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October 22, 2012

To: Lou Makrancy, president
NJAES Board of Managers

From: Rich Nieuwenhuis, president

Re: production ag issues at NJAES

As you know, there is a lot of discussion and rising level of discontent among farmers and county boards of ag regarding the level of support for production agriculture farming now at the Experiment Station. You also know of the role Farm Bureau has assumed in facilitating this discussion during the past year because of its importance to farmers throughout the state in all commodities, in accordance with the convention resolution from our delegates of last November. We support you and the board in confronting these issues.

In short, we suspect that a shift away from having NJAES keeping production agriculture as its primary constituency has taken place gradually over the last few years. This shift may not have been readily perceptible in the face of sharp budget cuts by state government. Yet we now realize that decisions on budget allocations, hiring and personnel assignments have left our industry short of where it ought to be.

We support the Board of Managers in its representative role for stakeholder interests. From the perspective of agriculture, our board of directors discussed its concerns for the prioritization of NJAES resources at its most recent meeting. Support was expressed for the reinforcement of the role of specialist, particularly in the areas of fertility and marketing, as well as their relationship with county ag agents. Further, it is felt that county ag agents with tenure who are now retiring ought to be replaced by ag agents on a tenure track, and that all counties be served by an ag agent.

We realize that funding for the NJAES is at a low ebb now and that these decisions on professional services are difficult. Nonetheless, it is vital that there be no diminution in the pro-rated share of NJAES resources for production ag as we collectively work for the support of farming in our great state, especially in view of the great tradition between our industry and NJAES.

Keep us apprised of your next steps in addressing this issue and I will be sure that Farm Bureau expresses its position on any relevant matter.

Thank you.

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cc: Jim Giamarese, State Board of Agriculture president
Douglas Fisher, Secretary of Agriculture