted the annual *Blue Diamond Growers* Foundation Golf Tournament. The event welcomed 144 golfers for breakfast and a day on the course, followed by lunch and a raffle featuring 30 donated prizes. All funds raised support the *Blue Diamond Growers* Foundation, a 501(c)(3) that awards scholarships to college students pursuing four-year degrees in agriculture-related fields. Thank you to all the golfers who participated and to the many *Blue Diamond* volunteers who made the tournament a success. We are proud to support a worthy cause that strengthens the future of California agriculture. ◆

Thank you to our tournament sponsors!

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Seven Years of Serving The GreenHouse!

Blue Diamond employees volunteered at The GreenHouse for the seventh Day in the Dirt service day. Thirty-six team members across two shifts along with the facilities team spent their day replacing garden beds, installing a gazebo for shade, replacing mulch in the garden, and doing general garden cleanup and maintenance. The GreenHouse staff shared their gratitude and has already expressed excitement for *Blue Diamond* returning in 2027.

About The GreenHouse

Our mission is to cultivate a thriving community by nurturing the emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical development of our youth and inspiring them to grow to their full potential.

The GreenHouse envisions youth who are:

1. Socially, Emotionally, and Spiritually Thriving.
2. Academically Successful.
3. Physically Healthy.
4. Growing to their Full Potential.





Beyond the Bin: Agriculture and California's Packaging Future

Since 2018, Ag Council has taken a leadership role in recycling and packaging issues relating to food and agricultural products given the potential impact on our members, including Blue Diamond Growers. In 2022, Governor Newsom signed SB 54 into law, requiring all single use plastics to become 100 percent compostable or recyclable by 2032.

The Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act came together because of the increasing challenges of managing plastic waste in California. Costs have increased throughout the waste management system, and beach cleanup has been an ongoing issue for decades. Ultimately, the Legislature decided to shift the responsibility of plastic and other packaging management to the producers of packaging.

Even before SB 54 was signed into law, Ag Council worked with CalRecycle and a broader agricultural coalition to provide for the use of plastics for food safety purposes, protect human health and prevent environmental issues. CalRecycle heard some of our concerns and created a "Categorical Exclusion" for food and agricultural products that require the use of plastics due to mandatory federal regulations. Though the exclusion is not as helpful as initially proposed, our team is working diligently to create workable solutions for the food and ag sector.

SB 54 broadly requires that all single use plastics be 100 percent compostable or recyclable by 2032. Impacts will be felt throughout the entire California economy well beyond food and agriculture, including single-use packaging from online retailers, as one example. Fees are also associated with differing types of plastics as part of the regulation. The goal of the fees is to assist with plastic mitigation and clean up, as well as building the necessary infrastructure to capture and recycle or compost packaging. The costs will be distributed throughout the supply chain; thereby, working against other affordability efforts taking place in Sacramento.

Infrastructure is Lacking

One of the obvious questions I receive is, "Does California have the infrastructure to manage an extensive recycling program for almost 40 million people?" The simple answer is, "No." We do know that the cost to build a statewide waste management infrastructure will be monumental.

While the funds collected may or may not go to improving the infrastructure in California — only time will tell. Some would say, this is putting the cart before the horse. Ag Council's Dairy Committee Chair Melvin Medeiros said, "This is like buying 1,000 dairy cows and not having a barn to milk them in."

It will likely require state and federal partnerships to secure the funding needed to fully implement this regulation and build the necessary infrastructure. No doubt, the cost will be enormous.

Driving Up Costs During an Affordability Crisis

The fees that will be paid by producers into the regulatory system will likely be to the tune of millions of dollars annually per entity. Those of us in agriculture know that for most commodities, our farmers are price takers with little to no room to negotiate market prices. Technically, there is an on-farm exemption when it comes to the use of plastics. However, plastics will be regulated throughout the supply chain and at the retail level.

How will these costs manifest themselves throughout the system? It is highly likely some will push through to the marketplace, possibly further increasing food and agricultural prices, while some will have to be absorbed at the processing and farm level.

The irony is not lost on us that while elected officials in California lament an affordability crisis, they continue to drive up costs throughout the supply chain with environmental mandates that have no obvious, cost-effective solutions.

Coupled with the affordability crisis, California's term limits work against us as these laws are passed and the original legislators that supported various bills have no obligation to follow-up to ensure they are successfully implemented, cost effective and workable. California legislators can pass bills and move on to their next job. As an example, the legislator who authored SB 54, is term limited this year.

Patchwork of Regulations

It is important to note that California's version of this regulation was not the first in the nation. Oregon, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota and Washington have passed packaging laws, and several other states are considering similar legislation. So, while we work through our process in Sacramento, it is imperative that we work with the trade groups across the nation to harmonize the varying state regulations. Otherwise, having a patchwork of regulations would create additional costs and compliance issues for our food producers here at home.

Ag Council Works Toward Soft Landing

Ag Council is working with *Blue Diamond* and other members to identify opportunities and gaps within the regulation and the underlying statute. We have also engaged CDFA Secretary Karen Ross on the issue. It is our hope that — for products requiring the use of plastics and other sanitary materials used for the purposes of food safety, food preservation and shelf life — we can create a clear compliance pathway that does not increase costs to the industry. Workable solutions are not easy to come by but will be found through deep conversations and a commitment to partnerships.

