

More than 30 Years of Action for Family Farmers and the Good Food Movement



In the 1980s, family farmers faced a crisis the likes of which hadn't been seen since the Great Depression. Plummeting farm product prices and land values, rising interest rates, troubled credit markets and unfair lending practices pushed tens of thousands of farms out of business, forcing millions of people off their land. It was in this context that Willie Nelson, joined by John Mellencamp and Neil Young, organized a groundbreaking concert in 1985 to raise awareness and funds to help America's family farmers, sparking a family farm movement that continues to this day. Dave Matthews joined the Board of Directors in 2001, adding another strong voice to Farm Aid's work. This timeline features highlights from Farm Aid's 30 years of action for family farmers and the Good Food Movement.

1985 – On September 22, **Farm Aid was held in Champaign, Illinois.** With 54 acts performing to a crowd of 78,000, the event was then the country's largest combined rock and country event in history. Farm Aid established its 1-800-FARM-AID hotline to take donations during the show. **The first Farm Aid concert raised millions of dollars and drew enormous attention to the plight of America's family farmers.**



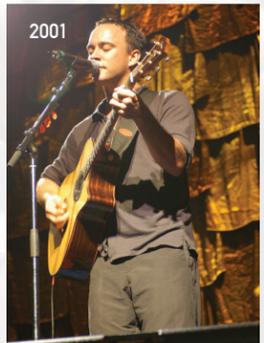
1992 – Farm Aid supported a caravan of **Southern farmers to USDA in Washington, DC,** organized by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, to raise awareness around the issue of land loss by minority farmers in America due to discrimination in lending practices.



1997 – **USDA settled Pigford v. Glickman, the largest class-action lawsuit in US history brought by African-American farmers,** addressing decades of blatant racial discrimination in the agency. Long-time Farm Aid partner and grantee, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, was critical to the case's success.

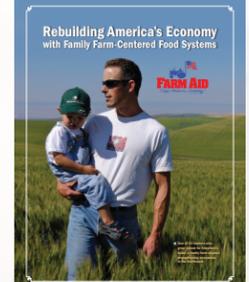


2001 – Willie Nelson asked **Dave Matthews** to join the Farm Aid Board of Directors.



2005 – When hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma devastated the Gulf Coast states, Farm Aid mobilized to respond to the emergency needs of family farmers. Within days of Katrina's impact, **Farm Aid sent emergency grants and truckloads of donated food to farm families in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi** and sponsored five trainings to enable farmers to access federal disaster programs. By year's end, Farm Aid sent over \$230,000 to local family farm service organizations that deliver aid to farm families.

2008 – Farm Aid Board Members Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp and Dave Matthews wrote an open letter, urging Congress to invest in family farmers as they considered the details of a \$700 billion economic recovery package. Farm Aid followed up on their demand by publishing **Rebuilding America's Economy with Family Farm-Centered Food Systems** in June 2010, a report calling for investment in family farms to revitalize and restore America's economy.



2009 – Crisis hit American dairy farms as milk prices plummeted. In response, Willie Nelson and Farm Aid staff met with Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, bringing him more than 13,000 petitions from farmers and eaters across the country. Meanwhile, **Farm Aid teamed up with dairy farmers from eight states to hold a rally to call attention to unfair dairy prices in Manchester, Iowa.** Farm Aid also launched its Action Center to engage the public and farmers in advocating for food and farm policy changes.

2012 – Farm Aid's **HOMEGROWN Concessions®** brought **HOMEGROWN Chili to Super Bowl XLVI** at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Indiana. HOMEGROWN pork, beef and vegetarian chili was served and the vegetarian version was the first organic item offered to all fans at a Super Bowl.



2015 – Kicking off its 30th year, Farm Aid was **honored in February by the GRAMMY Foundation®** for its legacy of harnessing the power of music for social change.



1987 – A massive campaign for farm credit law reform, led by Farm Aid and its partners the National Family Farm Coalition, National Farmers Union, the Western Organization of Resource Councils, and the Farmers Legal Action Group, saw victory as Congress passed The Agricultural Credit Act of 1987, saving thousands of family farms from foreclosure. Willie Nelson followed up on this victory with letters to nearly 90,000 family farm borrowers to tell them where they could find financial and legal counsel.

