

RESOLUTION # 12

RUTGERS NEW JERSEY AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

1 **WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) has been
2 generating and disseminating science-based knowledge and resources to New Jersey's
3 residents, communities, and businesses since 1880; and

4 **WHEREAS**, the federal Hatch Act (1887) and Smith-Lever Act (1914), respectively,
5 established federal funding for agricultural experiment stations at land-grant institutions
6 across the nation and Cooperative Extension in New Jersey and nationally; and

7 **WHEREAS**, NJAES has research faculty and staff in campus-based departments,
8 centers and institutes at the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and
9 maintains research farms, business incubator facilities, and marine and coastal research
10 stations across the state; and

11 **WHEREAS**, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, an integral part of NJAES that provides
12 access to the resources and expertise of Rutgers University and the national Cooperative
13 Extension system, has faculty and staff in county offices across New Jersey; and

14 **WHEREAS**, the NJAES generates and extends university knowledge and science-
15 based educational programs through research and outreach programs to the public in
16 diverse areas encompassing agriculture; natural resources stewardship and the
17 environment; food, nutrition and health; fisheries, aquaculture, marine and coastal resources;
18 home, lawn and garden; and, youth and community development; and

19 **WHEREAS**, the NJAES strives to support the contemporary and emerging needs of
20 a diverse range of stakeholders in the state; increase the resiliency of our communities and
21 businesses; catalyze economic development and innovation; and promote environmental
22 integrity and sustainable resource management and land use; and

23 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey's agricultural community is faced with a multitude of
24 challenges that threaten its viability and sustainability, including: food safety regulations; new
25 invasive pests; urbanization; land use and environmental regulation; water-quality concerns;

26 rising labor and other production costs; wildlife damage; cost and accessibility of farmland;
27 climate issues; globalizing market competition; Right to Farm conflicts; labor supply
28 shortages; and

29 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey agriculture’s viability and sustainability requires access to
30 information and innovations that enhance production efficiency and farm prosperity, market
31 access, sound land and resource stewardship, farm business decision making, risk
32 management, and planning for farm transition and business succession; and

33 **WHEREAS**, the NJAES is a separate line item in the State of New Jersey’s annual
34 budget; and

35 **WHEREAS**, State appropriations to NJAES have, in inflation-adjusted terms,
36 declined by 35 percent in the decade preceding Fiscal Year 2019; and

37 **WHEREAS**, NJAES, unlike schools in the university system, does not receive tuition
38 revenues and cannot make up for funding shortfalls via tuition increases; and

39 **WHEREAS**, the erosion of stable “base” state funding adversely impacts the ability of
40 the NJAES to cover rising operating costs and maintain and develop the necessary long-
41 term physical infrastructure, technology, and human capital needed to support the existing
42 and evolving needs of New Jersey residents, as well as their communities and businesses;
43 and

44 **WHEREAS**, the State supplemental budget appropriations to NJAES in FY19, FY20
45 and FY21 were a departure from a decade of declining or flat state support and facilitated the
46 beginning of much needed re-investments in NJAES research farms and facilities;
47 equipment, machinery and instrumentation; and programs related to hemp production,
48 wildlife management, aquaculture breeding and development, invasive species detection and
49 control, integrated pest management, and new crop commercialization, to name only few;
50 and

51 **WHEREAS**, long-term planning and appropriate staffing (i.e., strategic faculty hires)
52 cannot be supported with year-to-year supplemental budget, but requires sustained
53 increases to the State’s base funding of NJAES; and

54 **WHEREAS**, it is certain that further decreases in state funding will negatively impact
55 the NJAES’ delivery of crucial programs across the state, investment in, and dissemination
56 of, new research and technologies, and the maintenance of campus-based and off-campus
57 research facilities; and

58 **WHEREAS**, the state’s agricultural community has experienced and continues to
59 experience the negative ramifications of funding-related attrition in Extension agents and
60 specialists who are vital for the delivery of agricultural programming needed to maintain
61 industry viability; and

62 **WHEREAS**, the state’s agricultural community is deeply concerned about further
63 erosion in NJAES staffing in the face of looming retirements and the growing need for both
64 existing agricultural programming and innovation within the industry, such as value-added
65 products and new technologies; and

66 **WHEREAS**, we recognize and support the continued efforts of NJAES leadership
67 and the NJAES Board of Managers, in cooperation with County Boards of Agriculture, the
68 New Jersey State Board of Agriculture, New Jersey Farm Bureau, and agricultural
69 commodity groups to develop the necessary strategies to support the continued delivery of
70 quality programming in production agriculture and diverse areas affecting the quality of life
71 for all NJAES constituent groups.

72 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 106th State
73 Agricultural Convention, assembled through a virtual platform hosted in Trenton, New
74 Jersey, in accordance with COVID-19 pandemic recommendations, on February 17, 2021,
75 do hereby declare that financial support for NJAES must be improved and maintained at
76 higher levels if solutions to critical issues are to be achieved, ensuring the viability of the
77 state’s agricultural and food system.

78 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the New Jersey State Board of
79 Agriculture, the NJAES Board of Managers, County Boards of Agriculture and the New
80 Jersey Farm Bureau to work with the Governor and the Legislature to provide sustained
81 increases to the State base funding for the NJAES.

82 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the New Jersey State Board of
83 Agriculture, the NJAES Board of Managers, County Boards of Agriculture and the New
84 Jersey Farm Bureau to work with the County Boards of Commissioners to provide increased
85 financial support toward the salaries for the county agricultural agent and educator positions.

86 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge County Boards of Agriculture,
87 commodity organizations and New Jersey Farm Bureau to support the Rutgers NJAES Video
88 Marketing Campaign being developed to increase the visibility of and access to experiment
89 station programs and resources, and use this campaign and other promotional resources to
90 help inform state legislators and county commissioners about the impact of experiment
91 station programs.

92 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the County Boards of Agriculture and
93 the commodity organizations and New Jersey Farm Bureau to support the Rutgers NJAES
94 Vision 2025 Initiative, a 5-year investment plan using state “special purpose funding” and
95 infrastructure funds to make capital improvements, IT upgrades, and equipment purchases
96 to strengthen NJAES farms, stations and centers to support, develop and expand research
97 and extension programs and demonstrations that respond to the needs of the agricultural
98 industry and the broader New Jersey residents, communities and businesses.

99 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we encourage NJAES Board of Managers and
100 broader agricultural industry participation in the Vision 2025 initiative to provide advisory
101 input and guidance on the identification of immediate and longer-term programmatic priorities
102 within the agricultural industry.

103 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we commend Interim Executive Dean/Interim
104 Executive Director Laura Lawson and the senior NJAES leadership team for effectively

105 navigating the significant financial and operational challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has
106 presented to the experiment station in 2020.

107 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we emphasize the essential need for adequate
108 industry representation in the process for identifying a permanent executive dean/executive
109 director and therefore strongly urge that, when a search committee is created, the President
110 of Rutgers University and senior university administrator include representation of the
111 agricultural industry and at least two members of the NJAES Board of Managers.

112 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we also urge agricultural and other stakeholders
113 to communicate with federal Congressional representatives, through NJAES representatives
114 to the Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET) and all other
115 appropriate agencies and officials, the continued need for stable USDA funding for the
116 research and extension missions of NJAES that have proven their many-fold return on
117 investment for more than a century.