Learn more about Ag Council at www.agcouncil.org.

Blue Diamond Team at the Legislative Conference

Meeting with Assemblymember Solache (center)

Blue Diamond Joins Ag Council's Legislative Day at the State Capitol

Ag Council extends a special thanks to *Blue Diamond Growers* staff and farmers for participating in Ag Council's Legislative Conference in Sacramento in early May where attendees connected with over 30 legislators and staff on crucial issues in the State Legislature.

The day of outreach is an important tool for members to directly engage with state decision makers on legislation impacting your farm and cooperative.

During the morning session, attendees heard from and had a Q&A session with Assembly GOP Leader Heath Flora (R-Ripon). The group also connected with Assembly Agriculture Committee Chair Esmeralda Soria (D-Fresno) as she was recognized with Ag Council's 2026 Influential Legislator Award for her efforts on water supply, supporting funding for ag-focused emissions reduction programs and pushing back on legislation detrimental to agriculture. Flora is a past recipient of the award.

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Secretary Karen Ross spoke with attendees during lunch and covered CDFA's role in the legislative process and discussed current legislation affecting agriculture before she answered audience questions.

Attendees then met with legislators and staff in their offices to discuss critical legislative issues. The bills included: AB 2447 (Bauer-Kahan) nitrate/waste discharge programs (including ILRP), AB 1603 (Schultz) pesticides, AB 2646 (Krell) farmworker wages, and AB 2034 (Addis) food ingredients. Ag Council is urging legislators to oppose these bills.

Participants also discussed the importance of legislative support to fund four vital emissions reduction programs significantly improving air quality in California: FARMER (ag equipment upgrades), the Food Production Investment Program (FPIP), ag waste sustainability (ag burning alternatives), and methane reduction programs. Many *Blue Diamond* member-growers have benefited from these programs, and the cooperative previously received FPIP grant funding to lower facility-generated emissions.

Ag Council appreciates Alicia Rockwell and Liz Perez of *Blue Diamond Growers* for helping to coordinate *Blue Diamond*'s attendees. Thank you to all who participated. ◆

Emily Rooney, President, Ag Council of California

FIELD NOTES
with **MEL MACHADO**

The 2026 Bloom and Crop Potential

Forecasting the production of any crop involves detailed analysis of the factors affecting the bloom, as well as the conditions prior to and after bloom. While many in the industry consider official forecasts to be absolute, they are truly an estimate: "An approximate calculation or judgment of the value, number, quantity, or extent of something."

Successful forecasting is less about establishing a single forecast number and more about understanding the forces shaping production. Harvested acreage, weather volatility, water availability, and economic conditions are more influential now than ever.

Being a perennial crop, the health of the bloom can be impacted by events or conditions that occurred in the year prior to bloom, particularly during bud differentiation. These can include:

- Excess heat
- Water stress
- Poor nutritional status

Almond trees produce more flowers than are needed to set the crop. Under normal conditions, and depending on the bud set, the trees shed 40% to 80% of their buds after bloom.

Let's dive into the factors affecting the potential of the 2026 crop and consider the reasonable range of the conceivable volume.

Economic Factors

The difficult economic conditions of the past few years have impacted production practices. Reduced fertilizer applications and irrigation volumes have affected the productive potential of many orchards throughout the Central Valley. Some orchards were so impacted that they went unharvested or were even abandoned. Despite abandonment, some are in good enough condition to be considered "bearing" in the satellite imagery identifying California's bearing acres. I like to say, "If it's green and it's standing, it's in the bearing column." While we know the total pounds produced in any given crop year and we have a number for the industry's bearing acreage, we do not truly know the harvested acreage. This has an influence on the industry's calculated average yield.

The difference between the official bearing acreage and the actual harvested acreage provides the **first complicating factor** in forecasting the crop.

Winter Dormancy

Following the heavy rains that created some havoc during the 2025 harvest, the 2025/2026 winter proved to be dry and warm. Most areas of the valley did not experience frosty mornings until early January.

Fortunately, almond trees require less chilling than other crops. 200 to 500 hours below 45 degrees is the most quoted value, depending on variety. Some sources state that Nonpareil requires approximately 400 hours. University researchers have developed an alternative metric known as the "Dynamic Model" that uses an upper and lower limit to compensate for excessively warm daytime hours that may unwind chilling accumulated during overnight and early morning cold. Rather than hours below 45 degrees, the model identifies chilling as "chill portions." 22 to 32 chill portions are the most common requirement for almonds.

While the early weeks of winter were warm, tule fog set over the Central Valley in December and early January, shielding the sun for several weeks and holding temperatures low enough to provide ample chilling. By the start of the bloom, all major almond growing regions met or exceeded required chill thresholds. However, the winter conditions and the depth of chilling provided the **second complicating factor** in forecasting the crop.

Abandoned Orchard in Firebaugh by Mel Machado

The Bloom

The 2026 bloom can be easily described as early and fast. Elevated temperatures triggered an early bloom and reduced the number of days each variety presented viable flowers for pollination. While the overlap between varieties in any individual orchard was good, there was significant variation from orchard to orchard within any geographic area. In many cases, orchards planted with the same variety combination peaked as much as one week apart across the same county. Whether this is the result of individual grower economic decisions, soil type, rootstocks or chilling, the variation in peak bloom timing, combined with compressed bloom period and the storms that eliminated bee activity for several days produced the **third complicating factor** in forecasting the crop.

