

# FARM AID 2026: MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Farm Aid 2026 will take place Sept. 26, 2026, at Veterans United Home Loans Amphitheater in Virginia Beach, Virginia. This will mark the first time Farm Aid has brought its food and music festival to Virginia Beach and the fourth time the annual festival has been in Virginia (1999, 2000 and 2016 in Bristow).

The festival includes performances by:

- Willie Nelson, Farm Aid President and Founder, & Family
- Neil Young, Board Member and Co-Founder, & The Chrome Hearts
- John Mellencamp, Board Member and Co-Founder
- Dave Matthews, Board Member, & Tim Reynolds
- Margo Price, Board Member
- Nathaniel Rateliff, Board Member
- Turnpike Troubadours
- Lukas Nelson
- Mike Campbell & The Dirty Knobs
- Jesse Welles
- Sierra Ferrell
- Mon Rovía
- I'm With Her
- Amythyst Kiah
- Lily Meola
- Chris Pierce



Tickets are on sale starting Friday, June 12 at 10 a.m. ET and available for purchase at [www.farmaid.org/2026](http://www.farmaid.org/2026) and the amphitheater box office (open only on Mondays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.). Ticket prices range from \$85 to \$350.

## Farm Aid 2026 includes:

- **Generous Artists:** A unique blend of artists from many genres donate their performances and come at their own expense to shine a spotlight on family farmers and celebrate the many benefits they bring to all of us. More than 500 artists have performed on the Farm Aid stage since 1985.
- **HOME GROWN Concessions®:** Farm Aid's HOME GROWN Concessions® features a delicious and fresh menu with ingredients that are grown or raised by family farmers who use ecological practices and are paid a fair price. Backstage, artists and crew enjoy HOME GROWN Catering with the same farm-fresh standards. To meet the goal of a zero-waste event, all serviceware is compostable and a volunteer "green team" promotes composting and recycling throughout the venue.
- **HOME GROWN Village:** Farm Aid's HOME GROWN Village features hands-on activities about the climate, soil, water, energy, food and farming.
- Festivalgoers will be able to access the entire Farm Aid experience through the official Farm Aid 2026 mobile app, which will be available in August for iPhone and Android devices. Fans will be able to use the app to preview the HOME GROWN Concessions® menu; learn the stories of Virginia farmers; and make a personalized festival day schedule of music, workshops and conversations between artists and farmers.

## Farm Aid's History

- Farm Aid was founded by Willie Nelson, John Mellencamp and Neil Young in response to the growing crisis faced by American family farmers in the 1980s, known as the Farm Crisis.

- The inaugural Farm Aid concert, held on September 22, 1985, in Champaign, Illinois, marked a historic moment in the farm movement, raising more than \$7 million to support struggling family farmers. More than 50 artists came together before a crowd of over 80,000 to highlight the urgent need to address the challenges farmers were facing, including skyrocketing interest rates, mounting debt, plummeting land values, crop failures and policies that drove farmers out of business. The Farm Crisis was the worst economic disaster since the Great Depression, with lasting impacts on our farm and food system.
- Since 1985, Farm Aid has become an annual festival that has raised more than \$90 million; featured performances by more than 500 artists who generously donate their time and talent; brought together hundreds of thousands of eaters and farmers; and championed policies that support family farmers, promote sustainable agriculture and strengthen rural communities.

## **Farm Aid's Ongoing Commitment**

- Farm Aid's mission is to build a vibrant, family farm-centered system of agriculture in America. Best known for the annual food and music festival, Farm Aid works each and every day year-round to build a system of agriculture that values family farmers, good food, soil and water, and strong communities.
- Since 1985, Farm Aid has made it clear that family farmers play a vital role in supporting their communities, growing food, strengthening local economies and helping sustain the places we call home. We understand that the success of family farms and the wellbeing of communities are closely linked. When farmers thrive, communities thrive; when farmers struggle, communities feel it — they are interdependent. Strong communities, built on connection, cooperation and mutual support, can help sustain farmers and strengthen the food system for everyone.
- Supporting family farmers takes all of us, from the choices we make in our communities to the policies that shape our food system. Farm Aid fosters connections between farmers and eaters by growing and strengthening local and regional markets and working to get family farm food in urban neighborhoods, grocery stores, restaurants, schools and other public institutions. This creates opportunities for family farmers and makes their good food accessible to more people — a win-win!
- The Farm Aid Hotline (1-800-FARM-AID) provides immediate support services to farm families in crisis. Farm Aid's [Farmer Resource Network](#) connects farmers and aspiring farmers to an extensive network of organizations across the country that help farmers find the resources they need to get started in agriculture, access new markets, transition to more sustainable and profitable farming practices, survive natural disasters and build resilience to climate change.
- Farm Aid works with local, regional and national organizations to promote fair farm policies and grassroots organizing campaigns designed to defend and bolster family farm-centered agriculture. We've worked side-by-side with farmers to protest factory farms and inform farmers and eaters about issues like genetically modified food and growth hormones. By strengthening the voices of family farmers, Farm Aid stands up for the people we all depend on.

