

## RESOLUTION # 19

### 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

regulation; water-quality concerns; rising labor and other production costs; wildlife damage; cost and accessibility of farmland; climate issues; globalizing market competition; Right to Farm conflicts; labor supply shortages; supply chain disruptions; and

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

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

**WHEREAS**, State base budget appropriations to NJAES have, in inflation-adjusted terms, declined by 45 percent (equivalent to a loss of \$16.5 million per year in purchasing power) since Fiscal Year 2008; and

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

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

**WHEREAS**, a series of recent State supplemental budget (“special purpose”) appropriations to NJAES facilitated the beginning of much needed re-investments in the physical infrastructure, equipment and machinery, instrumentation, and technology at NJAES research farms and field stations; and

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

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

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

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

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

**WHEREAS**, the state's agricultural community is deeply concerned about the erosion in NJAES staffing in the face of recent faculty and staff retirements and their associated impacts on critical research and extension program continuity and succession, as well as new program development; and

**WHEREAS**, these concerns are increased greatly by the projected retirement of 25 to 40 percent of existing extension faculty over the next several years, as well as the anticipated retirements of large numbers of essential technical and programmatic staff, field station staff, and administrative staff across NJAES; and

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

80           **WHEREAS**, we commend and support the NJAES, New Jersey Department of  
81           Agriculture, New Jersey Farm Bureau, and industry leaders for their efforts to mobilize a  
82           statewide *Farm Viability Initiative* to identify critical issues affecting, and develop actionable  
83           strategies to strengthen, the current and longer-term viability of farming in the state.

84           **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 108<sup>th</sup> State  
85           Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 8-9, 2023, do  
86           hereby declare that financial support for NJAES must be improved and maintained at higher  
87           levels, and as continuing additional funding, as relying upon potential special appropriations  
88           each year inhibits the ability for long-term planning, if solutions to critical issues are to be  
89           achieved, ensuring the viability of the state's agricultural and food system.

90           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the New Jersey State Board of  
91           Agriculture, the NJAES Board of Managers, County Boards of Agriculture and the New  
92           Jersey Farm Bureau to work with the Governor and the Legislature to provide in the FY2024  
93           State budget a sustained and continuing increase of at least \$5 million to the NJAES base  
94           funding to provide essential salary support for faculty and staff needed to advance key  
95           experiment station programs and priorities.

96           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, while recent "special purpose" state appropriations  
97           used for NJAES infrastructure have been invaluable, we assert that the lack of stable state  
98           investment precludes long-term planning for routine maintenance and, importantly, the  
99           modernization of facilities, equipment, instrumentation, and technology needed to (1) support  
100          impactful research and extension programs, (2) compete for competitive federal and other  
101          program funding, and (3) attract and retain top-tier faculty and staff. These investments are  
102          deemed essential to the ability of NJAES to effectively address the growing range of critical  
103          issues impacting New Jersey's agricultural industry and other communities across the state.

104          **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly urge the New Jersey State Board of  
105          Agriculture, the NJAES Board of Managers, County Boards of Agriculture and the New  
106          Jersey Farm Bureau to work with the Governor and the Legislature to establish a stable,

annual funding mechanism of at least \$3 million to sustain the investments needed for the maintenance and modernization of physical infrastructure across the statewide NJAES system of research farms, field stations, and business incubators.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we support NJAES leadership's commitment to engaging the Board of Managers, agricultural industry leaders, and other stakeholder groups to identify and prioritize programs and associated staffing needs required to address critical issues affecting the current and other future viability of the farming industry (i.e. under the auspices of the ongoing statewide Farm Viability Initiative) and its commitment to empanel program steering committees to assist with guiding the implementation of such programs.

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

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

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

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

137           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we applaud and support the NJAES Board of  
138           Managers efforts to identify and prioritize critical extension specialist, county agent, and  
139           other staffing needs within NJAES that will ensure critical program continuity and build new  
140           capacity in critical areas of agricultural research and extension and recognize the importance  
141           of these efforts in garnering the university's FY 2023 hiring approvals for 15 extension  
142           specialists and agents.

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

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