Post-Bloom

While bloom-time weather conditions are critical to securing a crop, post-bloom conditions also play a critical role.

Following the disruptive bloom-time rains, the Central Valley experienced near summer-like conditions. Daily maximum temperatures ran between 10 to 20 degrees above seasonal norms, reaching into the upper 80's and lower 90's. This matched or broke previous daily record highs.

The elevated temperatures pushed crop development at a very high pace. Some have noted that orchards throughout the valley moved from the white of bloom rapidly into green without the usual "dirty stage" normally visible after petals have fallen and leaves emerge. Given that the developing crop is a nutrient sink, rapid leaf development is often thought to be the result of a poor crop set.

Jacket stage by Mel Machado

Growing Season Challenges

Economic challenges during the growing season can impact flower bud differentiation, ultimately impacting production for the current and subsequent crop years.

The number of nuts in the trees, the number of trees per acre and the actual harvested acreage are important factors in the total pounds produced. Another difficult to predict but important factor that can play a significant role in the crop volume is the actual weight of the kernels. A proxy for this is reflected in the turnout percentage.

FIELD NOTES
with MEL MACHADO

> *"Our forecast for the 2026 crop is 2.69 billion pounds, with a range of 2.675 to 2.72 billion pounds."*

Turnout is the percentage of the final meat weight compared to the weight of in-hull almonds removed from the orchards at harvest. It is a comparison of the weight of the kernel versus the hull and shell. Many growers question the value of this metric given that the amount of debris and soil included in the harvested product can influence the calculation.

Turnout can also vary widely between varieties.

Normal Runs:

Nonpareil: 22% - 25%

Aldrich: 26% - 28%

Independence (thinner shell): 26% - 30%

When taken as an aggregate across varieties and a wide geographic range, the turnout percentage can provide an indication of the influences endured during the growing season and ultimate impacts on the accuracy of any crop forecast.

Turnout can be influenced by heat during the growing season and kernel development stresses. Reduced crop inputs, particularly irrigation, can adversely affect kernel weight and turnout percentage. Research has shown that excessive temperatures early in the growing season, like this March, can decrease kernel size. Considering the weather conditions over the past few crops, and the number of low/minimal care orchards throughout the Central Valley, it is easy to see how turnout can influence the final crop volume.

Looking Ahead — The 2026 Crop

Land IQ recently published the initial estimate of the 2026 crop acreage at 1,385,870 acres, a reduction of 15,226 acres from the 2025 final estimate. These values are called estimates for a reason. Again, there are many orchards of bearing age throughout the Central Valley that have not been harvested for several years. The same will be true of the 2026 crop. This fact, and the addition of the low or minimal care orchards, serves to reduce the average yield measured across the total known acreage.

Our Forecast

Our forecast for the 2026 crop is 2.69 billion pounds, with a range of 2.675 to 2.72 billion pounds.

Our analysis of each year's crop focuses on several critical considerations:

- **Acreage trends** – Consider the proportion of new plantings and removals on a county and regional basis. Also consider the age, quality, and productive potential of orchards regionally.
- **Production trends** – Consider total pounds produced by variety in each county and as a percentage of the total production.
- **Monitoring prior year growing season conditions** as they may impact bloom and production of subsequent crops.
- **Monitoring and analysis of bloom-time conditions**, including bloom timing, pollination opportunities and post-bloom conditions throughout crop development.

Trees heavy with Nonpareil in Oakdale by Mel Machado

Product going into stockpiles by Mel Machado

- **Direct observation and evaluation** of hundreds of *Blue Diamond* member orchards, as well as other plantings throughout the Central Valley.
- **Consultation** with *Blue Diamond* members, agronomists, and Crop and Pest Control Advisers on the potential production of the crops they manage.

Grower sentiment on the potential of the 2026 crop is generally in line with 2025 production. While bloom-time storms impacted the Central Valley during bloom, regional conditions provided for variable pollination and crop potential.

Northern Sacramento Valley:

The region endured the poorest bloom-time weather, with the peak of bloom experiencing several rainy days. Bloom conditions improved further to the south, providing orchards along the west side of Colusa, Yolo, and Solano counties with better pollination opportunities and better crop potential.

Northern San Joaquin Valley:

Reports of the self-fertile variety, Independence, show good crop loads in most orchards. Orchards planted to Nonpareil and Monterey are exhibiting greater variability, with Nonpareil noticeably weaker than the Monterey. Many Aldrich plantings, another Nonpareil partner, produced exceptional yields in the 2025 crop. These plantings are displaying significantly less potential this year. Owing to the later bloom timing versus the rainy weather, growers report that the Butte and Padre crop appears similar to 2025.

Southern San Joaquin Valley:

While the area generally has better weather during the bloom, it also faces the greatest water availability challenges. As in northern San Joaquin, apparent yields of the Independence and Monterey varieties appear to be on par, or slightly better than in 2025. However, the apparent yields of the Nonpareil are much more variable. Aldrich did not experience the significant production increase in 2025 that was experienced across the rest of the Central Valley and now appears to be carrying a similar or slightly smaller crop this year.

