

## RESOLUTION # 30

### HUNGER, NUTRITION AND GLEANING IN NEW JERSEY

1           **WHEREAS**, schools are an appropriate vehicle to promote the availability of  
2 healthier foods and nutrition services, as they are uniquely positioned to model and reinforce  
3 healthy eating behaviors, such as increasing knowledge of and improving access to fruits  
4 and vegetables on the school campus and at school-related activities; and

5           **WHEREAS**, schools can serve as an outreach tool to carry positive nutrition  
6 messages, through student exposure to nutrition information and farming practices, to  
7 parents and the community at large; and

8           **WHEREAS**, schools are required to develop and implement a school  
9 nutrition/wellness policy and to promote nutritious alternatives, and the Department  
10 continues to train schools and school food-service providers about marketing nutritious foods  
11 to children and incorporating more fresh fruits, vegetables and dairy into the school meal  
12 program; and

13           **WHEREAS**, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the usual ways of delivering nutritious  
14 foods to students while they are in school were disrupted by schools shifting to virtual  
15 learning from home, meaning the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, USDA, and  
16 education officials needed to collaborate on ensuring those meals continued to get to  
17 students, through various methods of delivering those meals to students at home; and

18           **WHEREAS**, the Department of Agriculture has significantly increased participation in  
19 the School Breakfast Program by working in conjunction with the New Jersey Department of  
20 Education to facilitate the inclusion of “breakfast after the bell” options in schools; and

21           **WHEREAS**, the WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program, Senior Farmers’ Market  
22 Nutrition Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and  
23 Children are established through the United States Department of Agriculture but have been  
24 administered in New Jersey through the New Jersey Department of Health; and

25           **WHEREAS**, WIC coupon redemption rates in New Jersey have traditionally been low  
26 compared to other states, and resistance has been met for the idea of “over-issuing” WIC  
27 coupons in order to ensure the highest possible number of people are receiving them, with  
28 the goal that they will also use them; and

29           **WHEREAS**, a sound, balanced, nutritious diet is important to the well-being of  
30 society, both in terms of the future productivity of our children and the health and well-being  
31 of the population in general; and

32           **WHEREAS**, approximately 1.9 million people in New Jersey rely upon various  
33 feeding and nutrition programs administered by or through the Department; and

34           **WHEREAS**, the division has greatly expanded the Child and Adult Care Food  
35 Program, growing from 43 sponsors operating at 71 sites throughout the state in 1997, when  
36 the programs were moved to NJDA, to 733 sponsors operating at 2,075 sites in 2022; and

37           **WHEREAS**, school and feeding programs that have commenced since the programs  
38 were moved to NJDA also have advanced significantly, including: an increase in the total  
39 number of students receiving school breakfast, from 160,384 in 2008 to 356,475 in 2021/22;  
40 an increase in the average number of children served in the Summer Food Service Program,  
41 from 51,906 in 2005 to 1,972,313 in 2021; and an increase in schools participating in the  
42 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to expose students to healthier snacks, from 25 schools  
43 in 2008 to 202 schools in 2021/22; and

44           **WHEREAS**, the influence of the Farm to School Program has led to almost 500  
45 schools purchasing local products from New Jersey farmers; more than 300 of the districts  
46 buying local and implementing cafeteria programs using Harvest of the Month promotional  
47 material to highlight the nutritional value of local items; and nearly 200 of the districts using a  
48 curriculum that ties cafeteria meals to healthy eating education and/or field trips to farms;  
49 and

50           **WHEREAS**, local purchases of food items including fresh fruits and vegetables can  
51 benefit the local economy, growers and distributors, thus reducing the number of “food miles”  
52 those commodities must travel to reach the end consumers; and

53           **WHEREAS**, timely information from state officials regarding the potential for sale of  
54 locally grown and harvested foods through federal government programs such as SNAP,  
55 WIC, and the Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program would help farmers more effectively  
56 plan for what types and amounts of produce they should grow in a coming season; and

57           **WHEREAS**, WIC (Women, Infants and Children) and similar food safety net  
58 programs often are eligible to be used for fresh farm products at an on-farm market, and we  
59 recognize the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture has focused on concerns arising from a  
60 pilot program that provides electronic benefits transfer (EBT) equipment for farmers and  
61 market managers to accept those payments, and exploring the significant connectivity and  
62 other functional issues with that equipment that those in the pilot program have been  
63 experiencing; and

