In this Report: 1) Almond Facts, 2) Bee Health Trends, 3) Demand for Bees in 2021

As commercial members of the American Beekeeping Federation, we encourage you to speak with your growers or brokers often and be honest about your hive strength. Network with your fellow beekeepers so that no viable hives go unrented. We encourage the use of written pollination agreements. Ask about the growers’ protocols for pest management particularly the use of insect growth regulators (IGRs) and fungicides in tank mixes. Arm yourself with a copy of the Almond Board’s “Best Management Practices” handbook to back up good bee care practices.

ALMOND FACTS
According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS):

- In 2019, total almond acreage reached 1,530,000 acres—a net increase of 10% over 2018. This number does not include first-time planters not reported to NASS.

- In 2020, there will be over 1,260,000 acres needing bees. In the last 12 months, 25,000 acres have been pushed while 33,421 are coming on line.

- The five California counties with 72% of all almond acreage are Kern, Fresno, Stanislaus, Merced and Madera.

As quoted below, good bees will be needed for the upcoming almond pollination season.

Interesting Fact: California almond growers received a market disruption payment through the Farm Service Agency equal to 10% of their crop. For those that took advantage of this program, this payment takes care of their 2021 bee rental bill!

BEE HEALTH TRENDS
Bee Informed Partnership (BIP) is a nonprofit organization that provides commercial and sideliner beekeeping operations with individual in-field colony health assessments and consultation through its Tech Transfer Team program.

Here are a few general trends field specialists observed during the 2020 season:

- Overall favorable weather conditions during 2020 almond pollination set the stage for good spring build up, and colonies coming out of pollination were on average one frame of bees larger this year compared to 2019.

- Varroa loads in 2020 varied from one operation to another in all regions, but generally, those who were successful at coming out of almonds or after splits in June, had compared to those who did not get a good handle on their mites earlier in the year.

- Operations that split a majority of their colonies in the spring show lower Varroa loads in the fall. On average this fall, Varroa loads are similar, tended slightly higher in a few regions (Michigan, Minnesota and Texas), or slightly lower in others (Oregon and California), but not statistically different to last year’s load for the same period.
• In terms of honey bee diseases, there was European Foulbrood (EFB) and Chalkbrood present early in the season, but EFB was more problematic in California and Texas, and Chalkbrood in the Midwest.

DEMAND FOR BEES IN 2021

**Zac Browning, Browning Honey, Jamestown, ND:** “Despite a record 2020 almond crop and C-19 market disruptions, demand for bees in almonds is as strong as ever. With more almond acres in the nut-bearing stage than ever before and the usual wide-spread reports of hive losses, every strong hive will definitely be needed in February.”

**Steve Hunter, Bee Broker from Madera, CA area:** “With more acreage coming on line, demand is going to be larger. Hive health is already an issue. Good bees will always find a home.”