Without the USDA Objective Crop Forecast, we believe that it is in the best interest of our member-growers and customers to provide our insights into the issues that can influence the final crop volume. Stay tuned for updates as the season progresses. ◆

Mel Machado,
Chief Agricultural Officer,
Blue Diamond Growers

ALMOND MARKET UPDATE

Blue Diamond Almond Market Report — May 13, 2026

OVERVIEW

April shipments totaled 219.8 million pounds, within industry expectations at an 8.8% decline year over year on the heels of the last two strong shipment reports. April exports reached 167.3 million pounds, down 10.9% from prior year but continue to surpass last year's pace by 1.3% at 1.55 billion pounds. Domestic shipments for April were mostly flat at 1.3% behind prior year. Domestic year-to-date shipments remain behind at 444 million pounds, down 14.4%. Total industry shipments through April stand at 1.99 billion pounds, down 2.7% versus last year.

SHIPMENTS

India:

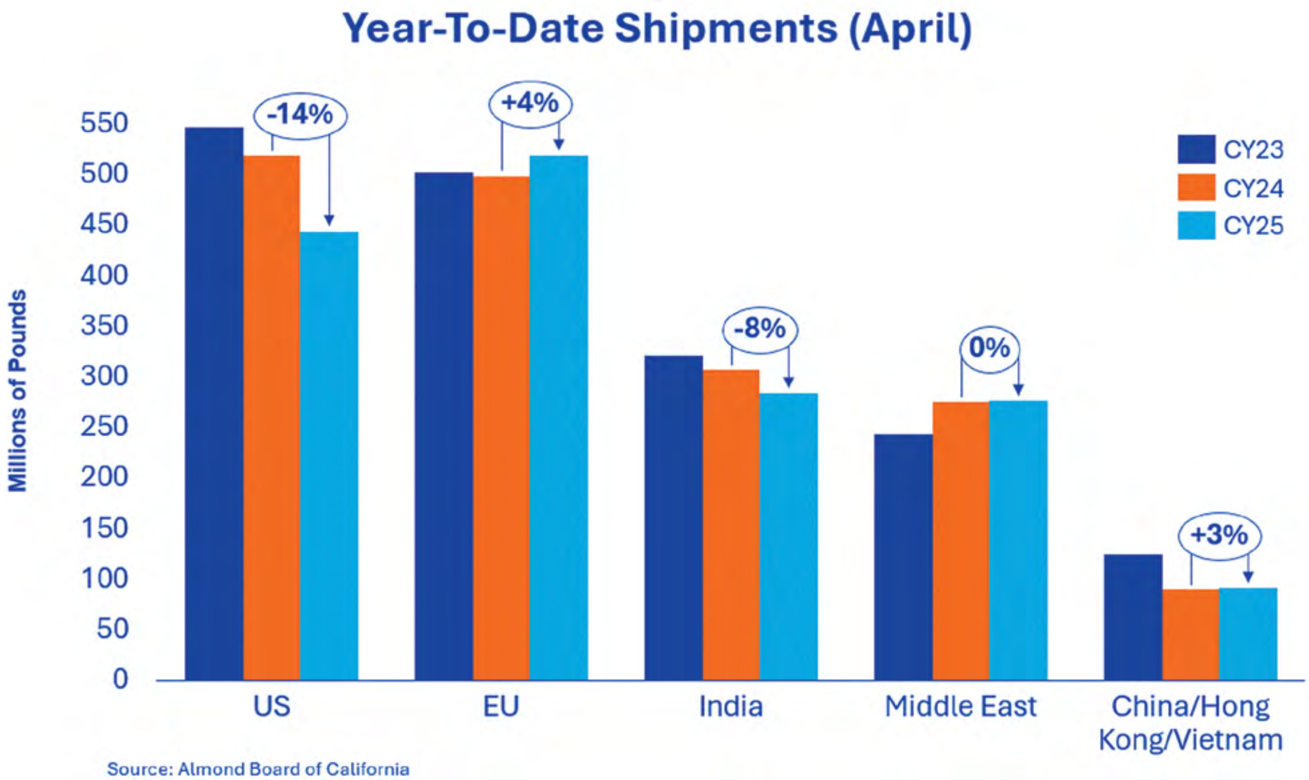
For the month of April, India imported 31.6 million pounds, a significant reduction from last year's 45.9 million pounds. Compared to last year, the gap has widened to 8%. The market has taken a step back as warmer temperatures have reduced local consumption. India remains a strong player for global inshell consumption and will need to re-engage to secure inventories ahead of new crop supply.

China/Hong Kong/Vietnam:

April 2026 shipments to China/Hong Kong totaled 3.7 million pounds, marking a 110% increase compared to prior year. Shipments to Vietnam reached 4.8 million pounds, down 34% for the month and up 46% year to date. Combined shipments to these regions increased 2.65% year to date.

Europe:

Europe took a slight step back this month, with its growth rate declining year over year from 7% to 4%. The market continues to be a solid performer and reliable outlet for California almonds. Buyer mentality has not changed all



year. Calculated and cautious buying activity should be expected to continue through the end of the crop year, with many beginning to shop for new crop coverage. Spain (+17%), Italy (+9%), and Germany (+4%) continue to lead the region's growth.