64           **WHEREAS**, volunteer gleaning organizations that harvest, collect, and distribute  
65 surplus produce from farms to community feeding operations are a valuable source of fresh  
66 agricultural products that need additional financial resources for purchasing this food, with  
67 concurrent costs related to storage and transportation of this produce; and

68           **WHEREAS**, gleaning surplus agricultural products as a means of reducing food  
69 insecurity has been increasing to feed our residents and more gleaning organizations are  
70 working with farmers than in the past; and

71           **WHEREAS**, according to the 2023 State Food Purchasing Program’s Gleaning  
72 Support Grant July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023 public notice, there will be a \$250,000 grant for  
73 non-profit gleaning organizations; and

74           **WHEREAS**, the FY2023 state budget included \$100,000 for Hunters Helping the  
75 Hungry, to be targeted toward moving meat from hunting, primarily venison from deer, to  
76 feeding operations to help feed the hungry; and

77           **WHEREAS**, the biggest challenge in adding venison to the feeding operations is  
78 aligning hunters with butchers who can cut and prepare the meat for the feeding operations'  
79 use; and

80           **WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture has for the past 26 years  
81 worked with municipalities and agriculture groups to establish and support community  
82 farmers markets, where, in addition to selling to the general public, farmers can accept  
83 federally issued Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition program vouchers from senior citizens,  
84 which the farmers then redeem for additional income; and

85           **WHEREAS**, New Jersey is home to some of the largest commercial fishing ports in  
86 the United States, and New Jersey's commercial fishermen seek to reduce hunger by  
87 participating in a seafood gleaning program; and

88           **WHEREAS**, among the goals of the gleaning program is exposing consumers to the  
89 tastes of some underutilized species, in the hope they will seek them out in the future, and,  
90 under the program being proposed, fishermen will receive neither payment nor tax write-offs  
91 for the fish being gleaned.

92           **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 108<sup>th</sup> State  
93 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 8-9, 2023, do  
94 hereby continue to support the efforts of the Department and its partners in the United States  
95 Department of Agriculture (USDA), as well as community feeding organizations to ensure  
96 that healthy food choices and fresh fruits and vegetables are available to all children and  
97 adults throughout New Jersey.

98           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strenuously oppose any legislation that would  
99 move school and/or community feeding programs currently housed in the NJDA's Division of  
100 Food & Nutrition to any other agency, as the division has done an outstanding job over the  
101 past 25 years to expand, modernize, and promote those programs, aided by moving to an  
102 almost entirely paperless system through strategic use of web-based interactions with  
103 schools and community feeding organizations.

104           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to continue to lead in  
105 promoting healthy foods and sound dietary choices to improve the well-being of New  
106 Jersey's citizens by promoting programs such as "Jersey Fresh Farm to School", "Farm to  
107 Preschool", "Farm to Summer" and school wellness policies.

108           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge those at all levels responsible for  
109 purchasing or otherwise acquiring food for community feeding programs to ensure that those  
110 foods are grown, harvested or produced in New Jersey to the greatest extent practicable.

111           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we stress the critical nature of the Governor and  
112 Legislature providing adequate funding for the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) in the  
113 FY2024 budget at a level at least equal to the current funding, and that additional funding  
114 should be provided for storage and distribution of emergency food.

115           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to work with New Jersey  
116 fruit and vegetable processing companies and the Rutgers Food Innovation Center to  
117 produce pre-packaged, value-added, single-serving New Jersey fruit and vegetable  
118 products, and "Made with Jersey Fresh" products, for use in school food service menus.

119           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we encourage the Department to engage in an  
120 education and outreach campaign to link hunters with butchers, and to further link those  
121 butchers with feeding operations, in order to fulfill the mission of Hunters Helping the Hungry  
122 by moving meat from hunts into the stream of food accepted by the feeding operations.

123           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department of Agriculture to  
124 continue seeking consultation with the New Jersey Department of Health and any other state  
125 and/or federal agencies to address issues with farmers and market managers accepting WIC  
126 or other safety-net payments, so that New Jersey can maximize the WIC and other benefits  
127 that can help the state's residents remain food secure, and to hold public discussions about  
128 those issues with the farmers and market managers who have expressed these concerns.

129           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we do hereby support and encourage the use of  
130 grants from all possible sources by New Jersey fishermen to establish the United States

131 Seafood Gleaning Program, and we support the USSGP pilot project in Monmouth and  
132 Ocean counties in New Jersey to promote these efforts.

133 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the 2023 State Food Purchase Program  
134 appropriation be increased to \$500,000 to more adequately address local food insecurity and  
135 the increase in demand for non-profit organizations' services.