**RESOLUTION #47**

**URBAN AGRICULTURE**

**WHEREAS,** urban agriculture provides invaluable benefits to communities, including access to fresh produce, agricultural education, community engagement and empowerment, and positive impacts for physical and mental health; and

**WHEREAS,** environmental benefits of urban agriculture include stormwater management, as urban farms can absorb rainfall that would otherwise overflow through streets and city drainage; the improvement of soil health and biodiversity; and an increase in green spaces, which reduces heat island effect (higher temperatures experienced in urban areas); and

**WHEREAS**, the USDA has a history of recognizing and supporting urban agriculture, and the 2018 Farm Bill expanded federal support by establishing the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee, USDA grant authority to support urban agriculture development and innovative production, and pilot projects for counties with a high concentration of urban or suburban farms; and

**WHEREAS**, several offices and organizations throughout New Jersey are working to strengthen support for urban farmers, such as the Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Extension Station’s Office of Urban Extension and Engagement; and

**WHEREAS**, currently, there is not a statutory or single formal definition of urban agriculture for New Jersey; and

**WHEREAS**, the USDA defines urban agriculture as “the cultivation, processing and distribution of agricultural products in urban and suburban areas,” and includes examples such as community gardens, rooftop farms, hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic facilities, vertical production, commercial shellfish hatcheries, and nurseries; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed curriculum definition of urban agriculture for Mercer County Community College is: “Growing, processing and distributing agricultural products in a densely populated area for the betterment of people and the environment.”

**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 urge the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) to adopt the Mercer County Community College proposed definition of urban agriculture, which is comprehensive and concise; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that we urge the Department of Agriculture and SADC to consider smaller farms that are less than 5 acres but make above $50, 000 per year. We request that these farms receive a certification from the State Department of Agriculture stating that they are an active working farm. Thus allowing them eligibility for grants and other benefits (i.e. farm plates) that larger farms qualify for.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the delegates strongly urge that those who decide which properties receive farmland assessment also consider farmland assessment for aquaculture properties where the entire operation encompasses 5 acres or more.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we encourage NJDA to facilitate a working group of pertinent organizations with experience and expertise in the subject, develop a comprehensive strategic plan that recognizes the importance of urban agriculture and sets priorities for supporting current and emerging urban farmers.