

California almond industry may face challenges as ‘backup bee’ project developed as alternative to honeybee crop pollination cancelled

The almond industry contributes an estimated \$21 billion annually to California’s economy and it is completely dependent on honeybees for its existence. For eight years the Wonderful Company, the world’s largest almond grower, had been funding a large research project to breed another commercial pollinator—*Osmia lignaria*, aka the blue orchard bee, or BOB—to help the beleaguered honeybee in their vast orchards. Researchers and growers worldwide were keeping a close eye on the program’s progress. But in February 2018, right when a new generation of BOBs was to fly into the orchards, Wonderful canceled the program.

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One of the key problems inhibiting their widespread use has been the inability of breeders to propagate large numbers of them.

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[W]hen asked why the company decided to discontinue the program right as the BOB season was about to begin, Mark Carmel, director of corporate communications, replied in a written statement, “We’ve determined that continuation of the program is not financially feasible. In addition, we were unable to consistently achieve the level of female replication needed to make the program successful.”

Read full, original post: [A Promising Backup to the Honeybee Is Shut Down](#)