**RESOLUTION 40**

**AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE, TECHNICAL, AND**

**TRADE SCHOOL EDUCATION**

**WHEREAS**, agricultural education is a program that typically focuses on the general principles and practices of agricultural research and production; and

**WHEREAS,** agricultural instruction to operate a farming, ranching, and/or agriculture-related business involves, among other topics, animal husbandry, plant cultivation, soil science, business skills, and conservation; and

**WHEREAS,** preparing individuals to apply the knowledge to create solutions to practical agricultural problems and ensure greater success is necessary; and

**WHEREAS**, a general business-management program can offer modern business and economic principals and objectives needed in the organization, operation, and management of agricultural businesses; and

**WHEREAS,** agricultural operations are becoming more and more diversified and mechanized, creating a need for education to address agricultural specialization in new elements added to a farm operation; and

**WHEREAS,** education programs need to be developed and offered in regularly accessible times, locations, and methods to prepare new, beginning, and even experienced farmers to both identify the need for, and to provide, support services locally among colleagues with the goal of all farmers possessing business management principles and knowledge on marketing agricultural products, both in the retail and wholesale sectors, both domestically and globally; and

**WHEREAS,** pragmatic education programs such as those addressing agricultural power systems, equipment and tractor repair, planting and harvesting equipment, cutting equipment, and systems education for silos; irrigation; dairy; feeding/processing systems as well as hiring and retaining-labor, should be covered in education programs and developed at New Jersey’s community college and career-technical education schools (traditionally also known as vocational schools) throughout the state of New Jersey; and

**WHEREAS,** a program is needed that prepares individuals to operate, maintain, and repair specialized farm, ranch and agribusiness power equipment, either stationary, mobile, and /or hand operated, whether internal-combustion, electrical, steam, hydraulic, or mechanical, such as planting and harvesting equipment, airborne crop equipment, power sources for silos, shearing, and associated processing systems; and

**WHEREAS**, an education program that prepares individuals to cultivate grain, fiber, forage, fruits and nuts, vegetables, floriculture and numerous other plant products should include instruction in the basic principles of soil health, plant science, health and nutrition as applied to species and varieties, soil preparation, irrigation, pest management, planting and harvesting operations, converting raw agricultural products into processed forms for human consumption with product marketing and the applicable issues of safety, regulation, logistics and supply; and

**WHEREAS**, a program that focuses on the application of inputs for production and management of livestock animals and the production of meat and other associated products, should include instruction in animal sciences and technology with the related aspects of human and animal health and safety, such as those embodied in New Jersey One Health and food safety approaches; and

**WHEREAS,** career education (aka vocational-technical, or vo-tech programs) (((JB))) should prepare individuals to manage, select, and care for dairy animals of all types and breeds, as well as associated scaled dairy farm processing and processing facilities and operations for many types of products; and

**WHEREAS,** these career-education programs should include further instruction in housing, feeding, sanitation, shipping, and handling, as well as applicable regulations; and

**WHEREAS,** basic support education in accounting software and information systems, database and records management associated with many aspects of a farm operation, and education regarding government grant applications, labor laws, taxation laws, equipment and infrastructure values, insurance laws and even estate planning, must be part of an overall career education; and

**WHEREAS,** in New Jersey there are four-year agriculture and environmental associates degree programs, yet there are limited agriculture “career” schools (less than two-year programs) and programs at the vo-tech and community college levels (approximately 25 community colleges and vocational schools do offer a ”career” agricultural certification within the United States); and

**WHEREAS,** our many cooperative extension services, nonprofit farm organizations, and associated groups in New Jersey offer important agricultural workshops and conferences, it is also vitally important that vo-tech and community college institutions further establish and develop regular curriculum offerings on a regular semester basis each year; and

**WHEREAS**, trade schools in career-technical community college settings, centered on agriculture, can train new individuals to supply a local, skilled, specialized workforce, educate a new farmer with cross-sectional education, and even reach more experienced farmers seeking to stay up to date with the quickly evolving spectrum of farming; and

**WHEREAS,** individuals that can access and complete a ”career” agriculture education curriculum will have, after completing an agriculture program, in general competitive wages and salaries, when available, based on information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; and

**WHEREAS,** according to the USDA and US Department of Labor, the average age of a farmer in the United States is 59 years, as it also is in New Jersey, and thousands of acres of farmland will likely change hands in the next five to 10 years, which further emphasizes the need for regularly offered education in all the many aspects of farm operations toward complete career development for beginning and existing farmers who come from all backgrounds and agriculture specialties, now and for the next generations; and

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that we, the delegates to the 109th State Agriculture Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 7-8, 2024, do hereby recommend the Associations of Community Colleges and the New Jersey Council of County, Career and Technical Schools accelerate and dedicate more focused enhancement of agriculture curriculum education and trade education with better coordination toward more comprehensive complete ”career” education programs regionally and throughout the state.

**BE I T FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the community colleges and post-secondary career-technical education schools to work in further coordination with the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, New Jersey Farm Bureau, Rutgers/NJAES, and the many non-profit farming organizations who have expertise and offer workshops and conferences in-classroom and in-field, to concurrently request dedicated funding from our Legislature for their community colleges, polytechnical schools, and career-technical schools to establish assistance to students to accelerate immediate participation in two-year career agriculture education.