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FARM AID 2020 ON THE ROAD RALLIES SUPPORT FOR FAMILY FARMERS AS ESSENTIAL WORKERS

35th Anniversary Virtual Festival Highlights Determination and Resilience of Farmers During Widespread Uncertainty and Suffering in the U.S.

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Farm Aid marked its 35th anniversary today with Farm Aid 2020 On the Road, a three-and-a-half-hour, virtual at-home festival featuring 22 artists who helped showcase the critical need for family farmers, the food they produce and their care for soil and water amid a time of unprecedented upheaval in our country, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and necessary calls for racial justice.

Since its start in 1985, Farm Aid has connected to farmers through its hotline and farm organization partners and deployed funds and resources to help farm families address multiple challenges. The 2020 festival comes amid extreme stress in the farm economy, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. As a result, thousands of family farmers are at risk of going under. Farm Aid President and Founder Willie Nelson said there is now even more urgency to support local farm communities and Farm Aid.

“The pandemic has shown everyone that our corporate-dominated food system is fragile and unjust,” said Nelson. “Now more than ever, it should be clear to all of us how much we need family farmers and why it’s so important to listen to them and support efforts — at home, locally and nationally — to keep them on the land.”

Nelson joined a Farm Aid 2020 On the Road lineup that also featured Farm Aid board members John Mellencamp, Neil Young and Dave Matthews, along with Black Pumas, Bonnie Raitt and Boz Scaggs, Brandi Carlile, Chris Stapleton, Edie Brickell with Charlie Sexton, Jack Johnson, Jamey Johnson, Jon Batiste, Kelsey Waldon, Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real, Margo Price, Nathaniel Rateliff, Norah Jones, Partice Kid, The Record Company, Valerie June and The War And Treaty.

During the virtual festival, Rhonda Perry and Roger Allison, farmers and founders of the Missouri Rural Crisis Center, discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a vulnerable dominant food system that works intentionally to maximize corporate power and profits, while putting the health of soil and water, farmers and workers, communities and people at risk.

The virtual festival also showcased the diversity and strength of family farmers, demonstrating that a thriving movement — especially of young farmers; Black, brown and Indigenous farmers; and women farmers — is leading the way for conversations, strategies and change to create a more democratic farm

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and food system. Louisiana farmers Angie and June Provost discussed their experience with racial discrimination in lending that ultimately resulted in the loss of their farm. Many other farmers from across the country were featured in video montages that showcased the reasons farmers do the work they do, the challenges they face, and their hopes for the future of agriculture.

The goal of the virtual festival is to raise critical funds for and awareness of the organization's mission, which it typically does through ticket sales to the annual in-person music and food festival. Farm Aid accepts donations at www.farmaid.org/donate. Farm Aid 2020 merchandise, which also supports the organization's year-round work, may be purchased at shop.farmaid.org.

Additionally, Farm Aid's online silent auction launched today with exclusive trips and artist-signed memorabilia, including several "from the vault" guitars and prints from previous Farm Aid festivals. The online auction can be accessed at farmaid.org/auction until Friday, Oct. 9. All proceeds will benefit the organization.

Sponsors of this year's event include ButcherBox, Farmer Focus, Pete and Gerry's Organic Eggs, and Horizon Organic. Stories of sponsors' farmer suppliers were also featured in the festival.

Farm Aid 2020 On the Road aired on FarmAid.org, YouTube, and AXS TV, as well as on SiriusXM's Willie's Roadhouse (channel 59) and Dave Matthews Band Radio (channel 30). The program will be available for viewing in its entirety for the next five days on farmaid.org.

Farm Aid's mission is to build a vibrant, family farm-centered system of agriculture in America. Farm Aid artists and board members Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp and Dave Matthews host an annual festival to raise funds to support Farm Aid's work with family farmers and to inspire people to choose family farm food. For more than 30 years, Farm Aid, with the support of the artists who contribute their performances each year, has raised nearly \$60 million to support programs that help farmers thrive, expand the reach of the Good Food Movement, take action to change the dominant system of industrial agriculture and promote food from family farms.

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****Editors and Producers Note:** Media can download official Farm Aid photos and videos at farmaid.org/media.**