Middle East:

The region continues to be hampered by the conflict in Iran. Buyers in the Persian Gulf region continue to take a wait-and-see approach with little appetite for risk. Demand is still present across the region, but logistical challenges and increased transportation costs make it difficult to take positions. Trade flows continue to evolve with new destinations now serving as trade hubs with Dubai unable to participate. Turkey continues to show strength, up 35%, while Pakistan, now up 202%, has emerged as a new throughput option to service the region's demand. Trade will always find a way if buyers want to engage, but until a resolution is reached, the industry will continue to define a new normal over the coming weeks and months.

Domestic:

The domestic market shipped 52.6 million pounds, resulting in a decrease of 1.3%. April was the second largest shipment month of this crop year, bringing the market year-over-year decrease to 14.4%. Softer monthly sales have led to forward commitments declining by 5.2%. After a long period of steep declines, it appears the domestic market is maintaining its new monthly shipping average just shy of 50 million pounds. With forward commitments of 199 million pounds, this market is well positioned to match prior year's final quarter shipments of approximately 152 million pounds.

COMMITMENTS

Total commitments currently stand at 517 million pounds, trailing last year by 1.6%. New sales for the month were subdued in anticipation of the Subjective Estimate and totaled 160.7 million pounds, down from 192.5 million last year. The domestic market secured 39.9 million pounds, while exports added 120.8 million pounds of new coverage. Total commitments for the domestic market are now at 199.6 million pounds while exports have reached 317 million pounds. With softer sales for the month, uncommitted inventory is currently up 4.2% at 605.8 million pounds versus 581.5 million pounds prior year.

MARKET REPORT

CROP

The 2025 crop receipts are trickling in with just 4 million pounds added in April, bringing the receipts to approximately 2.69 billion pounds.

Blue Diamond's May 9, 2026 Crop Estimate Report projects a California almond crop ranging between 2.675 and 2.72, with a center point of 2.69 billion pounds. The overall estimate reflects a balanced but cautious outlook acknowledging weather impacts, orchard abandonments, and summer conditions which determine whether the crop reaches projected potential. The *Blue Diamond* crop estimate is closely aligned with similar estimates by the USDA Subjective Estimate (2.7 billion pounds) and others in the industry. We will continue to share crop updates in our June Market Report and our July Crop Forecast Report to provide a more precise forecast as we progress through harvest. ◆

Market Perspective

Overall, the market outlook for the final months of the season remains positive, supported by strong global demand, and well-balanced supply, which is expected to stabilize pricing heading into new crop. We anticipate consistent performance from the domestic market for the remainder of the season, and despite the challenges in trade flow given the geopolitical environment, exports continue to put on a strong performance year to date.

Final shipments for the crop year should result in a manageable carryout. Consistent estimates for the 2026 crop paint a similar picture to 2025, dictating a well-balanced market. Disciplined selling and buying behaviors should lead to a market that is stable to firm, providing a runway for consistent booking activity throughout the crop year.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Blue Diamond Growers Crop Estimate
bit.ly/2026estimate

Almond Board of California Full Position Report
bit.ly/ABCpositionreport

USDA Subjective Estimate
bit.ly/NASSsubjective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THE ALMOND BOARD

What's C&U? And Why Should Growers Care?

When growers think about foodservice demand, restaurants and packaged foods often come to mind. But another foodservice segment is quietly shaping ingredient use, consumer preferences and long-term demand: College and University (C&U) foodservice.

C&U refers to on campus dining programs at colleges and universities. These programs feed students, faculty and staff every day across multiple venues and meals. Collectively, C&U foodservice represents an estimated $18 billion industry nationwide, with thousands of campuses and significant purchasing power. For almonds, it is a segment where scale and influence intersect.

A High Volume, High Impact Foodservice Channel

College campuses serve food continuously. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks are offered seven days a week. Some campuses prepare tens of thousands of meals daily across dining halls, cafés, food trucks and catering operations. Even small ingredient decisions, when multiplied across millions of meals each year, can add up quickly.

ABC is partnering with campus dining teams like UMass Amherst to spotlight almonds through on-campus activations and recipe support, helping students discover craveable almond applications beyond snacking and building long-term preference that can carry past graduation.

That scale is why the Almond Board of California engages with campus dining not only to encourage menu inclusion, but to help make almonds visible, desirable and repeatedly chosen by students. When almonds show up in everyday meals and beverages, they can influence preferences, normalize new uses beyond snacking and ultimately build long-term demand.

Campus Dining Has Changed Dramatically

College dining today looks very different than it did a generation ago. Many universities now operate chef-driven programs that emphasize scratch cooking, global flavors and ingredient transparency. On some campuses, dining experiences rival what is found in major cities.

Dining halls often feature multiple stations under one roof. These include plant forward menus, global cuisines, bakeries, smoothie bars and allergen aware options. Dining teams are expected to meet nutritional goals, sustainability commitments and dietary needs, while still delivering flavors students want.

For almonds, this shift creates meaningful opportunity. Almond butter, almond flour and other almond forms can show up across dayparts in smoothies, baked goods, sauces, snacks and globally-inspired dishes. When students encounter almonds in craveable, on-trend formats, it broadens how they think about almonds and can influence what they buy and eat beyond campus.

