# FARM AID

*Keep America Growing!*

# NEARLY 40 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, AND MARGO PRICE JOINED IN 2021, ADDING POWERFUL NEW VOICES TO FARM AID'S WORK. THIS TIMELINE FEATURES HIGHLIGHTS FROM FARM AID'S NEARLY 40 YEARS OF ACTION FOR FAMILY FARMERS AND THE GOOD FOOD MOVEMENT.

**FARM AID 1985**
**CHAMPAIGN, IL**

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 the nation's attention to the plight of America's family farmers.

**UNITED FARMER AND RANCHER CONGRESS**

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.

**FARM CREDIT LAW REFORM**

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 hundreds of family farms from foreclosure. Willie Nelson followed up on this victory with letters to nearly 80,000 family farm borrowers to tell them where they could find financial and legal counsel.

**FARM AID 1987**
**LINCOLN, NE**

**SOUTHERN FARMER CARAVAN**

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 Black farmers in America due to discrimination in lending practices.



**FARM AID 1992**
**IRVING, TX**

**DEVASTATING FLOODS**

A devastating flood swallowed entire towns whole, leaving thousands of Midwestern families homeless and devastated. Thousands of tons of Food Goods received Farm Aid to create the Family Farm Disaster Fund, which continues to respond when natural disasters devastate farming regions in America.

**EMERGENCY HAY LIFT**

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.

**FARM AID 1994**
**NEW ORLEANS, LA**

**PIGFORD V. GLICKMAN**

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

**FARM AID 1997**
**TINLEY PARK, IN**

**DAVE MATTEWS JOINS THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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

**FARM AID 2001**
**NOBLESVILLE, IN**

**FARM AID: A SONG FOR AMERICA**

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.

**FARM AID 2005**
**TINLEY PARK, IN**

**HOMEGROWN CONCESSIONS**

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 innovative exhibits on food, 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.

**FARM AID 2008**
**MANSFIELD, MA**

**REBUILDING AMERICA'S ECONOMY WITH FAMILY FARM-CENTERED FOOD SYSTEMS**

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.

**FARM AID 2011**
**KANSAS CITY, KS**

**NATIONAL GATHERING OF FARM ADVOCATES**

Farm Aid partnered with IAFI-USA to host the first annual National Gathering of Farm Advocates at the National Agricultural Hall of Fame in Bonner Springs, Kansas. 2 days of workshops, discussions and 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.

**FARM AID 2013**
**SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY**

**SURPRISE PERFORMANCE BY PETE SEEGER**

A crowed 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.

**SEPTEMBER 11, 2014**
**LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD, TOGETHER**

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.

**FARM AID 2015**
**CHICAGO, IL**

**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.

**GRAMMY FOUNDATION HONOR**

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.

**SEP 17, 2016**
**BRISTOW, VA**

Farm Aid and Climate Change Between 2015 and 2022, Farm Aid increasingly partners with groups such as the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), the California Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN), and many others fighting for climate adaptation and mitigation policies that benefit rural communities and family farmers.

**FARM AID 2017**
**BURGETTSTOWN, PA**

**EMERGENCY GRANTS**

After tripling emergency grants to farmers in 2017, Farm Aid responds to sharply declining farm income nationwide by tripling that amount again in 2018.

**SEP 22, 2018**

Farm Aid's pre-festival event, On the Road to Resilience: Moving from Individual Crisis to Collective Power, inspired farmers' and farm advocates' strength to persevere and explored strategies for resilience, through speakers, sessions and activities that call upon our compassion and ingenuity in tough times.

**MAY 15, 2019**

Farmers Flood Relief Benefit Concert in Omaha, NE, raises $62,000 for Farm Aid's Family Farm Disaster Fund, bringing the three-month total raised by Farm Aid in response to the flooding in Iowa and Nebraska to $175,000.

**FARM AID 2019**
**EAST TROY, WI**

**FEBRUARY 2020**

Farm Aid supports introduction of the Agriculture Resilience Act (H.R. 5661) by Representative Chellie Pingree (D-ME). The ARA would address the role of agriculture in combating climate change with a comprehensive suite of practical, science-based, farmer-driven policy solutions. Farm Aid continues to push, with allies, for passage of the ARA going into debates on the 2023 farm bill.

**SEPTEMBER 26, 2020**
**FARM AID 2020 ON THE ROAD**

In September, our annual festival went virtual with Farm Aid 2020, featuring 22 artists, including host Jon Batiste, 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.

**APRIL 6, 2021**
**MARGO PRICE JOINS THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

On this day, Grammy-nominated artist Margo Price and lifelong humanitarian and advocate for family farmers Annie Nelson joined the Farm Aid Board of Directors. Margo Price: "It is always a thrill to perform alongside my heroes on the Farm Aid stage, and it is one of the greatest honors of my life to become a member of the Farm Aid board. It's been a dream of mine to help family farmers and communities across America ever since my family lost their farm in the fall of 1984 — a year before the first Farm Aid concert. I hope to use my voice to shed light on the health crisis, climate change, the health and the health of our soil and water, and most importantly, food justice."

**SEPTEMBER 24, 2022**

With a focus on North Carolina, the Farm Aid festival showcases how farmers are leading the way in antiracist organizing and fight against environmental racism.

