**RESOLUTION # 18**

**AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE, TECHNICAL,**

**AND TRADE SCHOOL EDUCATION**

**WHEREAS**, with the current projections of the world population to exceed 9 billion by 2050, agriculture is the art and sound science of cultivating crops and raising livestock that is an essential component impacting how society is supplied with food; and

**WHEREAS,** agriculture is a multifaceted and cutting edge industry that incorporates the fundamentals of business activity, economics, marketing, sales, law, policy and global trade; and

**WHEREAS,** preparing individuals to combine core knowledge in agricultural business and economics in skill-building areas such as animal production, management, crop production, pest management, and equipment maintenance is necessary; and

**WHEREAS**, an agricultural business management education can prepare an individual to succeed in farm management, entrepreneurship, animal health sales, agricultural advocacy, and marketing needed in the organization, operation, and management of agricultural businesses; and

**WHEREAS,** agricultural operations ranging from agribusiness management to landscape technology and horticulture are becoming more and more diversified and mechanized, creating a need for two-year education leading to an Associate of Applied Science degree, Associate of Arts degree, Agribusiness Degree, or a one-year Agriculture Operations Certificate, inclusive of multiple areas of focus such as sustainability, natural resource management and soil science and addressing the great need for farm managers in New Jersey; and

**WHEREAS,** two-year agriculture education programs need to be developed, coordinated and with collaboration among our New Jersey community colleges to be offered at regularly accessible annual intervals, matriculating or non-matriculating offerings, to educate on the many methods to prepare new, beginning, and even experienced farmers by providing series and course curriculum education in New Jersey; and

**WHEREAS,** practical hands-on education programs that prepare individuals to operate, maintain, and repair specialized farm, ranch, and agribusiness power equipment, in machinery and equipment sales, are seriously needed for a variety of hands-on education on agricultural power systems, equipment and tractor repair, planting and harvesting equipment, cutting equipment, and systems education for silos; irrigation; dairy; and feeding/processing systems; and

**WHEREAS**, solar photovoltaic installations should be covered in practicum education programs and education for working on them should be developed at New Jersey’s community college and career-technical education schools (traditionally also known as vocational schools) for the state of New Jersey to be seen as a leader at workforce development in a wide variety of careers in agriculture, precision agriculture, and related green industries; and

**WHEREAS**, an education program is needed that prepares individuals in seed saving and seed sales in order to expand our cultivation of grain, fiber, forage, fruits and nuts, vegetables, floriculture and numerous other plant products, including 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 food safety, regulation, logistics and supply, as well as biosecurity; and

**WHEREAS**, with a projected need to meet increases in demand for affordable protein, livestock education must focus on genetics, digestion, nutrition, reproduction as well as the application of inputs for meat animal growth and development of livestock animals and the production of meat and associated products, to also involve soils and fertility in forage systems, and animal sciences and technology associated with the related aspects of human health and safety; and

**WHEREAS,** agriculture career education in milking protocols, equipment and processing can prepare individuals to manage, select, and care for dairy animals of all types and breeds, as well as associated small-scale dairy on-farm processing infrastructure needed in New Jersey for construction of processing facilities of different scales of operations for many types of value-added products; and

 **WHEREAS,** farm business management degrees should include 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 estate planning; and

**WHEREAS,** to provide an example of community college collaboration, the Community College Alliance for Agricultural Advancement recently announced an initiative with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to create a national agriculture center for two-year colleges and connect more students to agriculture career pathways with USDA and NRCS; and

**WHEREAS**,this $9 million program is part of an agreement between the Community College Alliance for Agricultural Advancement and NRCS and is a collaboration of nine schools across eight states; and

**WHEREAS,** this type of collaboration needs to be accelerated and can be established here in New Jersey among our many community colleges offering agricultural education coursework; and

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

**WHEREAS**, it is noted that in the recent 2017-2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, New Jersey has experienced a 28.2-percent increase in the growth in farmers below 35 years of age, one of the highest percentages in the Northeast, further emphasizing the need to support this growth and address the immediate agriculture workforce crisis; 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 ”career” agriculture education curriculum will have, after completing an agriculture program, competitive wages and salaries, when available, based on information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; and

**WHEREAS,** according to the USDA and U.S. 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.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that we, the delegates to the 110th State Agriculture Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 5-6, 2025, 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 through proper assessment and coordinated school promotion toward more comprehensive accessible agriculture ”career” education programs regionally and throughout the state.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the 21 community colleges and post-secondary career-technical education schools to work in accelerated 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 state dedicated funding from our Legislature in the next budget cycle for their community colleges, polytechnical schools, and career-technical schools to establish assistance and support to new and beginning farmers, and interested students in order to increase immediate participation in two-year career agriculture education.