Engaging with Campuses

ABC works with campus dining leaders, executive chefs and purchasers, especially at universities that manage their own dining programs, to make it easier to feature almonds in ways students will choose. These teams shape what shows up on menus and, by extension, what students try, like and come back for.

Chef-driven college dining is reshaping foodservice demand, an estimated $18 billion channel nationwide where small ingredient choices scale across millions of meals.

Engagement includes on-campus activations that connect students with almond-based dishes already on the menu and makes those choices easier to notice and select. ABC also collaborates with chefs to test recipes and menu applications that highlight almonds in relevant, student-appealing ways. Limited-time-offer toolkits support this work by providing recipes, signage and guidance that help dining teams feature almonds consistently and creatively.

Each effort is designed to remove barriers and help operators see almonds as functional, versatile ingredients that solve real menu challenges.

Learning What Works in Real Kitchens

Being on campus provides valuable insight as well. Seeing almonds used in high-volume kitchens highlights what works well and what needs improvement. Small observations, such as how almond butter behaves during high-volume service, can reveal operational challenges and spark ideas for further research or technical guidance.

These learnings inform future product forms, usage recommendations and support materials. Over time, that benefits the entire supply chain, including handlers and growers.

Reaching Consumers at a Formative Moment

College students are making independent food choices, often for the first time. Repeated exposure to almonds in appealing dishes expands how they think about almonds beyond snacking.

Consistency matters. When a limited time dish performs well enough to become a regular menu item, it signals that almonds are delivering value for both operators and consumers. That repeat exposure helps reinforce almonds as familiar, versatile ingredients.

Measuring Success Across Campuses

Measuring impact in foodservice is complex. There is no single metric that captures success. Instead, the Almond Board looks at a combination of signals such as menu adoption, chef feedback, toolkit downloads and website engagement.

These measurements are directional rather than exact. Together, they help guide strategy as campus dining and student preferences continue to evolve. Importantly, most almond products featured through C&U programs are already available through existing foodservice distributors, helping turn menu exposure into real usage while supporting current handler and distributor relationships.

Why C&U Matters to Growers

C&U foodservice represents a long-term investment in almond demand because it combines large-scale meal volume with an unusually strong ability to shape consumer choices. Campus dining teams influence what students try repeatedly, and those experiences can carry forward into habits and purchases after graduation.

For growers, this work helps keep almonds top-of-mind as these student-consumers navigate more choices and more competing ingredients. By inspiring chefs and putting almonds in front of students in everyday, desirable formats, the Almond Board is helping drive preference and demand in one of the most influential food environments in the country.

In short, College & University foodservice is not just about feeding campuses. It is about influencing what the next generation enjoys, expects and chooses, and building durable almond demand as those preferences travel beyond the dining hall.

Article Contributed by the Almond Board of California

THE BEE BOX

The Benefits of Hedgerows in Your Orchard

Bee pollination is essential for the production of many crops, including almonds. The total annual value of pollination services across all crops is estimated at $4.2 billion globally.[1] Adopting practices that support pollinators provides both environmental and financial benefits, and studies have shown that incorporating pollinator habitat in orchards decreases input costs and increases productivity in almonds. [1-5, 14-16]

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) defines a hedgerow as dense perennial vegetation in a linear design established to achieve a conservation purpose. Building on this definition, hedgerows can be intentionally planned to function as high-quality pollinator habitat by careful selection of plant species and structural features that support both foraging and nesting needs throughout the year.

Hedgerows can incorporate a diverse mix of shrubs, grasses, and flowering forbs that provide continuous blooms from early spring through late fall. Early-season blooming species support emerging bees, while mid- and late-season flowers sustain pollinators when other resources are scarce. Prioritizing native plants adapted to local soil and climate conditions improves establishment success and ensures compatibility with native pollinator species.

Beyond floral resources, hedgerows can be structured to provide essential nesting habitat. Many native bees are ground-nesters, so leaving patches of bare, well-drained soil within or adjacent to the hedgerow is critical. Other bees nest in cavities, which can be supported by incorporating plants with hollow or pithy stems and by maintaining some woody debris or standing dead stems. Layering vegetation—from low-growing grasses to taller shrubs—also creates sheltered microclimates that protect pollinators from wind, temperature extremes, and pesticide drift. Hedgerows are often incorporated along field edges, waterways, or contours where they can connect fragmented habitats and serve as movement corridors for pollinators. Integrating these elements transforms a standard conservation hedgerow into a multifunctional system that enhances biodiversity, supports crop pollination, and contributes to overall farm resilience.

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Honey bees also greatly benefit from on-farm habitat, like hedgerows, which can be designed to provide food sources when commodity and/or cover crops are not in bloom, preventing stressors like low food availability and improving overall honey bee health.[2] While honey bees are great almond pollinators, wild bees have proven to be more efficient pollinators[3] and a combination of honey bees and other wild pollinators has resulted in greater fruit set. Habitat within or adjacent to orchards increases wild bee abundance and diversity[4] and supports increased fruit set.[5] Habitat additions improve environmental conditions and resilience to climate stressors,[6-8] and hedgerows enhance ecological function in agricultural landscapes.[9-10] Habitat creation consistently increases pollinator presence and activity.[7,9,11] Even modest habitat additions can increase pollinator and beneficial insect populations and strengthen pest-control services.[7,12-13]