On October 4, 1985, Neil Young took out a full-page ad in *USA Today* with an open letter asking President Ronald Reagan, "Will the family farm in America die as a result of your administration?"

In September 1986, Farm Aid organized the **United Farmer and Rancher Congress** in St. Louis, an unprecedented gathering of nearly three thousand farmers from across the country to create a united platform for farm policy that coalesced support for family farm agriculture.

1993 – The US Food and Drug Administration approved Monsanto's Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH), a controversial genetically engineered hormone used to boost milk production. **Farm Aid advocated for a ban of rBGH** and supported efforts to label rBGH-free dairy products.

1995 – On April 1, 1995, **Willie Nelson joined farmers to protest a huge factory hog farm in Lincoln Township, Missouri.** The event was a rallying cry for farmers and communities angered by corporate abuse in agriculture, threats to food safety, pollution to the environment and the loss of family hog farmers. The event launched the Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment, a multi-state collaborative effort to stop factory farming, that is still active today.

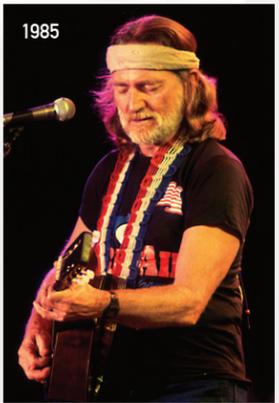
2005 – Sparked by a suggestion from Neil Young, Farm Aid sponsored a national **Farm to Cafeteria Conference at Kenyon College,** bringing together students, farmers, nutritionists and food service professionals to discuss ways to bring fresh, family farm food into schools and other institutions.



2010 – By the end of 2010, **the USDA and US Department of Justice hosted five unprecedented workshops examining competition issues and antitrust enforcement in agriculture.** Farm Aid participated in these sessions, highlighting the voices of family farmers and providing assistance so family farmers could attend the workshops. Farm Aid Board Artists sent a public letter calling on the USDA and the Justice Department to act immediately to stand up for family farmers.

2015 – **Farm Aid 30**—Farm Aid's 30th anniversary—was held in Chicago on September 19, before a crowd of 27,000! A pre-concert event gathered farmers, activists, farm advocates and civic leaders from across the country to reflect upon what the family farm movement has accomplished over 30 years to understand where we are today and how positive change is made.

1986 – Farm Aid II: Manor Downs, Texas, as one of Willie Nelson's annual Fourth of July Picnics	1990 – Farm Aid IV: Hoosier Dome in Indianapolis, Indiana	1992 – Farm Aid V: Irving, Texas	1994 – Farm Aid VII: Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans	1996 – Farm Aid '96: Columbia, South Carolina	1998 – Farm Aid '98: Farm Aid returned to Tinley Park, Illinois	2000 – Farm Aid 2000: Farm Aid returned to Bristow, Virginia	2002 – Farm Aid 2002: Burgettstown, Pennsylvania	2004 – Farm Aid 2004: Auburn, Washington, just outside of Seattle	2006 – Farm Aid 2006: Camden, New Jersey	2008 – Farm Aid 2008: Mansfield, Massachusetts, just outside of Boston	2010 – Farm Aid 25: Growing Hope for America: Milwaukee, Wisconsin	2012 – Farm Aid 2012: Hershey, Pennsylvania	2014 – Farm Aid 2014: Raleigh, North Carolina																	
1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1985 – Farm Aid, Champaign, Illinois	1987 – Farm Aid III: Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Nebraska	1989 – Willie took Farm Aid on the road, hitting 16 stops in the country with press conferences at each site.	1993 – Farm Aid VI: Ames, Iowa on April 24	1995 – Farm Aid, 10th Anniversary Concert: Cardinal Stadium in Louisville, Kentucky	1997 – Farm Aid '97: Tinley Park, Illinois, just outside of Chicago	1999 – Farm Aid '99: Bristow, Virginia, just outside of Washington, DC	2001 – Farm Aid 2001: Just 18 days after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Farm Aid: A Concert for America was held in Noblesville, Indiana.	2003 – Farm Aid 2003: Columbus, Ohio	2005 – Farm Aid celebrated its 20-year anniversary concert at Tinley Park, Illinois, just outside of Chicago.	2007 – Farm Aid 2007: A Homegrown Festival: Randall's Island in New York City	2009 – Farm Aid 2009: Maryland Heights, Missouri, just outside of St. Louis	2011 – Farm Aid 2011: Kansas City, Kansas	2013 – Farm Aid 2013: Saratoga Springs, New York	2015 – Farm Aid 2015: 30 th Anniversary, Chicago, Illinois																



In May 1986, John Mellencamp joined the Missouri Rural Crisis Center and 14,000 family farmers to **blockade a US Department of Agriculture Farmers Home Administration Office** in Chillicothe, Missouri, in protest of unfair lending practices.



