

RESOLUTION # 24

FARM VIABILITY

1 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey's agricultural industry has a long history of proactive
2 engagement in the identification of critical issues affecting farming in the state and in the
3 formulation of policy and other strategies to support the retention and viability of a robust
4 agricultural sector; and

5 **WHEREAS**, the mobilization of forward-looking agricultural leaders has, since the
6 1950s, resulted in seminal agricultural support programs in New Jersey, including
7 cornerstone agricultural statutes such as the Farmland Assessment Act of 1964, and the
8 concurrent passage of the Agriculture Retention and Development Act and Right to Farm Act
9 in 1983; and

10 **WHEREAS**, the industry embarked upon an ambitious FARMS Commission strategic
11 planning initiative in the early 1990s, which culminated with the report *Into the 21st Century:
12 Ensuring a Fertile Future for New Jersey Agriculture*, outlining a vision for a viable and
13 prosperous farm sector in New Jersey and charting a course for meeting the challenges and
14 opportunities facing the state's agriculturalists through policy and regulatory supports,
15 marketing strategies, production support, agricultural leadership development, and other
16 measures; and

17 **WHEREAS**, the comprehensive FARMS Commission effort was preceded by similar
18 industry-led initiatives, including those that resulted in the 1980 report titled *Grassroots: An
19 Agriculture Retention and Development Program for New Jersey* and its antecedent *Report
20 of the Blueprint Commission on the Future of New Jersey Agriculture* (1973); and

21 **WHEREAS**, the need periodically arises to systematically evaluate the status and
22 condition of the state's agricultural industry and set strategic priorities to bolster its viability
23 within the context of current and future challenges and opportunities; and

24 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey's agricultural and food complex accounts for \$138.5 billion
25 annually in economic activity to the state (the state's third-largest economic sector), directly

26 employs nearly 500,000 people, keeps open space productive and privately managed, and
27 enjoys highly favorable support among the state’s residents, with a combined 94 percent
28 saying it is “Very Important” (70 percent) or “Somewhat Important” (24 percent) to the state’s
29 wellbeing, according to the latest New Jersey Farm Bureau/Fairleigh Dickinson University
30 poll on the issue; and

31 **WHEREAS**, recent years have seen New Jersey farmers facing increasing costs that
32 competing farmers in surrounding states have not encountered, primarily from the state
33 increasing the minimum wage, an increase in fuel taxes, and other expenses, leaving New
34 Jersey farmers at even more of a competitive disadvantage to farmers in other states.

35 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey farmers are facing ever-increasing regulatory pressures
36 from all levels of government in addition to ever-present Right to Farm challenges; all of
37 which threaten farm economic viability; and

38 **WHEREAS**, the delegates to the 2021 State Agricultural Convention called on
39 agencies and groups with agriculture as their primary interest to “examine...the various
40 factors, positive and negative, that impact New Jersey agricultural operations and report
41 back to this Convention at its 107th annual meeting on its findings and recommendations
42 regarding the long-term viability of agriculture in New Jersey”; and

43 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 107th State
44 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, N.J., on February 9-10, 2022, do hereby
45 call on the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture, in cooperation with leadership from the
46 New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Rutgers NJAES, and other agricultural entities to
47 form a commission to examine the array of issues involved in a crisis of confidence and
48 future viability for agriculture in New Jersey and report back to this Convention in 2023.

49 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Legislature to pass, and the
50 Governor to sign, all measures requiring legislative approval that stem from the
51 recommendations in that report, with adequate funding to ensure effective implementation.