

Central California Almond Growers Association

P.O. Box 338

Kerman, CA 93630

### President's Report (continued)

At this time, I wish to personally invite you to attend our 63rd Annual Meeting that will be held on Tuesday, June 9, 2026. The meeting will once again be held at Pardini's Banquet Hall located at 2257 West Shaw Avenue Fresno, CA 93711 and will begin at 6 pm. Invitations will be sent out in early May. As always, we promise to serve you a great meal and present a full report on the state of your member owned cooperative.

### Contact Information

**President & CEO - Michael Kelley**

michaelk@ccaga.com (559) 289-8969

**Chief Operating Officer - Bob Donnelly**

bobd@ccaga.com (559) 567-4873

**Controller- Valerie Parkey**

valeriep@ccaga.com (559) 846-5377

**Operations Manager - Drake Salwasser**

drakes@ccaga.com (559) 433-7528

**Sanger Supervisor - Luciano Contreras**

lucianoc@ccaga.com (559) 567-4871

### Direct Deposit Reminder

Please remember that as of January 1, 2024, we do not mail payments using the United States Postal Service. This change is necessitated due to increases in mail theft that have been occurring. If you have not already done so, please sign up for Direct Deposit. You can easily do this by calling our main office, (559) 846-5377, and asking for the form. The only other way to receive payments from us in the future will be to physically pick up a check at our Kerman office each time we make a distribution. This change is for your own protection and ours.

### OUR CORE VALUE

ADDING THE GREATEST POTENTIAL  
VALUE TO MEMBERS' PRODUCT WITH  
THE HIGHEST QUALITY, SERVICE  
AND INTEGRITY.



# CENTRAL CALIFORNIA ALMOND GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Post Office Box 338 ♦ Kerman, California 93630-0338

CCAGA ♦ GROWING STRONGER EVERYDAY ♦ NEWSLETTER ♦ Spring 2026 ♦ Vol. 21, No. 1

## Nomination Period Opens on April 1

The nomination period for the election of members to sit on the Association's Board of Directors opens Wednesday, April 1 and closes Thursday, April 30. This year three seats are up for election, Seat #1 held by Director Matt Abercrombie, Seat #2 held by Director Matt Efird and Seat #3 held by Jim Anderson.

If you are interested in running for a seat on the Board of Directors, please let us know. We will be happy to provide you with an application to run in this year's election. When completed, the application must be returned to Mr. Tom Freitas Jr., the Chairman of the Committee for Election Certification. On May 4, the election ballots will be mailed to all regular members who are of record and the election will run for 30 days. In early June, the ballots will be counted, and the committee will make a report to the Board of Directors. After our Board meeting, a report announcing the results will be made to the entire membership at our Annual Dinner Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, June 9, 2026.

Should you have questions about this year's election, please call the Kerman office at (559) 846-5377 and request to speak with President & CEO, Michael Kelley. He will be happy to walk you through the entire process.

## Change is Upon Us at CCAGA

President & CEO Michael Kelley will be retiring from Central California Almond Growers Association in the very near future. During his tenure, he has seen tremendous growth in the almond industry and at CCAGA. His first season saw a 53,453,656 pound crop that was shelled in 2005 as well as a record high crop of 155,265,958 pounds in 2020. To meet this tidal wave of growth numerous changes were made to plant equipment, information systems, and personnel. These were certainly significant times for your cooperative and we believe we have met each and every challenge with success for our 385 members.

Mike's last day as the Chief Executive Officer will occur on January 1, 2027 after nearly 22 years of service to this Association.

On June 3, 2026 the annual reorganization of the Board will take place to assign the Corporate Officers of the Association. At that time Michael Kelley will retain the role of Chief Executive Officer until his retirement. Bob Donnelly will assume the role as President.

## Robert Donnelly is Pegged for Succession

The Board of Directors seated a selection committee in November for the purpose of finding a replacement to fill the President & CEO position at CCAGA. Director Lee Erickson was designated as Chairman of the Selection committee. Chairman Jeff McKinney and Vice Chairman Matt Efird also were tasked to sit on this committee. Upon a thorough review of the candidates, Robert Donnelly has been chosen to succeed to the President & CEO position effective January 1, 2027.

Mr. Donnelly was hired as the Association's Member Relations and Commodity Sales Coordinator on August 4, 2014. He did an exceptional job in this capacity and proved himself to be an excellent addition to our team. On November 15, 2015, he was elevated to the position of Chief Operating Officer upon the departure of Jim Sears. This is where he has truly proved his merit. Bob's engineering mind and his organizational skills have made him the best candidate to succeed Mr. Kelley in running this exceedingly large agricultural service cooperative organization. We are unique and there are many complicated facets of our business model. Bob knows these complexities well. He will be the fifth leader to head CCAGA since its inception 63 years ago. No one knows the complexity of our four shellers, seasonal logistics, our membership and our human resources better than Bob. It will be the focus and commitment of Mr. Kelley and the Board of Directors in the days ahead to ensure a smooth transition. Bob is married to the former Korina Gardea. They have two children Alivia (8) and Avery (6).



## Member Relations & Administrative Coordinator

Almost everyone is experiencing difficult times, especially the agricultural industry. With that said, if you made any changes to your acreage after the survey was sent in early January, please let me know. Having a solid total acreage number is beneficial for senior management when preparing the 2026 budget. The Board of Directors also utilizes the total acreage number when considering our waitlisted growers.

Last season, we hosted a membership tour in October and November. The attendance was great and allowed new members to learn more about the hulling and shelling process. Members asked various questions and there was a great discussion about the industry. We do plan to host two more tours in the upcoming season, so please continue to check for a Constant Contact email regarding specific dates.