On June 18, 1987, **Willie Nelson and John Mellencamp joined Senator Tom Harkin to testify before the US Senate** about the family farm crisis and corporate monopolies expanding in agriculture.

1990 – After years of Farm Aid advocating for organic farmers, **Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act,** establishing a certification program for organic farms that commit to environmental stewardship, animal welfare, and food grown without the use of synthetic pesticides, antibiotics, or genetic engineering. In 2002, the final USDA regulations were issued, after Farm Aid and many thousands of organic advocates weighed in for rules with integrity.

1993 – A devastating flood swallowed entire towns whole, leaving thousands of Midwestern families homeless and devastating thousands of farms. **The floods spurred Farm Aid to create the Family Farm Disaster Fund,** which continues to respond when natural disasters devastate farming regions in America.

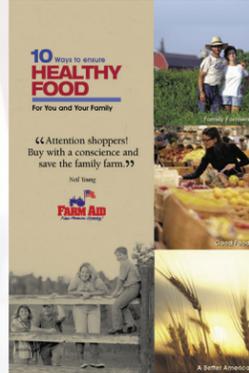
1993 – **The US House Agriculture Committee held a meeting in Ames, Iowa, preceding the Farm Aid concert.** Willie Nelson, John Mellencamp and Neil Young spoke out about the issues facing family farmers.



1994 – A severe drought in the Southeast spurred Farm Aid to organize a **farmer-to-farmer emergency hay lift to bring donated hay to starving livestock** in the region. It was the first of several hay lifts Farm Aid has organized.



1999 – Farm Aid organized the first of two farmer summits on genetically engineered seeds, resulting in the **Farmers' Declaration on Genetic Engineering in Agriculture,** which called for a moratorium on genetically engineered seeds, and creating the ongoing Farmer to Farmer Campaign on Genetic Engineering.



2004 – Farm Aid published and widely distributed **10 Ways to Ensure Healthy Food for You and Your Family,** a guide showing consumers how to support family farmers and secure good food for their families and communities.

2007 – **Farm Aid officially introduced HOMEGROWN concessions** at the concert at Randall's Island, New York, providing family farm food to concertgoers. It also hosted the first **HOMEGROWN Village,** featuring interactive exhibits about soil, water, energy, food and farmers. The following year, **Farm Aid launched HOMEGROWN.org,** an online community of people interested in all things HOMEGROWN: growing, cooking, crafting, brewing, preserving, building, making and creating.



2005 – For its 20th anniversary, Farm Aid published **Farm Aid: A Song for America,** a book featuring dozens of essays and hundred of photographs that tell the inspirational story of Farm Aid and family farm agriculture.

2011 – Farm Aid partnered with RAFI-USA to host **the first annual National Gathering of Farm Advocates** at the National Agricultural Hall of Fame in Bonner Springs, Kansas 2 days prior to the concert. This meeting brought Farm Advocates together to learn and share new developments in agricultural credit and finance. The gathering also sparked a haylift to assist farmers in drought-stricken parts of the country.



2013 – A crowd of more than 25,000 enjoyed a **surprise performance by Pete Seeger at Farm Aid 2013,** who joined the Farm Aid Board Artists on stage to perform "This Land is Your Land." To the cheers of anti-fracking activists and family farm supporters in the audience, Seeger added his own line, "New York was made to be frack-free!" It was Seeger's last public performance before his death.

2014 – On September 11, 2014, Farm Aid hosted **Looking Back and Moving Forward, Together,** a landmark gathering of farm and civil rights leaders from across the country focused on the legacy of civil rights organizing, black land loss, and power-building in the Southeast. The gathering inspired new thinking about racial justice in food and agriculture, the power of community organizing and the need for the farmer voice to come forward in defining a new vision for food and agriculture.

