

RESOLUTION # 5

FARMING ON PUBLIC LANDS

1 **WHEREAS**, throughout New Jersey, there exists publicly owned land that is actively
2 farmed under lease agreements between farmers and governmental entities of the state,
3 county or local level; and

4 **WHEREAS**, these lands remain a critical component of the available agricultural land
5 base in the state; and

6 **WHEREAS**, farmers have expressed some concerns about the terms of these lease
7 agreements; and

8 **WHEREAS**, these concerns include questions about certain restrictions or
9 encumbrances imposed upon farmers that, in some instances, hinder agricultural production,
10 including the ability to deal with encroaching wildlife that destroy crops; and

11 **WHEREAS**, there has traditionally been no uniform, statewide model for renting
12 these lands for agricultural purposes, increasing the risk of inconsistencies and individualized
13 use restrictions in lease agreements that can impede or limit generally accepted farming
14 practices; and

15 **WHEREAS**, in some instances, farmers make substantial investments in rented
16 ground as a means of enhancing an individual parcel's agricultural productivity for the long-
17 term, and thus are negatively impacted by exceedingly short-term lease arrangements; and

18 **WHEREAS**, recent discussions between farmer groups and senior staff at the New
19 Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) have resulted in constructive
20 movement toward more consistent and uniform lease language; and

21 **WHEREAS**, representatives from the Department of Agriculture and NJDEP have
22 had discussions about extending the length of leases, and the Department will continue to
23 engage NJDEP in discussion of topics surrounding farming on leased public lands.

24 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 105th State
25 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 5-6, 2020, do

26 hereby urge the State Board of Agriculture and Department of Agriculture, along with the
27 New Jersey Farm Bureau, to continue reviewing the current status of lease arrangements for
28 agricultural purposes throughout the state to determine the potential for enhancing the
29 predictability and consistency of land-leasing arrangements for agricultural purposes at the
30 state, county and local level, where appropriate.

31 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, we urge that the State Board, the Department and
32 New Jersey Farm Bureau to continue soliciting the input of county boards of agriculture and
33 commodity organizations, and that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) be
34 consulted on lands leased for farming as part of this review process.

35 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we acknowledge the recent movement within the
36 NJDEP toward more consistent and uniform language on leases to farm public lands.