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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**'FARMLAND PRESERVATION FUNDING MUST BE RENEWED;
DUAL APPRAISAL METHOD MUST BE EXTENDED'
New Jersey Farm Bureau States Position**

TRENTON, NJ (MARCH 26, 2009) -- New Jersey Farm Bureau, the state's largest association of farmers, strongly urges the Legislature and the governor to renew the funding for the farmland preservation and open space programs. It was just ten years ago that New Jersey voters approved the ballot question creating a fixed-term constitutional dedication of funding for the purpose of open space, farmland and historic preservation acquisition projects. The Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) fund is now depleted and at risk of stymieing the momentum created by these state investments.

"The farmland preservation program is vital to maintaining an agricultural land base that keeps the agriculture industry in the Garden State productive and viable," said Farm Bureau President Richard Nieuwenhuis. Since the beginning of the farmland preservation program in 1981, some 1,795 farms totaling 175,014 acres have been preserved through State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) programs administering GSPT funds. The SADC now says that it has spent or allocated the last of the GSPT funds for farmland preservation. The appropriations bills for the expiring funds are currently awaiting passage by the Legislature. Farm Bureau is urging the Legislature to move forward on appropriating these funds so that the SADC can complete its work with pending preservation projects in a timely fashion.

Farm Bureau also strongly supports the effort led by Senator Marcia Karrow and Assemblyman John McKeon to extend the dual appraisal method that was set forth in the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act. "Landowners in the Highlands," said Nieuwenhuis "should not be further disadvantaged by a crippling appraisal method as well as the failure to see a promised funding source." The dual appraisal method protects landowners from the severe loss of equity that resulted from that law and other DEP rule changes since January 1, 2004. County preservation programs, which still have their own dedicated funding, should be able to continue to preserve farms using the dual appraisal method even if there is a failure to renew state funding for the programs. Nieuwenhuis added, "Continuity must be maintained with the dual appraisal method."

Farm Bureau plans to work hard over the next several months to see that some funding for the farmland preservation program is renewed. Public support for open space preservation remains high. "Just as the state maintains highway and public infrastructure spending during a recession, so also should there be no interruption in the availability of farmland and open space funds," said Nieuwenhuis. "Agriculture is a \$1 billion industry, it deserves ongoing support," he said.

For further information, contact the New Jersey Farm Bureau, at The Farmhouse, 168 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608. Phone 609-393-7163; fax 609-393-7072; email mail@njfb.org; website www.njfb.org

The New Jersey Farm Bureau is a non-profit member organization of 14,000+ farmers and farm-related individuals within the Garden State. It is the only organization solely dedicated to representing the grass- roots interests and directives of its members in educating all levels of government and the public on the farm community's policies and positions. The Farm Bureau also takes a lead in seeking out initiatives, activities and ventures to enhance the profitability of producer members and ensure the viability of agriculture in New Jersey -- *the Garden State for Good Reason -- our farms.*

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