About 43% of the growers in this Association ship their product to Blue Diamond Growers (BDG). BDG has recently made changes to their quality and premium schedule. If you have any questions about their changes, I would be happy to discuss them with you. It is my job to ensure that questions regarding quality are answered prior to season.

With the 2025 season behind us, please remember it is better to make changes to your membership sooner rather than later. If you started a lease or changed your business name, please contact me. I understand legal paperwork can have a wide-ranged timeline, but it is important to make changes before August when everyone becomes busy.

I am also trying to work with our software developer to have an option through the grower portal to complete the yearly Grower Information Sheet and 2026 Processor Assignment of Crop Proceeds. There have been many requests to have a digital option for completing and returning these forms. Please be patient with us as we try our hardest to have this request implemented.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns, 559-267-3071 or celestel@ccaga.com.



## Chief Operating Officer

We have been busy at the Association working on a few projects to improve your facilities. In Kerman we have concluded the addition of a fourth in-ground truck scale at the quality control building north of the Kerman office. During the 2025 crop year, we rented a drive over scale to help alleviate the pressure of inbound field run truckloads being delivered to Kerman. We used the rented scale primarily for commodity trucks shipping the cooperative's by-products but also shipped a few outbound meat loads to some of your Handlers to test our software system. We saw a dramatic decrease in the quantity of down time of inbound and outbound field run trucks at the main office scales as drivers waited to unload in our stockpile yard or weigh out to return empty trailers to the field. The new scale location will be fully operational for the 2026 crop year to relieve the pressure on the three scales located at the Kerman Office.

As we prepare for the 2026 hulling and shelling season, we will continue to ensure our four Huller/Shellers are in tip top shape and ready to receive your product. We are always improving upon our process flows and continue to strive to provide the best quality to be delivered to you handler.

## Solar Array 1 Savings


In 2015, the Board of Directors voted to construct our first one-megawatt fixed tilt solar array (CCAGA 1) at our Kerman site which came online in April of 2016. This array has been offsetting PG&E costs under the NEM 1.0 tariff at Kerman Plant #3 for nearly 10 years with its lease payments to Farm Credit concluding in May of 2026. The Association will outright own CCAGA 1, at that time lowering the yearly lease expense and further increasing savings. This milestone has given management the opportunity to memorialize exactly how much CCAGA has saved in comparison to our initial estimates.

As we all know, the cost of power has nearly doubled since 2016. When CCAGA 1 came online the cost per kWh to your association was 11.9 cents. Today, the cost per kWh is 22.5 cents, an increase of 10.6 cents or 89% from 2016. When the Board of

Directors decided to move forward with CCAGA 1 there was an expected cumulative savings by year 10 of \$830,841.46. CCAGA 1 solar array has actually saved the membership \$1,251,927.66 over the last 10 years. This is wonderful news and truly shows one of the many merits of installing the solar.

The Board of Directors also approved a 1.2 megawatt tracking solar array (CCAGA 2) which has been operating since 2019 in Kerman. Additionally, the Board's recent approval has allowed for a 610 Kwh project at the Sanger location and we recently celebrated its one-year anniversary in February 2025. The three projects total 2.75 megawatts of solar production to the grid to offset 52% of our total energy needs. CCAGA 2 and CCAGA 3 are both operating under the Nem 2.0 tariff which will continue to provide vast savings to CCAGA.

### President's Report



After twenty-one years as the Association's President & CEO, I pause reflect on where we were when I began on June 1, 2005 and where we are today. There have always been challenges, but I am very proud of protecting the organization financially and protecting the sanctity of the Bylaws that continue to keep your cooperative safe, reliable and strong. While transitions can be difficult, I wish to assure you that we have been proactive in making sure this transition with the management team is as smooth as possible. I look forward to what will be my last season with you.

Let me provide some thoughts on the season ahead:

- It appears that a good crop has set on our Central California almond orchards which will be delivered to us for hulling and shelling services this summer. It will not be a record, but it does appear to be a good crop. This is despite less than ideal conditions which occurred during pollination.
- We budgeted last year for hull prices to be at \$55.00 per ton during this fiscal period. Fortunately, with 68% of our hulls sold we are currently averaging \$93.00 per ton. Not bad, but still below the cost of production. New crop is trading at similar levels.

- For the past three years our dairy friends have been reeling from the low prices they receive for the fluid milk they produce. They too are operating below the cost of production.
- The price of almond kernels has fortunately held steady since this time last spring, but costs have certainly risen. However, at around the mid-\$2 range the price received is basically breakeven depending on yield and what irrigation district in which a member operates.
- Repairs have gone exceedingly well, and we are well ahead of schedule in being ready to process what appears will be an earlier crop by perhaps as much as two weeks.
- We have been proactive in ordering many items before the military excursion in the middle east, especially our plastic needed in the stockpile yard.

The 2025 fiscal period will conclude on April 30, 2026, and will continue the pattern of "more of the same" that we have experienced since the 2022 fiscal period. That season we returned the second largest dividend to our members. We had an excellent production volume and experienced record high hull and shell values on products we had sold to dairies. However, since we closed the 2022 fiscal period "pool," we have been experiencing an incredible malaise that is prevalent across many aspects of American agriculture and the general economy. While we have seen modest improvement, times are still uncertain. Once again, we affirm that we will be diligent in protecting your interests. We know you have put great trust in us when processing your annual almond production, and it is a responsibility we do not take lightly.

On a brighter note, I am personally very happy with the selection of Robert Donnelly to lead this agricultural service cooperative. He will do an excellent job for our members and our industry. Bob is ready to meet this task that will be presented to him in the latter part of this year.

We hope you have found in CCAGA a shared vision in delivering the highest level of quality and service for our 385 members. We have achieved continued success dating back to 1963. We thank you for your patronage.