**RESOLUTION # 20**

**LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY IN NEW JERSEY**

**WHEREAS**,New Jersey’s livestock and meat production industry is an important part of the state’s agriculture, not only contributing wholesome, locally produced meat and meat products, but also creating demand for field crops used as feed, as well as other industry support sales; and

**WHEREAS**,recent years have seen wide market swings, combined with periodic spikes in input costs, and a lack of processing facilities that enable producers to establish Custom Value-Added products, both wholesale and retail to the consumer; and

**WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the forefront the need to decentralize the meat USDA-inspected and custom-slaughter processing industry, and to provide greater availability in processing centers throughout the United States of small to medium-sized meat processors; and

**WHEREAS**, there has been continuous growth in small farms of fewer than 50 acres since 2012, with a drastic increase since 2019 and the COVID-19 Pandemic, and with the increase of new small farmers, there is a lack of available resources for beginners; and.

**WHEREAS**, the increase in livestock and small ruminants for self-sufficient households lack access to veterinarian assistance and contacts for emergency assistance; and

**WHEREAS**, within the current marketing structure, New Jersey livestock producers have suffered from the lack of USDA-inspected and custom-slaughter processing centers within the state’s borders that have as their first priority of providing custom harvest and processing of all types of livestock; and

**WHEREAS**,the Department has been working with livestock producers to explore alternative modes to marketing livestock meat and meat products outside the traditional route of selling live animals into a commodity processing system; and

**WHEREAS**, those alternative approaches include the establishment of on-farm, small group, or regional USDA-inspected and custom-slaughter processing centers for the purpose of harvesting, cutting, packaging, and further processing for table-ready livestock protein meat products; and

**WHEREAS**, the creation of opportunities to process New Jersey-produced livestock meat and meat products within the state can provide the state’s livestock farmers with a chance to control their own destiny and earn significant premiums over the commodity market; and

**WHEREAS**, an important step in pursuing that goal occurred this November when the state’s USDA-Rural Development, working in conjunction with NJDA, announced $4.2 million in federal funding through the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program for increased poultry meat production at Goffel Road Poultry in Bergen County, and to explore the idea of a waste digester at that facility to help create energy for its operations; and

**WHEREAS**,as with all agricultural products, the return to the farmer for livestock produced meat and meat products should be greater the further into the marketing chain, such as when the farmer controls the packaging and sale of the products that his farm produces; and

**WHEREAS**, all value-added ventures in agriculture involve a considerable amount of risk, and this level of risk is additionally intense for livestock processing ventures, which tend to be capital-intensive and require large investments of equity on the part of the principals to establish; and

**WHEREAS**, New Jersey is demographically favorably positioned to have direct local or on-farm USDA-inspected and custom-slaughter processing of livestock meats be profitable ventures for any size livestock farmers looking to diversify, as evidenced by existing successful on-farm operations providing needed livestock meat supplies during the initial stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic and has since continued with consumers wanting more knowledge of where their food is coming from; and

**WHEREAS**, New Jersey’s commercial farmers have in recent years branched out beyond “traditional” livestock (cattle, poultry, swine, small ruminants, etc.) and there are now also New Jersey farmers raising llamas, alpacas, water buffalo, bison, rabbits, emus, ostriches and other livestock, all of which can be a source of farm income and contribute to the overall value of farm products sold in the state; and

**WHEREAS**, agricultural methane emitted by cattle and other livestock is part of the flow of a pre-existing carbon cycle and does not represent new carbon extracted from underground; and

**WHEREAS**, using the GWP 100 (Global Warming Potential) metric overcalculates methane emitted by cattle by three or four times because it treats methane as an accumulating stock gas like CO2, where, in contrast, using GWP\* developed by Oxford University treats methane as a flow gas and accounts for the biogenic cycle.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 109th State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8, 2024, do hereby strongly urge the New Jersey Department of Agriculture to do the following:

* Continue to support value-added projects, both on-farm and those that involve USDA-inspected and custom-slaughter processing at off-farm sites, that can offer New Jersey livestock meat producing farmers significant premiums for their products; help livestock farmers expand beyond custom retail cuts to include less-expensive, alternative table-ready livestock meat, to serve non-premium markets; and work through the Department’s Division of Marketing and Development to provide enhanced support for the “*Jersey Raised”* livestock meat/protein products brand. Help livestock farmers access all appropriate state and federal government agencies with the goal of maximizing all small-business funding program opportunities in order to create value-added livestock meat processing units that will support and grow the diversified livestock industry in New Jersey.
* Enthusiastically support development of a USDA-inspected and custom-slaughter processing facility that would be owned by a group of livestock producers and facilitate the development of individual branding of custom products and enhance the ability to develop a wholesale market that would establish greater volumes of meat product which can be made available to a wider consumer base, and to include in those efforts involvement in an innovation center that could help both the livestock and dairy sectors identify projects that can bridge both sectors, with an emphasis on creating demonstration projects.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Department, along with Rutgers Cooperative Extension and Rutgers University as the result of the two Special Statewide Livestock Summits, continue working to identify all possible resources and partnerships that could help livestock producers create livestock harvest and USDA-inspected and custom-slaughter processing facilities of source-verified *Jersey Fresh* livestock meat products, either individually or in tandem with other New Jersey livestock producers.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Department, Rutgers NJAES, and any other interested agricultural group, provide on-line access to publications and videos, as well as in-person educational seminars, to 4-H members and small livestock owners about pertinent information in the areas of nutrition, disease, and parasite prevention, and that these materials and trainings be made available to consumers as well as at feed stores, fairs, and other places that are frequented by those small farmers who raise livestock.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, t**hat NJAES and the Department of Agriculture work together to develop a contact list of small backyard operations and all livestock farms, to be used for notification of emergencies, dissemination of educational information and upcoming workshop sessions.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to closely monitor developments in the drafting of the next federal Farm Bill as regards the livestock industry, and that it advise and educate the New Jersey Congressional Delegation as to New Jersey livestock farmers’ support or opposition of livestock-related issues in the Farm Bill, in order to ensure that the Farm Bill best reflects the needs of New Jersey’s livestock industry.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that we support science-based calculations using GWP\* that take into account this climate-neutrality, so that the global-warming potential of cattle and livestock is not overstated.