**FARM AID 2022**
**RALEIGH, NC**

**1985**

**FARM AID 1985**
**CHAMPAIGN, IL**

**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?"

**1986**

**CHILLICATHE MISSOURI BLOCKADE**

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 Bolivar, Missouri, in protest of unfair lending practices.

**JUNE 16, 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**

**FARM AID 1990**
**INDIANAPOLIS, IN**

**ORGANIC FOODS PRODUCTION ACT**

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 not using synthetic fertilizers, 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**

**FARM AID 1993**
**AMES, IA**

**rBGH BAN**

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.

**US HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE**

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.

**1995**

**FARM AID 1995**
**LOUISVILLE, KY**

**FACTORY FARM PROTEST**

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.

**1999**

**FARM AID 1999**
**BRISTOW, VA**

**DECLARATION ON GENETIC ENGINEERING**

Farm Aid organized the first of two farmer summits on genetically engineered seeds, resulting in the Declaration on Genetic Engineering. 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 2004**
**AUBURN, WA**

**HEALTHY EATING GUIDE**

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 2007**
**RANDALL'S ISLAND, NY**

**FARMER RESOURCE NETWORK**

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**

**FARM AID 2009**
**MARYLAND HEIGHTS, MO**

**DAIRY CRISIS**

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 Ted and Jessica Allen to help 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.

**2010**

**FARM AID 2010**
**MILWAUKEE, WI**

**USDA AND US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE WORKSHOPS**

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 also sent a public letter calling on the USDA and the Justice Department to act immediately to stand up for family farmers.

**2012**

**FARM AID 2012**
**HERSHEY, PA**

**SUPER BOWL XLVI**

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.

**2014**

**FARM AID 2014**
**RALEIGH, NC**

**JAN 29, 2015**
**TEXAS DROUGHT SUMMIT**

Farm Aid partnered with Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA, National Center for Appropriate Technology, and the Farmers' Legal Action Group to host the Texas Drought Summit. The meeting brought together farmers, ranchers, and farm service providers to focus on immediate and long-term response strategies in a region facing prolonged climate extremes.

**2016**

**FARM AID 2016**
**BRISTOW, VA**

**MAY 18, 2017**
**PREMIERE OF FARM AID'S DOCUMENTARY FILM: "HOMEPLACE UNDER FIRE"**

Farm Aid co-founder John Mellencamp hosted the premier of Farm Aid's first documentary film, Homeplace Under Fire, at Duke University Homeplace. Under Fire celebrates the farmers, farm wives and rural leaders who refused to stand by and watch their communities be destroyed during the 1980s Farm Crisis. Because of them, thousands of farmers are alive and on their land today.

**2018**

**FARM AID 2018**
**HARTFORD, CT**

**SEP 21, 2019**

Against the backdrop of a growing national farm crisis, Farm Aid 2019 emphasized the determination of farmers and ranchers in Wisconsin and across the nation to survive mounting challenges that include devastating weather, low prices and harmful farm and trade policies. Farm Aid hosted several pre-festival events in Wisconsin to bring farmers, advocates and activists together, engage the public, and invite the media to highlight issues of concern to family farmers and eaters and the stories of their resilience. The Forward From Here event was inspired by Wisconsin's unique cultural and populist heritage in order to inspire action, build community, elevate models for exercising farmer power and foster solidarity.

**2020**

**APRIL 11, 2020**
**AT HOME WITH FARM AID**

Understanding the impact of COVID-19 and the shutdowns of markets that family farmers depend on, Farm Aid began into action to produce At Home with Farm Aid, a series of webcasts featuring Farm Aid board artists Neil Young, John Mellencamp, Dave Matthews and Willie Nelson with his sons Lukas and Micah Nelson. The virtual concert raised more than $500,000, which Farm Aid quickly distributed to farmers impacted by COVID-19.

As a result of At Home with Farm Aid, Farm Aid launched the national COVID-19 Farmer Resilience Initiative, working with more than 100 local, state and regional organizations in all 50 states and the US Virgin Islands to deliver immediate farmer relief efforts and longer-term resilience strategies.

**FARM AID 2020**
**ON THE ROAD**

The virtual festival 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 and food system.

**2021**

**HOTLINE TEAM EXPANDS**

In 2021, with funding from the West (WRASAP) and Northeast (FESAN-NE) regions of the USDA's Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) grant, Farm Aid expanded its Hotline Team to six staff, dramatically increasing capacity to serve farmers who contact Farm Aid. For the first time, the Hotline Team is spread across the Pacific, Central, and Eastern time zones, making it easier to serve farmers across the country.

**FARM AID 2021**
**HARTFORD, CT**

**SEPTEMBER 25, 2021**

Farm Aid 2021 emphasized the diversity of farmers and ranchers in New England and across the nation. Over the summer, Farm Aid staff visited featured farmers on farms across New England to film video spots that brought farmer voices to the Farm Aid stage as well as TV and web audiences. Farm Aid also intentionally shared only stories of farmers of color, as these voices and faces are so often ignored or not seen in national media.

**2022**

**FARM AID 2022**
**RALEIGH, NC**