

RESOLUTION # 26

DRONES AND AGRICULTURE

1 **WHEREAS**, the use of unmanned aerial aircraft (a.k.a. “drones”) has expanded
2 beyond the initial military and other governmental applications and has seen growing
3 acceptance and practicality of uses in various private-sector industries; and

4 **WHEREAS**, agriculture, too, can benefit from the use of drones for various activities
5 that are central to the growing of crops and the raising of animals, including enabling farmers
6 to view and videotape vast swaths of farmland in substantially less time and from aerial
7 angles that could not be obtained from walking or driving through their fields; the reduction of
8 wildlife damage to crops through the use of drones to scare off animals that can cause
9 significant crop damage; and the mapping and documentation of fields that could aid greatly
10 in traceback efforts in the event of a foodborne illness incident; and

11 **WHEREAS**, drones also have come under scrutiny from the public when they are
12 misused by their operators, especially when intruding over the properties of others that have
13 not given their permission, and must be properly regulated to avoid conflicts among property
14 owners; and

15 **WHEREAS**, farmers also have expressed concern about the use of drones by
16 government agencies or activist groups to fly over their fields without the farmers’ permission
17 and record data that, in the wrong hands, could expose the farmer to a competitive
18 disadvantage or, in the worst-case scenario, agri-terrorism; and

19 **WHEREAS**, universities or other institutions interested in helping agricultural
20 operators conduct aerial surveying of their properties can do so more efficiently and
21 accurately using drones than manned aircraft flying at higher altitudes; and

22 **WHEREAS**, the most appropriate way to provide such regulation would be for the
23 New Jersey Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, legislation that establishes broad
24 parameters regarding the licensing and operating of drones in agricultural operations and for

25 the New Jersey Department of Agriculture to write specific rules within those parameters;
26 and

27 **WHEREAS**, bills have been introduced in the Legislature that would make it unlawful
28 to use drones to “aid in the taking of wildlife”; and

29 **WHEREAS**, drones can be a useful tool for farmers who have been granted
30 depredation permits to limit the damage done to their crops and/or livestock by wildlife.

31 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 104th State
32 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 6-7, 2019, urge
33 the New Jersey State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, legislation regarding the
34 licensing and operation of drones in agricultural operations.

35 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Legislature to craft this legislation in a
36 way that enables the Department to use its expertise and knowledge of the agricultural
37 industry to create, in consultation with other agencies or private-sector entities with
38 knowledge and expertise in unmanned aerial aircraft, guidance to farmers that fosters
39 legitimate drone use in agricultural operations in New Jersey.

40 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we oppose any legislation that would make it
41 unlawful for a farmer with a depredation permit to use drones to aid in the “taking of wildlife”
42 for the purposes of protecting crops and/or livestock from wildlife damage.