The *Blue Diamond Growers* Orchard Stewardship Incentive Program (OSIP) is a voluntary, science-based initiative that encourages almond producers to adopt sustainable orchard practices. It offers financial incentives for implementing best practices in environmental stewardship, worker safety, and community investment while helping document and

[6] Park, M. G., Blitzer, E. J., Gibbs, J., Losey, J. E., and Danforth, B. N. Negative effects of pesticides on wild bee communities can be buffered by landscape context. Proceedings of the Royal Society B, 282, 20150299.(2015). <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/full/10.1098/rspb.2015.0299>

[7] Blaauw, B. R., and Isaacs, R. Flower plantings increase wild bee abundance and the pollination services provided to a pollination-dependent crop. Journal of Applied Ecology, 51, 890–898. (2014). <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1365-2664.12257>

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[9] Morandin, L. A., and Kremen, C. Hedgerow restoration promotes pollinator populations and exports native bees to adjacent fields. Ecological Applications, 23, 829–839. (2013). <https://doi.org/10.1890/12-1051.1>

communicate responsible production to markets and consumers. The Triple Diamond level of OSIP recognizes top-performing growers who implement advanced stewardship practices. Triple Diamond growers receive a $1,000 base payment, plus $0.01 per pound of almonds delivered. This makes Triple Diamond the highest paying OSIP tier, with increased per-pound returns tied directly to production volume. To obtain Triple Diamond, growers must:

- Complete the California Almond Stewardship Platform (CASP) assessment, covering orchard setup, business management, and orchard practices.
- Enroll in Pollinator Partnership's Bee Friendly Farming (BFF) Program and achieve BFF third tier. To achieve the third tier of the BFF Program, growers must be able to demonstrate that they have incorporated all key components of pollinator habitat and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) on their farm. These key components are described in detail in the BFF Handbook (bit.ly/BFFhandbook).

Requirements:

1. Offer forage providing good nutrition for bees on at least 3% of cropped land.
2. Provide an average of two blooming species of plants per season from early spring to summer, and into late autumn.
3. Incorporate permanent pollinator habitat, which contains pollinator forage features, equivalent to 0.5% of total cropped area.
4. Offer clean water for bees when managed honey bees are present on site, if uninhibited by government-mandated water restrictions.

5. Utilize IPM to reduce or eliminate the use of chemicals.

Blue Diamond has received a $45 million grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help growers implement on-farm practices through the Advancing Markets for Producers (AMP) program. This is a voluntary program for *Blue Diamond* member-growers, or growers who farm on a *Blue Diamond* orchard. The AMP grant provides a cost-share incentive to cover seed and plant material, and direct financial reimbursement for implementing one or more of the following eligible practices: hedgerows, cover crops and whole orchard recycling. *Blue Diamond*'s growers are eligible to receive their standard OSIP incentive in addition to the reimbursement for eligible AMP practices. Pollinator Partnership (P2) (pollinator.org) and Project *Apis m.* (P*Am.*) (projectapism.org) are partnering with *Blue Diamond* to provide technical assistance to growers through the planning and implementation process; P2 will support with hedgerow projects while P*Am.* supports with cover crops. Learn more about the AMP program here: bit.ly/AMPGrantApp.

Cody Wilson,
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Codi Hale,
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Pollinator Partnership

[10] Morandin, L.A., Long, R.F., and Kremen, C. Pest Control and Pollination Cost Benefit Analysis of Hedgerow Restoration in a Simplified Agricultural Landscape. Journal of Economic Entomology. (2016). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jee/tow086>

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TIME TO CONSIDER

By the time this article comes out, I will be about a month or so away from my five year anniversary as regional manager with Blue Diamond Growers. In those five years I have answered the usual questions. "What's the price? How's the market? When's the next payment?" There is one question, though, that typically is asked only as we get close to harvest and it is "What actually happens to my sample when it goes to the test room?" In this article I'm going to talk about the process of how your product is graded. I can't forget about the orchard entirely as we're in a critical stretch of the season, so I'll start with navel orangeworm management and a few considerations as we get closer to harvest in case we're dealing with another wet stop-and-go harvest year.

Almond Windrow by Trent Voss

Navel orangeworm (NOW) is still the primary topic as we head into harvest. By the time you read this, you will be well past the timing window for mummy spray, previously known as the May spray application. This year produced probably the most sporadic application window for the mummy spray application that I have seen. Varying levels in trap accounts along with intermittent storms led to varied spray applications throughout the state. The impact this will have later in the year...We will just have to wait and see. But make sure your hull split application is dialed in. Timing is the most critical factor, so be diligent when checking your orchards and make sure the material you choose aligns with your strategy. Remember, hull split starts at the top of the trees. So, if you're watching the nuts that are at eye level, you've missed the timing. Watching the tops of the trees for the "blank nuts," those where the kernel failed to form, can help you get the timing right. Blanks split 10 to 14 days ahead of the good nuts.

Unless you're farming a self-fertile variety, you will also need to think about a second application. In higher pressure areas, or if you've historically had elevated damage, you'll also want to target hull split on the pollinizer varieties. The days of a single hull split treatment in most orchards are largely gone. If you're making more than one hull split application, chemical selection matters: rotate modes of action to slow resistance development and make sure the pre harvest interval (PHI) fits your anticipated shake timing.

