

RESOLUTION # 38

SOIL HEALTH

1 **WHEREAS**, soil is a vital resource of agriculture and its management lies at the
2 heart of farming best practices; and

3 **WHEREAS**, improving soil health through best management practices can increase
4 productivity of nutrient dense crops to feed an expanding local population with higher quality
5 food; and

6 **WHEREAS**, still enduring disruptions and consolidation in the food system due to the
7 COVID-19 pandemic underscore the necessity of a resilient, affordable local food system
8 supported by state policies, state legislative and funding; and

9 **WHEREAS**, soil with high organic matter is an indicator of a soil's ability to better
10 manage and sequester carbon as it is absorbed to feed soil organisms contributing to the
11 growth and activity of the entire food web; and

12 **WHEREAS**, the current national momentum for adopting state Healthy Soils
13 legislation, has been building to improve soil and sequester carbon; and

14 **WHEREAS**, states currently are adopting soil health legislation, building upon the
15 work of federal and state agencies, academic, and agricultural professionals, to improve soil
16 health and sequester carbon; and as of 2021, **31** states had Healthy Soils legislation on
17 their dockets. The total number of states with Healthy Soils resolutions and laws is
18 now **19**. These states include 45% of U.S. farm acreage (401,725,890 of 900,217,576
19 acres, based upon 2017 National Agricultural Statistics Service Agricultural Census),
20 and 48% of U.S. state population; and

21 **WHEREAS**, holistic ecosystem protection is the responsibility of all in the farming
22 community; and

23 **WHEREAS**, nutrient management planning – to budget, supply, and enhance
24 nutrient holding capacity and nutrient cycling for plant production in order to maintain or

25 improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil – can be used to develop
26 whole farm, conservation management plans; and

27 **WHEREAS**, practices such as crop rotation diversity, improving yield, cover crops,
28 interseeding, residue retention, aggregate stability, agroforestry, rotational grazing and
29 decreased tillage for perennial systems when utilized, build organic matter content by
30 stimulating soil biological activity and groundwater retention and supply; and

31 **WHEREAS**, significant soil health changes may only begin to occur in a typical three-
32 to five-year grant period, making the need for continued economic support for those soil
33 health practices go beyond the end of a typical grant period; and

34 **WHEREAS**, permanent state based funded incentives are needed in order for
35 farmers to be able to pay for implementation of best management practices; and

36 **WHEREAS**, farmer training programs on best management by including farmer-to-
37 farmer styled programs, demonstration field days, and farm best practice tours, need to be
38 expanded as supported by NRCS, academic institutions, extension stations and NJDA
39 services; and

40 **WHEREAS**, establishing statewide bulk purchase programs can allow small, medium
41 and large-scale farmers to buy farm supplies and innovative equipment at a lower cost; and

42 **WHEREAS**, access to needed state funded cost-share programs should be available
43 to all farmers including those who operate on year-to-year leases; and

44 **WHEREAS**, cost-effective measurements and protocols for quantification of
45 sequestered soil carbon should be increased to give farmers incentive payments aligned with
46 soil health data and to guide their practices by identifying the most efficient indicators of soil
47 health to enhance precision agricultural applications;

48 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 107th State
49 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, N.J., on February 9-10, 2022, do hereby
50 urge the Governor of New Jersey and all appropriate state, and local agencies to support
51 and establish increased state-based legislation and funding for expanded training, and

52 equipment purchases for implementation of healthy soil practices of producers in urban,
53 suburban and rural communities throughout New Jersey.

54 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a fixed source of state funding
55 commensurate with long-term, financial incentives to expand best soil health improvement
56 practices should be created to enable the achievement of 2030 climate goals to limit carbon
57 dioxide in the atmosphere and to mitigate its impact for better resilience to drought, extreme
58 temperature and weather events while ensuring a vibrant, resilient and profitable New Jersey
59 food system.