

RESOLUTION # 20

HUNGER AND NUTRITION IN NEW JERSEY

1 **WHEREAS**, schools are an appropriate vehicle to promote the availability of
2 healthier foods and nutrition services, as they are uniquely positioned to model and reinforce
3 healthy eating behaviors, such as increasing knowledge of and improving access to fruits
4 and vegetables on the school campus and at school-related activities; and

5 **WHEREAS**, schools can serve as an outreach tool to carry positive nutrition
6 messages to parents and the community at large; and

7 **WHEREAS**, schools are required to develop and implement a school
8 nutrition/wellness policy and to promote nutritious alternatives, and the Department
9 continues to train schools and school food-service providers about marketing nutritious foods
10 to children and incorporating more fresh fruits and vegetables into the school meal program;
11 and

12 **WHEREAS**, the Department of Agriculture has significantly increased participation in
13 the School Breakfast Program by working in conjunction with the New Jersey Department of
14 Education to facilitate the inclusion of “breakfast after the bell” options in schools; and

15 **WHEREAS**, the WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program, Senior Farmers’ Market
16 Nutrition Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and
17 Children are established through the United States Department of Agriculture but have been
18 administered in New Jersey through the New Jersey Department of Health; and

19 **WHEREAS**, WIC coupon redemption rates in New Jersey have traditionally been low
20 compared to other states, and resistance has been met for the idea of “over-issuing” WIC
21 coupons in order to ensure the highest possible number of people are receiving them, with
22 the goal that they will also use them; and

23 **WHEREAS**, a sound, balanced, nutritional diet is important to the well-being of
24 society, both in terms of the future productivity of our children and the health and well-being
25 of the population in general; and

26 **WHEREAS**, approximately 1.9 million people in New Jersey rely upon various
27 feeding and nutrition programs administered by or through the Department; and

28 **WHEREAS**, local purchases of food items including fresh fruits and vegetables can
29 benefit the local economy, growers and distributors, thus reducing the number of “food miles”
30 those commodities must travel to reach the end consumers; and

31 **WHEREAS**, timely information from state officials regarding the potential for sale of
32 locally grown and harvested foods through federal government programs such as SNAP,
33 WIC and the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program would help farmers more effectively
34 plan for what types and amounts of produce they should grow in a coming season; and

35 **WHEREAS**, volunteer gleaning organizations that provide surplus produce from
36 farms to community feeding operations are a valuable source of fresh agricultural products
37 that do not demand financial resources for purchasing this food, yet still have costs related to
38 storage and transportation of this produce; and

39 **WHEREAS**, gleaning surplus agricultural products as a means of reducing food
40 insecurity has been increasing in popularity, and more gleaning organizations are working
41 with farmers in New Jersey than in the past; and

42 **WHEREAS**, the FY2020 state budget included \$100,000 for Hunters Helping the
43 Hungry, to be targeted toward moving meat from hunting, primarily venison from deer, to
44 feeding operations to help feed the hungry; and

45 **WHEREAS**, the biggest challenge in adding that stream of food to the feeding
46 operations is aligning hunters with butchers who can cut and prepare the meat for the
47 feeding operations’ use; and

48 **WHEREAS**, an additional way to bring more fresh produce and other agricultural
49 products to designated food deserts is through government initiatives to increase the number
50 of “cold boxes” in neighborhood corner stores and bodegas, provided those boxes are used
51 for the keeping and retailing of fresh agricultural products; and

52 **WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture has for the past 25 years
53 worked with municipalities and agriculture groups to establish and support community
54 farmers markets, where, in addition to selling to the general public, farmers can accept
55 federally issued Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition program vouchers from senior citizens,
56 which the farmers then redeem for additional income.

57 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we the delegates to the 105th State
58 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 5-6, 2020, do
59 hereby continue to support the efforts of the Department and its partners in the United States
60 Department of Agriculture (USDA), as well as community feeding organizations to ensure
61 that healthy food choices and fresh fruits and vegetables are available to all children and
62 adults throughout New Jersey.

63 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to continue to lead in
64 promoting healthy foods and sound dietary choices to improve the well-being of New
65 Jersey's citizens by promoting programs such as "Jersey Fresh Farm to School", "Farm to
66 Preschool", "Farm to Summer" and school wellness policies.

67 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to continue promoting
68 the increased participation in School Breakfast programs, especially the inclusion of
69 "breakfast after the bell" options, which have helped New Jersey significantly increase
70 participation over the past several years.

71 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Governor and Legislature to
72 recognize the critical nature of maintaining state funding levels supporting the federal school
73 nutrition and commodity programs in an amount that will ensure that no accompanying
74 federal funds are lost.

75 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge those at all levels responsible for
76 purchasing or otherwise acquiring food for community feeding programs to ensure that those
77 foods are grown, harvested or produced in New Jersey to the greatest extent practicable.

78 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge New Jersey state officials who
79 administer feeding and nutrition programs to provide the earliest possible notice to the farm
80 community in this state as to the expected demand for produce and other agricultural
81 products through those programs, providing farmers with a better planning tool for the types
82 and amounts of such products to be produced in a coming season.

83 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we stress the critical nature of the Governor and
84 Legislature providing adequate funding for the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) in the
85 FY2021 budget at a level at least equal to the current funding, and that additional funding
86 should be provided for storage and distribution of emergency food.

87 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to work with New Jersey
88 fruit and vegetable processing companies and the Rutgers Food Innovation Center to
89 produce pre-packaged, value-added, single-serving New Jersey fruit and vegetable
90 products, and “Made with Jersey Fresh” products, for use in school food service menus.

91 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we gratefully acknowledge the efforts of the
92 Legislature and Governor to provide adequate funding to help volunteer gleaning
93 organizations carry out their missions of feeding the hungry in New Jersey.

94 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we encourage the Department to engage in an
95 education and outreach campaign to link hunters with butchers, and to further link those
96 butchers with feeding operations, in order to fulfill the mission of Hunters Helping the Hungry
97 by moving meat from hunts into the stream of food accepted by the feeding operations.

98 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly support increased participation in the
99 following safety-net federal and state nutrition programs administered by the Department:
100 National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program; After School Snack
101 Program; Special Milk Program; Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program; Child and Adult Care
102 Food Program; Summer Food Service Program; School Commodity Program; The
103 Emergency Food Assistance Program; the State Food Purchase Program; WIC and Senior
104 Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program, and we urge the Department to work toward having

105 white potatoes established as an eligible commodity in the WIC, SNAP and other food-
106 assistance programs in which they currently are not eligible.

107 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we support educational, outreach and marketing
108 measures to increase the redemption rate of the WIC coupons issued in New Jersey, so that
109 more farmers can connect with more WIC consumers, for the benefit of all.

110 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we support initiatives to increase the number of
111 “cold boxes” used to store fresh fruits, vegetables and other agricultural products in corner
112 stores, bodegas and other food retailers in urban areas designated as “food deserts,”
113 provided the cold boxes remain dedicated to that purpose.

114 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge enhanced support for the Rutgers
115 Institute for Food, Nutrition and Health and Rutgers Cooperative Extension to deliver
116 science-based educational programs in nutrition and healthy living.