

RESOLUTION # 19

FARM BILL PRIORITIES

1 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey agriculture is diverse, spanning nearly a dozen major
2 sectors, and depends upon the vitality of a variety of agricultural products and enterprises to
3 make the overall industry a success; and

4 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey farms' proximity to population centers brings with it unique
5 challenges not faced in those states where significantly lower population densities make it
6 less likely that farmers will confront noise, odor and other complaints from neighboring
7 residents; and

8 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey's diversified economy and various industries make it more
9 of a challenge for farm operators to find, train and retain adequate labor; and

10 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey's continuous dedication to protecting and improving the
11 environment has created the need for farmers to be ever-mindful of the need to be stewards
12 of their land, water and other natural resources, both for the benefit of their own operations
13 and for the quality of life of all residents; and

14 **WHEREAS**, for these reasons, New Jersey farmers face unique challenges in their
15 efforts to keep their farm operations viable and thriving, creating the need to rely on certain
16 government programs to help them meet these challenges; and

17 **WHEREAS**, the State of New Jersey can cover the costs of operating these essential
18 government programs only with the assistance of federal funding; and

19 **WHEREAS**, the federal Farm Bill historically contains within it the spending priorities
20 for the nation's agricultural industry, including nutritional programs that are interconnected
21 with agriculture; and

22 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey farms' needs from federal programs are significantly
23 different from those of farms in many other regions of the country; and

24 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey's diverse agriculture, typified by farms ranging from as
25 small as five or 10 acres to those over more than 3,000 acres, which produce a variety of

26 crops, benefits from a strong emphasis on Specialty Crops Grants designed to increase
27 consumer awareness about fresh produce, improve access to foreign markets, ensure food
28 safety, strengthen research efforts, enhance conservation programs and encourage
29 investment and efficiency; and

30 **WHEREAS**, nursery and greenhouse production accounted for \$498,125,000 in
31 farmgate receipts in 2017, and fruits, vegetables, berries and tree nuts accounted for
32 \$363,788,000 in farmgate receipts in 2017; and

33 **WHEREAS**, a broad array of agricultural trade associations representing United
34 States growers and shippers are continuing to work on achieving mutual objectives for the
35 Farm Bill and assuring a common platform across regions, commodities, and other interests,
36 including allies in support of the production of “specialty crops”; and

37 **WHEREAS**, the agricultural sectors dominant in New Jersey would not be well
38 served by direct payment to growers, but instead by building the long-term competitiveness
39 and sustainability of specialty crop production in the United States; and

40 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey works closely with the United States Department of
41 Agriculture’s (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service to support a number of feeding programs
42 that bring nutritious products to children, the elderly and those in need; and

43 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey is committed to bringing more of the fruits and vegetables
44 produced by its farmers into these programs to ensure that the offerings are of the highest
45 practicable nutritional value; and

46 **WHEREAS**, funding targeted for these feeding programs can be stretched by
47 ensuring, whenever possible, that products be bought locally first, regionally second and
48 nationally and internationally as a last resort, thereby cutting the associated transportation
49 costs, especially in times of rising fuel prices; and

50 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey also is home to numerous grain and forage producers who
51 receive a much-needed benefit from the Farm Bill’s commodities funding; and

52 **WHEREAS**, grain and forage producers strongly support a minimum safety net for
53 grain producers throughout New Jersey; and

54 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey is also home to dairy and livestock producers whose
55 stewardship maintains a considerable amount of agricultural lands and support for the crop
56 sectors that sell feed to livestock producers helps to keep costs to those livestock producers
57 from rising; and

58 **WHEREAS**, the approach of the federal government toward relying on subsidized
59 crop insurance premiums as a farmer's sole protection from the devastation of severe
60 weather events – including hurricanes, other persistent flooding rains, hail, extreme heat,
61 drought or any other extreme weather, as well as market loss due to quality and low prices –
62 appears to be increasing rather than decreasing, since it is a way of addressing a farmer's
63 losses without the additional expense of direct ad-hoc payments; and

64 **WHEREAS**, federal crop insurance programs, in which premiums paid by farmers
65 are subsidized with federal funds, receive their authorizations and operating parameters
66 through the Farm Bill; and

67 **WHEREAS**, apple growers in the various counties need a program that would
68 encompass the entire state, not limited to counties, especially as some orchards in the
69 northern part of the state cross county lines, with one county having a defined program and
70 established yields and the neighboring counties not having a defined program, leaving
71 producers at a disadvantage in the under-established counties; and

72 **WHEREAS**, the Farm Bill also can include funding for projects to bring reliable
73 broadband to the rural areas of New Jersey, which is desperately needed by farmers to
74 enable them to keep pace with technological advances in both producing and marketing
75 agricultural products.

76 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 106th State
77 Agricultural Convention, assembled through a virtual platform hosted in Trenton, New
78 Jersey, in accordance with COVID-19 pandemic recommendations, on February 17, 2021,

79 urge the Congress of the United States to include within the next Farm Bill, and urge the
80 New Jersey Congressional delegation to advocate for and support the following:

- 81 • additional funding and other support for Specialty Crops;
- 82 • additional funding and other support in helping states fight invasive species, both plant
83 and animal, as well as plant and animal diseases, with an emphasis on preventing
84 invasive species and exotic diseases from entering the United States through
85 international ports;
- 86 • greater attention to conservation of farmland in states experiencing development
87 pressures;
- 88 • and reviewing the multiple definitions of “rural” in the USDA’s Rural Development
89 programs to ensure that they focus on the importance of agriculture to a given
90 geographical area, not simply the number of people living in those areas.

91 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the New Jersey Congressional
92 delegation to propose and/or support funding in the next Farm Bill to help bring reliable
93 broadband telecommunications and Internet to rural areas of this state, and to ensure that
94 such funding is tied to the agricultural character of a rural area, not solely its population or
95 inclusion in a given Census tract.