WHEREAS, New Jersey’s agricultural community is faced with a multitude of challenges that threaten its viability and sustainability, including: Right to Farm conflicts; taxation issues; wildlife damage; labor supply shortages; land use and environmental regulation; rising production costs; and water-quality concerns; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey agriculture’s viability and sustainability are also impacted by untapped market opportunities and limited access to innovations that would enhance prosperity, stewardship potential and compatibility with other land uses; and

WHEREAS, given the economic impacts and public benefits of the agricultural and food complex, not only in rural areas but also in the state’s urban and suburban communities, the constraints on the industry impinge upon the assurance of food security, nutrition and health, water quality and supply, environmental sustainability, economic development, and the quality of life for all residents of the Garden State; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey’s status as the nation’s most densely populated state means its environmental pressures exceed those of other states, and thus have raised the environment to become a key quality-of-life issue; and

WHEREAS, this requires new policies and technologies that are effective in maintaining the delicate balance between environmental quality and economic growth; and

WHEREAS, the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) provides a diverse range of research, extension, and education programs that serve the people and businesses of New Jersey and the urban, suburban, and rural communities in which they live and work, and provides the expertise and information needed to
develop the policies and technologies that strike the balance between environmental quality and economic growth; and

WHEREAS, the budget constraints facing NJAES, including large budget cuts or flat budgets over the last decade, and the need to continue meeting operational costs, have meant that less funding is available for its personnel, research and outreach programs; and

WHEREAS, exacerbating the funding cuts has been a threat that the federal formula funding for state agricultural experiment stations could be replaced with competitive grant funding only; and

WHEREAS, the circumstances detailed above have strained the ability of NJAES to continue to provide its traditional high-level of service to all its stakeholder groups; and

WHEREAS, further continued decreases in funding will negatively impact the delivery of crucial agricultural programs across the state; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Managers appreciates the inclusiveness with which NJAES/School of Environmental and Biological Sciences has approached forming search committees to fill vital faculty and staff positions over the past year; and

WHEREAS, while both agricultural extension agents and specialists have traditionally had multiple roles – including outreach, farm visits to production agriculture operators and research, in the case of extension agents, and outreach, in-class instruction and research, in the case of specialists – it is important to maintain the proper balance of these duties, especially in light of decreased budgets meaning that both positions are being asked to do more with less; and

WHEREAS, the state’s agricultural community is concerned about maintaining appropriate resources in order to retain extension agents and specialists as some become eligible for retirement; and
WHEREAS, NJAES, unlike other facets of the university system, cannot make up for lost budget dollars with tuition increases, as it does not receive tuition revenues.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the delegates to the 101st State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey on February 10-11, 2016, do hereby declare that support for production agriculture and NJAES must be improved and maintained if solutions to the critical issues that production agriculture faces are to be achieved, ensuring the viability of the state’s agricultural and food system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Executive Dean of the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and the Executive Director of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES), in cooperation with its Board of Managers, County Boards of Agriculture, the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture, agricultural commodity groups and the Rutgers Cooperative Extension staff to continue their efforts to develop the necessary funding strategies to support the staffing and programming that will enable the continued delivery of quality programming to production agriculture and all NJAES constituent groups and to develop new programs as identified by stakeholders in agriculture and natural resources that catalyze economic development in a sustainable manner.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Executive Dean of the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and the Executive Director of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, the Board of Managers, County Boards of Agriculture, the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture and Rutgers Cooperative Extension staff to maintain timely communications among these groups on key issues.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we strongly urge the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture, the NJAES Board of Managers and the New Jersey Farm Bureau to work with the Governor, the Legislature and the County Boards of Chosen Freeholders to
restore adequate state funding for the NJAES and agricultural research, including core
funding to the Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Upper Deerfield;
the Philip E. Marucci Center for Blueberry and Cranberry Research; the Snyder
Research and Extension Farm; the Rutgers Food Innovation Center; the Rutgers Equine
Science Center; the Fruit and Ornamental Research and Extension Center at Cream
Ridge; Adelphia Plant Science Research and Extension Center; the Rutgers
EcoComplex, the Aquaculture Innovation Center, and the Haskins Shellfish Research
Laboratory to compliment the extramural grants, contracts and bequests secured by
NJAES staff in the past fiscal years. In addition, the agricultural community is strongly
encouraged to support the initiative to have the state legislators add $1 million in
program support funds for production agriculture in the FY2017 state budget.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the NJAES/SEBS leadership to
initiate search processes to replace retiring agricultural agents and specialists as soon
as a retirement is announced, provided that the funding to hire a replacement is
available, thus reducing the amount of time it takes to fill the retiree’s position.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we also urge the USDA to provide a stable
source of funding for the Land Grant University and Extension programs.