

RESOLUTION # 23

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 climate and economic resiliency of
21 our communities and businesses; catalyze economic development and innovation; and
22 promote environmental 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 compliance with a growing
25 number of regulations; new invasive pests; urbanization; land use and environmental

26 regulation; water-quality concerns; rising labor and other production costs; wildlife damage;
27 cost and accessibility of farmland; climate issues; globalizing market competition; Right to
28 Farm conflicts; labor supply shortages; supply chain disruptions; 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 to the next
33 generation of agriculturalists; and

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

36 **WHEREAS**, State base budget appropriations to NJAES have, in inflation-adjusted
37 terms, declined by 41 percent since Fiscal Year 2008; and

38 **WHEREAS**, this erosion of stable “base” state funding (i.e., past cuts and a flat (not
39 inflation-adjusted) level of funding for seven consecutive years) adversely impacts the ability
40 of the NJAES to cover rising operating costs and maintain and develop the necessary long-
41 term physical infrastructure, technology, and staffing needed to support the existing and
42 evolving needs of New Jersey residents, as well as their communities and businesses; and

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

45 **WHEREAS**, the State supplemental budget appropriations to NJAES in FY19, FY20,
46 FY21 and FY22 facilitated the beginning of much needed re-investments in the physical
47 infrastructure, equipment and machinery, instrumentation, and technology at NJAES
48 research farms and field stations; and

49 **WHEREAS**, these capital investments are supporting the development or expansion
50 of needed programs related to climate adaptation, renewable energy, soil health, hemp
51 production, wildlife management, aquaculture breeding and development, invasive species

52 detection and control, integrated pest management, and new crop commercialization, to
53 name only a few; and

54 **WHEREAS**, long-term planning and appropriate staffing (i.e., strategic faculty hires)
55 cannot be supported with year-to-year supplemental funding, but requires sustained
56 increases to the State's base appropriation to NJAES; and

57 **WHEREAS**, the past decade has demonstrated that decreases in state funding
58 significantly and negatively impact the NJAES' delivery of crucial programs across the state,
59 including the investment in and dissemination of new research, adoption of new
60 technologies, and the maintenance of campus-based and off-campus research facilities; and

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

65 **WHEREAS**, the state's agricultural community is deeply concerned about further
66 erosion in NJAES staffing in the face of recent and forthcoming retirements and associated
67 impacts on program continuity and new program development; and

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

74 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 107th State
75 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, N.J., on February 9-10, 2022, do hereby
76 declare that financial support for NJAES must be improved and maintained at higher levels if
77 solutions to critical issues are to be achieved, ensuring the viability of the state's agricultural
78 and food system.

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

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

87 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the County Boards of Agriculture and
88 the commodity organizations and New Jersey Farm Bureau to support the Rutgers NJAES
89 “Vision 2025 Initiative,” a critical and demonstrably impactful five-year investment initiative
90 supported by state “special purpose funding” and dedicated NJAES infrastructure funds to
91 make capital improvements, IT upgrades, and equipment purchases to strengthen NJAES
92 farms, field stations and centers to support, develop and expand research and extension
93 programs and demonstrations that respond to the needs of the agricultural industry and the
94 broader range of critical needs facing New Jersey residents, communities and businesses.

95 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we support and endorse the three overarching
96 areas of investment priority articulated in Vision 2025 that support (1) the future of food and
97 agriculture in New Jersey, (2) climate resilience and adaptation, and (3) personal and
98 community health and wellness programming.

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

103 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we applaud and support the NJAES Board of
104 Managers efforts to identify and prioritize critical extension specialist, county agent, and
105 other staffing needs within NJAES that will ensure critical program continuity and build new

106 capacity in critical areas of agricultural research and extension, including but not limited to:
107 carbon sequestration, soil health, wildlife management, agribusiness, climate adaptation,
108 renewable energy, agricultural technology and “smart farming,” and agricultural viability, to
109 name a few.

110 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the timely replacement of retiring
111 extension specialists and county agents to avoid gaps in service or disruption of essential
112 agricultural programs.

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

119 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we emphasize the essential need for adequate
120 agricultural industry representation in the process for identifying a permanent executive
121 dean/executive director and therefore strongly urge that, when a search committee is
122 created, the President of Rutgers University and senior university administrators include
123 representation of the agricultural industry, with a minimum representation of the state’s top-
124 four commodity groups, and at least two members of the NJAES Board of Managers.