

RESOLUTION # 18

SOIL HEALTH

1 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey is a national top-10 producer of a number of high-value fruit
2 and vegetable crops; and

3 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey has approximately 720,000 land acres in cultivation
4 statewide, across approximately 10,000 farms; and

5 **WHEREAS** conservation practices have the potential to make agriculture more
6 carbon-neutral, more productive and more profitable; and

7 **WHEREAS**, the benefits of climate-friendly farming practices create healthier soils,
8 which better protect cropland to endure seasonal floods, droughts, and heatwaves, and
9 sequester more carbon; and

10 **WHEREAS**, regenerative stewardship of healthy soil practices, including: crop
11 rotation, cover cropping, conservation tillage, application of compost, and reduced input
12 costs, can increase yields by building topsoil and increasing the microbiome, thereby
13 improving resiliency to weather impacts and loss; and

14 **WHEREAS**, many New Jersey farmers are already active in conservation practices
15 that reduce agriculture's contribution to greenhouse gases while stabilizing eco-systems,
16 enhancing beneficial insects, and increasing stormwater and nutrient holding storage
17 capacity in the soil; and

18 **WHEREAS**, since 2012, New Jersey has increased by 25 percent, the multi-species
19 cover cropping practices, from 50,893 acres to 63,607 acres in 2017; thereby maintaining
20 soil cover, implementing erosion control, maximizing soil structure, and sequestering carbon
21 in the soil; and

22 **WHEREAS**, federal direct payments to farmers for aerial cover crop practices have
23 ranged from \$30 to \$70 per acre in New Jersey (in 2019); and

24 **WHEREAS**, from 2012 to 2017, New Jersey farm operations reported a 13.2-percent
25 increase in conservation practices, from 1,050 to 1,189 farm operations; and

26 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey's ranking in conservation tillage acres rose from 28th in the
27 nation to 21st in national ranking from 2012-2017, reflecting an increase from 88,180 acres to
28 104,499 acres in conservation tillage operational practices; and

29 **WHEREAS**, the 2018 Agriculture Improvement Act (Public Law 115-334, "The Farm
30 Bill"), provided approximately \$25 million in funding through USDA's Natural Resources
31 Conservation Service for states to carry out new on-farm conservation innovation trials to
32 test new or innovative conservation approaches and, under the Act, directed the Secretary of
33 Agriculture to provide incentives to producers to improve and evaluate soil health gains.

34 **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 105th State
35 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 5-6, 2020, do
36 hereby urge the State of New Jersey, through the Department of Agriculture, to dedicate
37 funding, subsidies and/or tax incentives to purchase appropriate equipment and
38 reimbursement for soil carbon sequestration.

39 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department of Agriculture, working
40 in conjunction with the farm industry, and through education and outreach to leaseholders
41 and landowners, to enact policy programs that establish conservation tillage farmer
42 alliances.