

RESOLUTION # 13

FEDERAL 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 historically contains within it the spending priorities
20 for the nation's agricultural industry, including nutritional programs that are interconnected
21 with agriculture; and

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

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

30 **WHEREAS**, “Specialty Crops” as a catchall phrase for most crops outside of the “Big
31 Five” commodity crops is inadequate to describe the farm products most often purchased
32 fresh by consumers at retail outlets (items like blueberries, lettuces, peaches, cucumbers,
33 etc.), often leaving consumers confused about what “Specialty Crops” means; and

34 **WHEREAS**, in New Jersey nursery and greenhouse production accounted for more
35 than \$500 million in sales in 2019 and fruits, vegetables, berries and tree nuts accounted for
36 more than \$350 million in farmgate receipts in 2019; and

37 **WHEREAS**, a broad array of agricultural trade associations representing United
38 States growers and shippers are continuing to work on achieving mutual objectives for the
39 Farm Bill and assuring a common platform across regions, commodities, and other interests,
40 including allies in support of the production of “specialty crops”; and

41 **WHEREAS**, the agricultural sectors dominant in New Jersey would not be well
42 served by direct payment to growers, but instead by building the long-term competitiveness
43 and sustainability of specialty crop production in the United States; and

44 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey works closely with the United States Department of
45 Agriculture’s (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service to support a number of feeding programs
46 that bring nutritious products to children, the elderly and those in need; and

47 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey is committed to bringing more of the fruits and vegetables
48 produced by its farmers into these programs to ensure that the offerings are of the highest
49 practicable nutritional value; and

50 **WHEREAS**, funding targeted for these feeding programs can be stretched by
51 ensuring, whenever possible, that products be bought locally first, regionally second and

52 nationally and internationally as a last resort, thereby cutting the associated transportation
53 costs, especially in times of rising fuel prices; and

54 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey also is home to numerous grain and forage producers who
55 receive a much-needed benefit from the Farm Bill's commodities funding; and

56 **WHEREAS**, grain and forage producers strongly support a minimum safety net for
57 grain producers throughout New Jersey; and

58 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey is also home to dairy and livestock producers whose
59 stewardship maintains a considerable amount of agricultural lands; and

60 **WHEREAS**, the support for the crop sectors that sell feed to livestock producers helps
61 to keep costs to those livestock producers from rising; and

62 **WHEREAS**, the approach of the federal government toward relying on subsidized
63 crop insurance premiums as a farmer's sole protection from the devastation of severe
64 weather events – including hurricanes, other persistent flooding rains, hail, extreme heat,
65 drought or any other extreme weather, as well as market loss due to quality and low prices –
66 appears to be increasing rather than decreasing, since it is a way of addressing a farmer's
67 losses without the additional expense of direct ad-hoc payments; and

68 **WHEREAS**, federal crop insurance programs, in which premiums paid by farmers
69 are subsidized with federal funds, receive their authorizations and operating parameters
70 through the Farm Bill; and

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

76 **WHEREAS**, the Farm Bill also provides federal funding for the Land Grant university
77 system, including New Jersey's Land Grant university, Rutgers, and this funding makes
78 possible an array of research and development for agricultural products and production

79 innovation, thereby bolstering the State-level funding that goes to Rutgers and the New
80 Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES); and

81 **WHEREAS**, the Farm Bill, along with some recently passed legislation regarding
82 economic recovery and supply chain issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, will have
83 funding targeted toward enhancing smaller, independent processors of meat and other
84 livestock products to ensure a more reliable supply chain for such products; and

85 **WHEREAS**, the Farm Bill also can include funding for projects to bring reliable
86 broadband to the rural areas of New Jersey, which is desperately needed by farmers to
87 enable them to keep pace with technological advances in both producing and marketing
88 agricultural products.

89 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 107th State
90 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, N.J., on February 9-10, 2022, urge the
91 Congress of the United States to include within the next Farm Bill, and urge the New Jersey
92 Congressional delegation to advocate for and support the following:

- 93 • additional funding and other support for Specialty Crops;
- 94 • giving serious consideration to changing the term “Specialty Crops” to something that
95 more accurately conveys the agricultural products currently covered under that definition,
96 such as “Consumer Purchased Farm Products”;
- 97 • additional funding and other support in helping states fight invasive species, including
98 plants, animals, and insects – as well as plant and animal diseases, with an emphasis on
99 preventing invasive species and exotic diseases from entering the United States through
100 international ports;
- 101 • greater attention to conservation of farmland in states experiencing development
102 pressures;
- 103 • funding to develop smaller, independent processors of meat and other livestock products
104 to ensure a more reliable supply chain for such products;

- 105 • and reviewing the multiple definitions of “rural” in the USDA’s Rural Development
106 programs to ensure that they focus on the importance of agriculture to a given
107 geographical area, not simply the number of people living in those areas.

108 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the New Jersey Congressional
109 delegation to propose and/or support funding in the next Farm Bill to help bring reliable
110 broadband telecommunications and Internet to rural areas of this state, and to ensure that
111 such funding is tied to the agricultural character of a rural area, not solely its population or
112 inclusion in a given Census tract.