**RESOLUTION #46**

**On Farm Dairy Foods Processing**

 **WHEREAS**, the New Jersey dairy industry, despite many challenges, makes valued contributions to the local economy, including on-farm bottled milk, value-added cheese, value-added yogurts, and farm experiences that nurture careers in sustainable foods, farming and animal husbandry; and

**WHEREAS,** with the decrease of milk-production farms in the state of New Jersey, surviving farms are moving to self-processing of milk and milk products to stay relevant in today’s changing industry, and the push for local products has created potential for viable and profitable opportunities; and

 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey’s dairy industry should be actively supported by state agencies, demonstrating consistent inspectional oversight through greater courtesy and support, leading to more cooperative and productive working relationships; and

 **WHEREAS**, the current supervision of processing inspections by the New Jersey Department of Health currently appears to lack understanding in the consistency of testing required by the on-farm facilities as required by the FDA Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO); and

 **WHEREAS,** in 2024, among the deficiencies in the inspection program were inspectors missing routine milk plant inspections, as well as failing, in many cases, to provide sample-analysis results to the processors, causing an inability on their part to provide information sought by inspectors from other agencies, such as the federal Food and Drug Administration; and

 **WHEREAS**, this results in direct economic revenue hardships to the farmer, including over-enforcement, improper embargoes of products and lack of protocol that has contributed heavily to a collective frustration among the farmers about the unreasonable “tenor” of these inspections; and

 **WHEREAS**, plant inspection reports, pasteurization testing reports, farm inspection reports, and water-test reports are required to be performed per the FDA’s PMO, as mandated in N.J.A.C. 8:21 and N.J.A.C. 8:24, as that information is needed by the processor to operate properly and avoid further unnecessary enforcement and penalties.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,** that we, the delegates to the 110th State Agricultural Convention, gathered in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 5-6, 2025, do hereby strongly urge the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) to continue addressing these issues with the Department of Health in direct and pointed discussions about how the current PMO inspection protocols will lead to undoing all the NJDA has done, over the past decade-plus, to work with dairy farmers on establishing on-farm processing of dairy products, as a way to increase farm viability outside the existing co-op dominated milk procurement system, and allowing more of the value of the farm’s production to stay with the farm.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the New Jersey Department of Agriculture work toward consolidating all licensing for on-farm dairy processors, with the goal of creating a single-agency program, with the proper administrative and staffing resources, including training, for greater efficiencies, as had previously been the case when inspections were conducted by the NJDA.