

RESOLUTION # 42

WATER

1 **WHEREAS**, water is the lifeblood of the agricultural industry, and agricultural
2 access to adequate water supply is a critical concern for New Jersey's farmers; and this
3 need is especially urgent during periods of drought when restrictions on water use could
4 catastrophically affect farm income for the production year; and

5 **WHEREAS**, even absent drought conditions, ensuring an adequate water supply,
6 both now and in the future, is essential to protecting the production capability and
7 economic stability of agriculture; and

8 **WHEREAS**, many New Jersey farmers implement water-management practices
9 as a routine part of their conservationist approach to agriculture, resulting in New Jersey
10 agriculture using just 6 percent of the state's total water use, less than other comparable
11 areas in the United States and worldwide; and

12 **WHEREAS**, the Department has worked with the New Jersey Department of
13 Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to restore some of the agricultural water allocations
14 in the restricted water supply areas in Cumberland, Salem and Gloucester Counties in
15 Critical Area 2 and in Ocean, Monmouth and Middlesex Counties in Critical Area 1;
16 however, despite these efforts (which included advocating for the Tri-County Pipeline),
17 agricultural water concerns still persist, and New Jersey's farmers face increasing water
18 supply restrictions, particularly in Critical Areas 1 and 2; and many agricultural water
19 certifications are being subjected to reductions in their allocations based upon actual
20 water usage; and

21 **WHEREAS**, in 1987, the NJDEP completed a study that showed the Potomac-
22 Raritan-Magothy (PRM) aquifer, at the time the major source of drinking water in

23 southwestern New Jersey, was being rapidly depleted, resulting in the Tri-County
24 Pipeline project to provide potable water from sources other than the PRM aquifer.

25 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 101st
26 State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 10-
27 11, 2016, direct the Department of Agriculture to continue working with the New Jersey
28 Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to address water supply and water
29 quality issues even beyond the NJDEP's drafted Statewide Water Supply Master Plan
30 and by strategically planning and promoting the implementation of federal and state
31 conservation cost-share programs.

32 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the NJDEP to ensure that they plan
33 for adequate water resources for New Jersey's farmers, realizing that such resources
34 are critical to overall farm management.

35 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department and NJDEP to
36 continue to allow farmers who employ water conservation practices that utilize water at a
37 rate that is *below* their permit allocations at certain times to correspondingly *increase*
38 water use at other times, under the program that allows for annual averages in water
39 use. Such a program encourages the implementation of water conservation measures
40 within the agricultural community and improves the viability of the agricultural industry by
41 allowing water usage to be tailored to fit the needs of each agricultural operation.

42 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to work with NJDEP
43 to ensure that all water-related plans, policies and programs of the state recognize the
44 critical role that farmland plays in providing recharge of water to underlying aquifer
45 systems and surface water supplies.

46 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge all municipalities located along the
47 Tri-County Pipeline project and those served by the Raritan Water Supply Authority to

48 utilize those sources of potable water, as opposed to utilizing groundwater, thereby
49 reserving as much available groundwater as possible for agricultural operations.

50 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we request that the previous efforts of the
51 Department and Rutgers Cooperative Extension, who were working with the New Jersey
52 Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) in developing a draft Ag Water Conservation Plan,
53 which will outline specific best management practices addressing water conservation
54 and water quality protection, be revived.

55 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that once the Plan is developed and agreed
56 upon, farmers withdrawing surface water from the NJWSA's Manasquan Reservoir and
57 Raritan Basin water systems would implement these plans on their operations when
58 contracting with the NJWSA.

59 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the NJDEP to consider the
60 needs of agricultural operations when developing policies and programs that involve
61 water quality issues, such as stormwater management and impervious coverage
62 limitations.

63 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we encourage producers to use water
64 conservation technologies and to utilize any available state and federal cost-share
65 grants to implement such measures and continue to look for new and efficient methods
66 to conserve water on farms, including drip irrigation, water recapture and reuse, and
67 enhanced on-farm water storage techniques.

68 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge a review by the Attorney General to
69 reaffirm the longstanding interpretation of the statutory language that agricultural
70 operations are exempt from fees and surcharges for water and water use.