Wet weather seemed to somewhat catch growers off guard in 2025. This led to high excess moisture levels and even concealed damage (the internal breakdown of the kernel). We've all learned that when we get rain, we also get mud. Sometimes we get rain right when we don't want it. If you find yourself staring at a forecast that could complicate harvest, here are a few key points:

1. **If you're planning to shake and rain is in the forecast, don't shake.** Shaking ahead of rain is a fast way to create problems down the road, from stuck equipment to slower dry down and higher risk of quality loss.

Sample Division by Mel Machado

2. **If you've already shaken and the almonds are on the ground, keep them flat.** Don't sweep them up until they've had a chance to dry. Sweeping wet nuts onto wet soil won't help them dry; it usually does the opposite.

3. **If the nuts are already in the windrows, pick them up and put them down.** Run the crop through a conditioner to remove leaves, soil, and other debris that holds moisture. If a conditioner isn't available, taking a pass with a harvester then spreading the crop back out can be better than letting it sit in a tight, wet windrow.

4. **Remember: moisture is obvious, but heat is often the bigger problem.** Microbial activity in a wet windrow, trailer or stockpile can generate heat. That heat can quickly drive quality losses in the form of concealed damage! Remember one simple rule: once you pick up wet almonds, you must keep them in motion. High moisture almonds cannot safely stay in trailers or stockpiles for any length of time as heat will quickly ruin them.

5. **Communicate early.** Keep your huller and your regional manager in the loop if you're bringing in wet product so we can help you navigate next steps, including whether a load should go to dryers.

So, once the product is successfully delivered to *Blue Diamond Growers*, what happens next?

Before your product makes it to the test room, the first step is sampling at delivery. A sample is taken from a continuous flow that represents the entire load. This approach provides one of the most random and fair samples we can pull for that delivery. Sample size also varies with the size of the load; larger deliveries require larger samples.

Once the sample arrives at the test room, it's randomly reduced and split into two parts: a **test sample** used for the initial grading, and a **reference sample** that is held on site in case you request a retest of the original grade.

To establish a grade, the test sample is assessed by a grader inside the test room. The grader is trained to identify rejects such as NOW damage, brown spot, and ant damage. They also separate out chipped and scratched kernels, foreign material, and doubles. After each component is identified, we determine the weight of each category and enter those weights into our payment system.

We use gram weights rather than ounces because it's a more precise unit of measurement (there are 28.3 grams in an ounce). Those weights are used to calculate the percentages you see on your delivery statement. As you know, you're paid on **Total Good Meat Weight**, and quality adjustments (premiums or deductions) are driven by the percentages of rejects, foreign material, chipped and scratched, and doubles. For detailed grading practices and standards, please refer to the current Crop Delivery Guide for the applicable crop year.

We hope this helps answer some of the questions about what happens to your product once we receive it. If you have any questions about your deliveries during this year's harvest, please reach out to your regional manager. We're your best resource for spotting issues early, troubleshooting quickly, and helping you keep your quality where it needs to be. ◆

Trent Voss, Sr. Regional Manager, Blue Diamond Growers

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- Classic comic books.

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WANTED
- Used OMC A-6 shaker head. Must be in good condition and complete.

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FOR SALE
- Heavy duty tractor trailer with 20" tractor tires and crank up ramps. $2,500.

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FOR SALE
- Set of 4, Firestone Turf and Field tires and wheels. Like new. 50-75 hours on the tires. Fits Kubota M 85/60 tractor. 18" rims on rear tires, 8" rims on front. R-3 tread. Asking $4,800.

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FOR SALE
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- KCI Almond Nut Carts (2), $800 each

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- Adjustable 9 foot rear push brush rake: $700

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- 30 HP electric lift pump rated at 1000/gal/minute with screen basket: $3,000

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FOR SALE
- New super strong shaker tires — 10 ply-14.5/75 — 16.1: $1,350 each.
- Skid steer connect with forks and brush rake attachments (call for prices).
- 350-gallon fuel tank: $400
- 3-point nut crowder: $1,500

Call Sam, (209) 765-0027 (leave message). Ceres

FOR SALE
- Vrisimo flail mower Model #SC-100: $5,000
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- Spring tooth with attached following harrow 8ft wide 3 point hook-up: $1,000
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- 2 supercarts, good tires. $4,500 each.

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FOR SALE
- 2,000 gallon PBM water tank with Honda pump on dual-axle trailer and fifteen foot discharge hose with camlock fitting. Like new, used 3-4 days a year for quick fill-up of orchard sprayers: $12,000
- Maibo PTO air compressor: $250

Call (209) 986-2409. Manteca

FOR SALE
- Pruning tower, older model Jackrabbit with 3 cylinder Kubota diesel. $8,500 Includes hydraulic lopper shears and chain saw, both very little use.

Call Tim, (209) 648-3724

FOR SALE
- KCI Elevator/Honda Engine. Very good condition: $7,000
- 3 Almond carts: $500/ea
- Allis-Chalmers 16 ft field cultivator with Unverferth spike harrow and crumblers: $3,000

Call (209) 631-3160. LeGrand

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- 2018 KCI Kingsburg Cultivator Inc 2418 HS Field Elevator/ Conveyor with Honda Motor and new battery, $10,000 OBO.
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