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FARM AID 2021 OFFERS VISION FOR FUTURE OF FOOD

Return to Live Festival Unites Farmers, Artists and Advocates Working to Build a More Diverse, Sustainable Food System

HARTFORD, Conn. — Farm Aid 2021 marked the organization’s return to a live festival today, highlighting farmers who have withstood economic, operational and policy challenges and stand determined to create a better farm and food system — one that embraces diversity, sustains our natural resources and nourishes generations to come.

“So much has changed since we last gathered at Farm Aid in 2019,” said Farm Aid President and Founder Willie Nelson. “We’ve all seen the pain brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, but our family farmers endured, growing the food we needed and offering solutions that are so essential to our country.”

At a virtual town hall gathering Friday, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Tina Smith (D-MN), the Agriculture Commissioners of Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York, along with farmers, partners and other policymakers kicked off the festival weekend with a robust discussion about core issues, including corporate concentration and consolidation, racial equity, debt relief and climate change.

Nelson was joined Saturday on the Farm Aid stage by fellow board members John Mellencamp, Dave Matthews and Margo Price, along with Tyler Childers, Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, Bettye LaVette, Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real, Jamey Johnson, Allison Russell, Partice Kid, Ian Mellencamp, the Wisdom Indian Dancers, and the Horse Hill Singers, who donated their time and talents for the nearly 10-hour show. On the video screens, festivalgoers were introduced to farmers from the Northeast and beyond who represent the diverse people and practices that make up a healthy, sustainable agricultural system. Featured farmers include immigrants who are finding innovative ways to access land and farm in community with each other; producers using regenerative practices to build soil and teach new generations to find joy in working the land; and entrepreneurs creating new paths to build local and regional food systems.

Throughout the day, artists and farmers joined together on the FarmYard stage to discuss challenges and opportunities in agriculture, including Black land loss, climate change and the solutions that family farmers bring to the table, and the day-to-day realities of being a farmer in an increasingly-consolidated farm and food system. Farm Aid reaffirmed its solidarity with BIPOC farmers who are advocating for fairness across the system and highlighted the innovative progress in agriculture in the Northeast, including local and regional food systems, organic production and regenerative agricultural methods that mitigate climate change and build soil.

Farm Aid’s HOMEGROWN Village featured hands-on activities to celebrate the culture of agriculture and give festivalgoers a chance to meet farmers in person and learn how they enrich our soil, protect our water, grow our

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economy and bring us good food for good health. Local and national organizations participated, and attendees learned about gleaning and re-localizing food systems in the United States to prevent avoidable food waste; discovered Connecticut local farms, markets and farm products; and tested their food and farm knowledge in a game, while learning about the dangers of corporate consolidation.

Farm Aid's trademarked HOMEGROWN Concessions® offered food with ingredients produced by family farmers who utilize ecological practices and are paid a fair price for their products. Legends Hospitality, local community vendors and Farm Aid's perennial food suppliers served menu items showcasing Connecticut and the region's outstanding farms. Food choices included local fish and chips, crispy oyster tostadas, hot dogs and sausages from Meatworks of southern New England, roasted brussels sprouts, beet sandwiches, portobello burgers, grass-fed beef burgers, stuffed sweet potatoes with local smoked beef brisket, pretzels made with organic flour, grains, beans and greens bowls, plank fries and chicken tenders with homemade sauces, and much more. Vendors brought local flavors, including Soul de Cuba Café, Whey Station, Villa of Lebanon, DORO Restaurant Group, Maple Valley Creamery and Ben & Jerry's. Farm Aid's perennial vendors include Corndog, Inc., Patchwork Family Farms and Lone Cedar Café.

Sponsors of Farm Aid 2021 included DISH Network, ButcherBox, Porter-Cable, Tractor Supply Foundation, Spindrift, WhistlePig Whiskey, McManis Family Vineyards, Lundberg Family Farms and Maestro.

Farm Aid 2021 will air on FarmAid.org and Circle Network, as well on SiriusXM's Willie's Roadhouse (channel 59) and Dave Matthews Band Radio (channel 30) via SiriusXM radios and on the SXM App.

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, Dave Matthews and Margo Price 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 35 years, Farm Aid, with the support of the artists who contribute their performances each year, has raised more than \$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, Producers and Photographers Note:** Media can download official Farm Aid photos and videos at farmaid.org/media.**