

RESOLUTION # 10

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, set to be renewed in 2018, historically contains
20 within it the spending priorities for the nation's agricultural industry, including nutritional
21 programs that are interconnected with agriculture; and

22 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey farms' needs from federal programs are significantly
23 different from those of farms in many 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, producing a variety of crops,

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

30 **WHEREAS**, nursery and greenhouse production accounted for more than \$400
31 million in farmgate receipts in 2016, and fruits, vegetables, berries and tree nuts accounted
32 for more than \$337 million in farmgate receipts in 2016; 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 large percentage of state 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; 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 disaster payments; and

67 **WHEREAS**, producers need a better and defined program for potatoes that would
68 protect them from seed-borne diseases such as Dickeya; and

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

74 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates of the 103rd State
75 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8, 2018, urge
76 the Congress of the United States to include within the next Farm Bill, and urge the New
77 Jersey Congressional Delegation to advocate for and support the following:

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- Maintain the Specialty Crop Block Grants Program at, at least, its current funding
79 levels, as discussion about the upcoming budget has included the concept of
80 “zeroing-out” Specialty Crop Block Grant funds, which would be devastating to
81 agricultural industries in states, like New Jersey, where Specialty Crops account for
82 far more than half of the overall annual farmgate receipts.
 - Fund grant and/or loan programs for innovative projects that would: (1) catalyze
83 investment for cooperatives and companies to develop and improve agricultural
84 infrastructure; (2) boost research and development projects through universities and
85 agricultural groups, through both competitive and non-competitive formula funds to
86 advance the use of science and technology in the industry; (3) provide additional
87 funding for educational programs designed to encourage potential future farmers and
88 those new to the industry; and (4) provide technical assistance to farmers dealing
89 with changing regulations or methods of production.
 - Provide matching funds for state farm viability programs and agricultural innovation
90 centers. To support innovation centers, offer a round of \$1 million matching grants to
91 start new centers and \$500,000 matching grants to continue developing the initial
92 models.
 - An emphasis on creating a balance between commodities funding and Specialty
93 Crops Grants/Value Added Grants to ensure that all sectors of New Jersey
94 agriculture benefit from the Farm Bill.
 - Refinement of the Value-Added grant programs to ensure greater producer
95 participation.
 - Due consideration to equine breeding operations as akin to production agriculture,
96 and their eligibility for the same programs as crops that are currently considered
97 production agriculture, especially given that the equine sector is among the largest
98 agriculture sectors in New Jersey and contributes greatly to keeping farmland green
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and free from development.

- 105 • Funding of a forestry title to encourage agricultural owners of forest land (42 percent
106 of the nation's forest land is owned by farmers) to effectively manage and improve
107 those properties.
- 108 • Distribute funding for technical assistance and conservation programs more equitably
109 around the country, with allocations tied to the percentages of market value of a
110 region's agricultural production.
- 111 • Streamline Conservation Program application processes by allowing a farmer to
112 apply for multiple programs with one application.
- 113 • Support increases in conservation technical assistance dollars for all producers
114 seeking assistance regardless of their enrollment in other Farm Bill programs.
- 115 • Provisions that give priority for grants and loans to young farmers determined to
116 sustain agriculture into the next generation.
- 117 • Adequate funding to supplement existing farmland preservation programs in New
118 Jersey.
- 119 • Amend USDA's policy of distributing funds for the Federal Farm and Ranchland
120 Protection Program (FFRPP) to allow block grants to states and/or preservation
121 entities with qualified preservation programs, with state Natural Resources
122 Conservation Service (NRCS) offices developing qualification standards and
123 determining which programs meet the standards.
- 124 • Allow impervious cover/building envelope standards to run parallel to the state's
125 preservation program.
- 126 • Provisions to encourage the continuation and expansion of Food and Nutrition
127 Service programs, and that emphasize buying locally first in order to lower the costs
128 and environmental impacts of food transportation.
- 129 • An emphasis on nutrition education in the Food and Nutrition Service programs to
130 encourage people benefiting from these programs to make informed nutrition
131 choices.

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- A focus on access to and availability of fruits and vegetables, particularly to children, through expansion of the school fruit and vegetable snack program, increased commodity purchases, higher allocations to the Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh program for schools, development of a new nutrition program to assist producers in enhancing their markets, and a general requirement that food banks and commodity purchasing programs comply with beneficial dietary guidelines, except where they illogically remove products which provide important health and nutritional benefits.
 - Expand support of Farm to School initiatives, including the use of a bidding mechanism that gives preference to purchasing locally produced food for school meal programs to the maximum extent practicable and appropriate.
 - Provide adequate funding for The Emergency Feeding Assistance Program (TEFAP) and the associated transportation and storage expenses incurred by states to increase the selection of nutrient-dense foods in concert with USDA's Food Guide Pyramid.
 - Provide financial support for developing shared electronic platforms to improve customer service, help farmers better compete in a global economy and enhance food accessibility, affordability and nutrition.
 - Significant new investment in prevention of unintentional introduction of plant pests and diseases.
 - Adequate funding for the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, Rutgers University, our land grant college, and Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension, to develop and maintain their leading-edge technology and support their contributions to agriculture nationally.
 - Adequate funding in research for specialty crops and integrated pest management, particularly through Smith-Lever and Hatch funding, as well as both the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative and programs within the National Institute for Food and Agriculture and Agriculture Research Service (ARS).

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- Adequate funding for programs that educate students and young farmers, as well as
160 those that encourage new people to enter farming.
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- Continued adequate funding for farm labor housing programs, with special
162 consideration given for the higher costs of real estate and construction in New
163 Jersey.
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- Dairy and livestock producers strongly support a modern safety net insurance
165 program for dairy and livestock, a new way that protects minimum margins of milk
166 and livestock prices over input costs, while allowing producers to increase production
167 within their local milk shed to match consumption within the market area and export
168 share.
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- Adequate funding for soil conservation practices on agricultural lands.
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- USDA agencies charged with promoting and administering crop insurance programs,
171 re-examine what types of crops are eligible and under what circumstances, so that
172 the widest possible number of farmers will be able to avail themselves of such
173 protection.
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- The Farm Bill continue to authorize Noninsured Assistance Program (NAP) at buy-up
175 to the 65 percent level and 100 percent of price, and that USDA's Farm Service
176 Agency accept applications from farmers for the 2018 crop year, and we urge RMA
177 that if at least one producer has an imported crop policy from another county or one
178 person buys a NAP policy for the crop, that RMA should file the rates and rules to
179 expand the program to the additional county (technical term is to "approve the
180 county" for the specific crop) and that if RMA insures a specific crop anywhere in a
181 state, that it should be required to approve that crop for all counties in that state.
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- The USDA continue funding Crop Insurance Educational Programs for targeted
183 states in order to continue aiding producers in changing their means of protecting the
184 agriculture businesses of the state and to assist in developing new programs to
185 protect significant crops being grown.

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- The New Jersey Department of Agriculture continue to work with the New Jersey Congressional Delegation to ensure that the RMA rules within the upcoming five-year Farm Bill include the best possible crop insurance provisions for farms in New Jersey, which typically are smaller than those in other states, are more closely located to urban areas than in other states, and which produce a preponderance of Specialty Crops and other products not included in the historical “Big Five” commodities.