

## RESOLUTION # 4

### FARMLAND PRESERVATION

1           **WHEREAS**, the purpose of the Farmland Preservation Program is to preserve  
2 the state's agricultural land base, helping to ensure the continued viability of New  
3 Jersey's agricultural industry; and

4           **WHEREAS**, as of December 4, 2014, 2,295 farms covering 212,129 acres had  
5 been permanently preserved statewide, including 99 farms covering 13,033 acres in the  
6 Pinelands and 474 farms covering 39,064 acres in the Highlands, which contribute not  
7 only to a secure land base for agricultural operations, but also to a host of other quality-  
8 of-life benefits, such as an increase in the total number of acres of open space in New  
9 Jersey, at both the local and statewide level; and

10           **WHEREAS**, among the benefits of reaching the 200,000-acre milestone,  
11 preserved farmland remains privately managed and continues to contribute tax revenue  
12 to municipal budgets while demanding very little in public services; and

13           **WHEREAS**, the \$146 million in funding for farmland preservation made available  
14 through a public question on the November 2009 ballot has been allocated or expended,  
15 enabling the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) and its local, county and  
16 non-profit partners to continue New Jersey's preservation efforts; and

17           **WHEREAS**, the voters of New Jersey in the November 4, 2014 election  
18 approved a change to the state constitution to direct funding on an annual basis to the  
19 preservation of farmland and open space, providing a stable funding source that does  
20 not rely upon repeatedly asking voters to approve bond referenda; and

21           **WHEREAS**, that overwhelmingly positive vote to change the state constitution  
22 indicates the importance New Jersey residents place upon the preservation of farmland  
23 and open space; and

24           **WHEREAS**, it is preferable that the funds raised through this creation of a  
25 permanent funding source be apportioned, at a minimum, at the 40/60 split between  
26 Farmland Preservation and Green Acres open space that previously existed when funds  
27 were raised through ballot referenda, especially as the Green Acres fund for open space  
28 preservation still contains approximately \$150 million, while some parts of the Farmland  
29 Preservation Program have no State money left to allocate to new projects and since  
30 unpreserved farmland is the most vulnerable to development as opposed to  
31 undevelopable wetlands and steep slopes that comprise the majority of open space  
32 preservation purchases; and

33           **WHEREAS**, it is essential that the availability of preserved farmland for  
34 agricultural purposes remain the central impetus behind preserving such land, yet the  
35 SADC must also be open to flexibility when farmers on preserved land present new  
36 ideas in New Jersey's ever-changing agricultural make-up, and thus be willing to update  
37 its views as to what encompasses allowable uses of preserved farmland; and

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40           **WHEREAS**, P.L. 2014, Ch. 16, signed into law in July 2014, allows wineries to  
41 conduct special occasion events on preserved farmland under certain conditions under a  
42 44-month pilot program that expires on March 1, 2018; and

43           **WHEREAS**, the SADC's pilot program will largely focus on identifying and  
44 collecting the information it needs throughout the pilot program in order to be in a  
45 position to make recommendations to the Legislature at the program's conclusion.

46           **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 100<sup>th</sup>  
47 State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 4-5,  
48 2015, support the permanent protection of New Jersey's farmland through the Farmland  
49 Preservation Program.

50           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the SADC to continue its planning  
51 incentive grant process, which to date has resulted in the development of 18 county  
52 comprehensive farmland preservation plans and 47 municipal plans that address  
53 strategies not only to preserve farmland but to sustain agriculture as an industry.

54           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we support the structure of those plans  
55 including one-, five- and 10-year goals that target the preservation of 25,000 acres at a  
56 cost of \$323 million in one year; 113,000 acres at a cost of \$1.35 billion over five years;  
57 and 216,000 acres at a total cost of \$2.5 billion over 10 years.

58           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we continue to strongly oppose any proposal  
59 to move farmland preservation acquisition or any of the SADC's functions to the New  
60 Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), on the grounds that such a  
61 consolidation would seriously undermine efforts to promote farmland preservation and  
62 further development of the agricultural industry, not only in this Administration but in  
63 future ones where agriculture may not be a priority.

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65           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Department to work with New  
66 Jersey Farm Bureau and other agricultural organizations to increase education of the  
67 public about the economic differences between preserving farmland, which is privately  
68 managed, and publicly owned and managed open space.

69           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we call upon the Governor and Legislature to  
70 restore stewardship funding assistance through the soil, water and woodland  
71 conservation cost-share program to the FY2016 budget at an adequate level to help  
72 farmers undertake critical practices to protect soil, water and woodland resources, and to  
73 ensure that the stewardship funding does not reduce the available funding for the  
74 Farmland Preservation Program.

75           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we strongly encourage the SADC to institute  
76 a requirement that preserved farmland be kept in agricultural enterprise and production  
77 in accordance with all provisions of the Deed of Easement, rather than available for  
78 agricultural production, to ensure these lands continue to contribute to New Jersey's  
79 agricultural industry, and further we encourage the SADC to establish stewardship  
80 requirements for preserved farmland to ensure preserved farmland is properly  
81 maintained.

82           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we support continued discussion by the  
83 SADC's Deed of Easement Subcommittee to help clarify provisions of the deed of  
84 easement so that it is interpreted and enforced consistently and fairly across the state.

85           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we encourage the SADC to continue re-  
86 examining its list of what activities are permitted on preserved lands and to expand,  
87 where appropriate, the types of activities that can be permitted, provided they are  
88 consistent with the goals of the Farmland Preservation Program.

89           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the SADC to interpret its authorizing  
90 statutes and regulations as broadly and liberally as possible to maximize the flexibility  
91 afforded to owners of preserved farmland.

92           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Governor and Legislature to  
93 support the SADC staff from dedicated farmland preservation funding in order for the  
94 SADC to continue to preserve the maximum amount of farmland and ensure the proper  
95 monitoring and stewardship of preserved lands.

96           **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we support the SADC's efforts to learn as  
97 much as possible from the pilot program called for by P.L. 2014, Ch. 16, including by  
98 annually surveying winery owners, county agriculture development boards and  
99 municipalities, in order to help the Legislature evaluate at the end of the pilot program  
100 what worked and what might need improvement in the future.

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104                   **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the SADC to create plain-language

105 documents regarding all the issues involved in farmland preservation, and to conduct

106 outreach about those documents to those who have preserved their farms, those

107 considering preservation, or those considering the purchase of a preserved farm,

108 through avenues such as real-estate professionals, municipal planning and land-use

109 offices, property auction houses and other appropriate entities.