

RESOLUTION # 34

SOIL HEALTH

1 **WHEREAS**, soil is a living system filled with biodiversity, rich with nutrients, fungi and
2 microbes providing water absorption, filtration, and invertebrate life; and

3 **WHEREAS**, improvements made to soil health benefit all agricultural producers,
4 regardless of size, production methods, or soil type; and

5 **WHEREAS**, comprehensive assessment of soil health involves support and
6 expansion of practical soil health services, which assist in identifying and understanding soil
7 constraints, future management, and deeper understanding for New Jersey farmers and
8 growers; and

9 **WHEREAS**, cost-effective measures of carbon sequestration should be increased to
10 give farmers and growers the incentive payments aligned with soil health data to enhance
11 cost-saving precision field applications, whereby agriculture in New Jersey can make
12 progress toward reduction of emissions; and

13 **WHEREAS**, consumers increasingly are seeking products that have elements
14 associated with human health and environmental health with demonstrated increases in
15 purchases that are regenerative in nature and habitats produced by farmers and growers
16 that steward the environment and natural resources; and

17 **WHEREAS**, the number of New Jersey farmers and growers implementing
18 regenerative soil health practices is increasing while all aspects of agriculture are facing
19 more frequent climate-related events; and

20 **WHEREAS**, soil health outcomes produce high yields through forward-looking
21 farming practices such as limited tillage systems, cover cropping, crop rotation, interplanting
22 and integration of livestock, guaranteeing positive impacts in production, conservation, and
23 stewardship; and

24 **WHEREAS**, the USDA Organic Transition Initiative (OTI) and Transition to Organic
25 Partnership Program (TOPP) was announced in August 2022, as a \$300 million multi-agency
26 USDA effort to support transition expenses and in building and strengthening markets to
27 implement a major role in the transition initiative; and

28 **WHEREAS**, transition to more sustainable production involves a set of practices that
29 improves aggregate stability and increases in above-ground diversity, while proving a
30 reduction of annual inputs and direct costs; and

31 **WHEREAS**, farmers and growers of all sizes and operations want to use soil health
32 practices that are good for the environment but need to find ways to pay for the practices;
33 and

34 **WHEREAS**, governments at all levels are discussing the need to fund programs that
35 will compensate farmers for incorporating carbon-sequestration practices so that their
36 operations can become more sustainable without undermining economic farm viability; and

37 **WHEREAS**, according to a November 2022 report from USDA Conservation
38 Assessment Project (CEAP-Farmers.gov-November 21, 2022), a farmer can save \$14-\$17
39 per acre on fuel annually by implementing seasonal or continuous limited tillage,
40 respectively; and

41 **WHEREAS**, the report approximates that the potential nationwide reduction of fuel
42 use would be 763 million gallons of diesel equivalents each year, roughly the amount of
43 energy used by 2.8 million homes; and.

44 **WHEREAS**, the report projects a potential reduction in carbon emissions by 8.5
45 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) each year, equivalent to removing nearly 1.7 million
46 gas-powered passenger vehicles from the road; and

47 **WHEREAS**, in addition to federally funded soil health programs, permanent state-
48 funded incentives and equipment purchase cost reductions are still needed in order for
49 farmers and growers to be able to pay for implementation of best management practices;
50 and

51 **WHEREAS**, establishing coordinated state bulk purchasing programs can also allow
52 farmers and growers the ability to purchase farm inputs, supplies and equipment at a lower
53 cost; and

54 **WHEREAS**, access to needed state-funded cost-share programs should be available
55 to all farmers and growers, including those that operate on year-to-year leases and smaller
56 acreages; and

57 **WHEREAS**, soil health education through farmer and grower training programs,
58 farmer-to-farmer-style programs, demonstration field days, and farm tours needs to be
59 supported and complemented by expanding statewide accessible education, agricultural
60 skills development, and necessary business planning through increased curriculum
61 throughout the educational system; and

62 **WHEREAS**, investment in transitioning farmers to regenerative community-based
63 agriculture and responsible land stewardships can provide solutions to issues facing our
64 state and country today, including increased economic development, improved public
65 health, reduction of waste and pollution, and rehabilitation of damaged ecosystems.

66 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 108th State
67 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 8-9, 2023, do
68 hereby urge the Governor of New Jersey and all appropriate state agencies and education
69 institutions to establish state-based legislation and funding for accelerated adaptation of soil
70 health practices by funding needed direct costs to transition practices.

71 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a fixed source of state funding commensurate
72 with long-term incentives being established to support expanded educational programs to
73 enable the soil health achievements of all farmers and growers, resulting in greater success,
74 reduced costs, increases in holistic farm viability and resiliency and reduced emissions and
75 carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

76 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge farmers to seek out all emerging
77 government programs that incentivize carbon-sequestration strategies and other approaches

78 aimed at increasing sustainable natural resources practices on farms, and for the
79 Department to use its social-media and other messaging capacities to inform farmers about
80 such programs.