

The Conversation | The Sacramento Bee The Sacramento Bee

The number of acres in California devoted to growing almonds has doubled in the past 10 years, as global demand has skyrocketed. Almond production has generated billions of dollars for the state's economy. This year The Sacramento Bee's editorial board will be exploring the world of almonds and issues of land use, water rights, job creation and food policy, among others. To start the Conversation, we ask: What is California's responsibility to feed the world?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Almonds are not foie gras

Re "State's growing, and thirsty, almond industry is sowing seeds of discontent" (Editorials, Feb. 8): Bravo to The Bee editorial board for outdoing even yourselves. Apparently you are sidetracking things like governmental dysfunction, a failing education system and out-of-control crime to focus over the coming year on the California almond industry. From the tone and tenor of your article about the almond industry "sowing seeds of discontent" and other negative comments, I have to assume your focus is already biased against almonds.

So it's clear to the editorial board, almonds are not foie gras or deep-fat-fried Twinkies. Almonds are a noble product enjoyed by knowledgeable consumers around the world. Almond growers should be commended for a superb success story that benefits not only themselves but countless other Californians and their families who are employed by or otherwise benefit from this highly principled industry.

Jerald Parsonneault, Roseville

Expansion of production out of balance

The rapid expansion of almonds in the Central Valley is totally out of balance with the reality of how much water is and will be available. Where is the priority on produce that we want to get locally like beans, asparagus or corn? I'd rather get almonds from Mexico than my vegetables.

Jan McCleery, Discovery Bay

We must help almond growers

Wow, 1.1 gallons of water are needed to produce a single almond? No wonder we are constantly being asked and sometimes mandated to reduce our residential water use.

Because those almond growers are going to need a lot of conservation on our part in order to irrigate those thirsty almond orchards, please do your part.

Powell Svendsen, Rancho Murieta

From Facebook

Paula Yokoyama – We have no responsibility to feed the world, but if we can, it would be a good thing. Almonds are food and a good thing to grow. Look at all the vineyards that have displaced fruit orchards. Do we need to drink wine? No. But we do need to eat food. California uses its water badly and conserves it poorly.

Phineas Worthington – California has no such responsibility. The job of the California government is to protect the lives and livelihoods of its citizens. That is all. As far as water, there needs to be more private market mechanisms applied to water and its consumption. Shortages are the necessary result of a price that is too low. Water prices should better reflect its scarcity. And the best way to achieve that is to privatize the water supply. The second best way to achieve that, since no one in the single party rule bastion of Sacramento wants to do the right thing and privatize, is to use the pricing mechanism of private markets.

Phillip Larrea – Farmers grow almonds because it takes very few people to harvest them. That most Californians can't afford to buy almonds is beside the point. The Chinese love us.

COMMENTS ON SACBEE.COM

Nancie Carter – We should not be using our water for products to be sent overseas. Yeah, I know about trade and all this other business, but we don't have the water to do it and keep California producing all types of other food that is needed in America. We have plenty of people who need food here. Plus, eating almonds all the time gets old. Let's start thinking about ways of keeping America healthy first.