## **Current Issues**

- U.S. farmers have recently faced consecutive years of high input costs and low commodity prices, decreasing the already small margins that many operations get by on. And while these conditions alone are difficult enough to navigate, additional challenges have only increased uncertainty for U.S. farmers. Farmers have been hit from every direction: seesawing tariffs, damaging trade policies, inflation and drastic cuts to federal farm programs. These impacts combined with decades of agriculture policy that favors large-scale, industrial operations and corporations are bringing many farmers — and the rural communities they support — to a breaking point.
- In addition, family farmers are facing increasing challenges — from rising costs and climate impacts like extreme weather and sea level rise to land use pressures and policy uncertainty — that threaten their livelihoods, as well as the stability of the food system and the communities that depend on them.

- Chapter 12 farm bankruptcies rose 46% in 2025. There were 315 filings compared to 216 in 2024, marking the third year in a row that filings increased. Altogether, around 15,000 farms nationwide closed in 2025. Even as the number of farms has decreased in recent years, the size of the remaining farms has increased, with a consolidation of land into fewer, larger operations.
- A handful of corporations control our food from farm to fork, allowing them to manipulate the marketplace, pushing down the prices paid to family farmers and driving them out of business. The unbridled power of food companies also grants them increasing political influence over the rules that govern our food system, affecting both farmers and all of us who eat.
- For eaters, extreme consolidation means fewer choices in the grocery aisle and higher prices, while corporate-written policies create growing food safety concerns, food worker exploitation and less transparency in the marketplace. The COVID-19 pandemic provided us with a clear view of the failure of corporate consolidation as supply chains crumbled during that crisis. Across the country, local farmers and local food systems demonstrated they are the best solution for a safe and steady food supply, and policy wisely reacted to invest in local food systems. Those investments have now been canceled, pulling federal dollars from programs that strengthened both family farmers and local communities.
- Our farm and food system is rooted in, and remains deeply entwined with, racism and injustice. Our vision of a transformed America in which family farmers and eaters are partners in a thriving farm and food system that benefits all is not possible without actively being part of the movement for justice.

## Virginia Agriculture Facts

- According to data from the 2024 USDA Census of Agriculture, there are 38,995 farms in Virginia, with more than 7.3 million acres of farmland.<sup>1</sup> Virginia Beach County is home to 129 farms, accounting for 23,140 acres of farmland. The average Virginia Beach farm is 179 acres.
  - Virginia Beach is not just a beach city. Its Pungo area is a rural agricultural community just west of Sandbridge, with about 23,000 acres of country roads, farmland and rural land where you can pick your own strawberries and enjoy other farm experiences.<sup>2</sup>
- USDA data show that Virginia farms averaged \$38,058 in net cash farm income in 2022, but because only 37% of farms had positive net cash farm income, the median Virginia farm operated at a net loss.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2024, Virginia farms generated more than \$4.5 billion in agricultural cash receipts, including nearly \$3 billion from animals and animal products and more than \$1.5 billion from crops. Broilers — chickens raised for meat — were Virginia’s top agricultural product, generating about \$1.25 billion in cash receipts.<sup>4</sup> The majority of these birds are raised in confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs, often known as factory farms), which are designated “point sources” of water pollution and are subject to regulation under the Clean Water Act.
- In addition to chickens, Virginia’s top agricultural products include cattle, hay, soybeans, corn for grain and cotton lint.<sup>5</sup> However, in both Virginia Beach and Chesapeake City, USDA reports that 97% of agricultural sales come from crops, while only 3% come from livestock, poultry and animal products.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://data.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online\\_Resources/County\\_Profiles/Virginia/cp99051.pdf](https://data.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Virginia/cp99051.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.visitvirginiabeach.com/experiences/beaches-districts/pungo/>

<sup>3</sup>

[https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Virginia/Publications/Current\\_News\\_Release/2024/2022%20VA%20Census%20Highlights.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Virginia/Publications/Current_News_Release/2024/2022%20VA%20Census%20Highlights.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/press-releases-251229-cash-receipts-top-va-ag.shtml>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick\\_Stats/Ag\\_Overview/stateOverview.php?+state=Virginia&year=2024](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/Ag_Overview/stateOverview.php?+state=Virginia&year=2024)

<sup>6</sup> [https://data.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online\\_Resources/County\\_Profiles/Virginia/cp51810.pdf](https://data.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Virginia/cp51810.pdf)

- Virginia Beach created its Agricultural Reserve Program in 1995 to keep agriculture viable by preserving the land base for farming.<sup>7</sup> Chesapeake has a similar Open Space and Agricultural Preservation Program tied to protecting rural character and agricultural resources.<sup>8</sup> In March 2026, the Virginia Beach City Council and the [Agricultural Reserve Program](#) were honored with the 2025 Excellence in Agriculture Award.
- Much of the region sits near sensitive waterways. The Back Bay watershed in southeastern Virginia Beach includes farmland and protected areas, drains 64,907 acres, and makes up about 33% of the city.<sup>9</sup> In the broader Chesapeake Bay watershed, agriculture is described by the Chesapeake Bay Program as the largest source of nutrient and sediment pollution entering the Bay, so farm practices such as cover crops, no-till, nutrient management and buffers are central to water quality goals.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://agriculture.virginiabeach.gov/agricultural-reserve-program>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cityofchesapeake.net/586/Open-Space-Agricultural-Preservation-Pro>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.lynnhavenrivernow.org/back-bay-watershed/>