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FARM AID 2026
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AS FAMILY FARMERS FACE GROWING ECONOMIC PRESSURE, FARM AID 2026 LIFTS THEIR VOICES IN HAMPTON ROADS

*Festival highlights the essential role family farmers play in strong communities
and our shared responsibility to sustain them*

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — Against a backdrop of growing economic pressure on America’s family farmers, Farm Aid 2026 at Veterans United Home Loans Amphitheater at Virginia Beach shined a national spotlight on the people who grow our food and the communities they sustain.

The annual music and food festival underscored the deep connection between the success of family farms and the well-being of communities: When farmers thrive, communities thrive, and when farmers struggle, the effects ripple through local economies, food systems and the places we call home.

Farm Aid board artists Willie Nelson, John Mellencamp, Neil Young, Dave Matthews, Margo Price and Nathaniel Rateliff joined farmers and fellow artists to call attention to what communities lose when family farmers can no longer make a living on the land. Family farmers — like teachers, health care providers and first responders — are essential for our communities to thrive. They take tremendous personal and family risks to grow the food on our tables, care for the land and water we all depend on and create jobs and economic life in towns and counties across the country.

Today’s festival came at a critical moment for U.S. agriculture. Chapter 12 farm bankruptcies rose 46% in 2025, marking the third year in a row that filings increased. Around 15,000 farms nationwide closed in 2025. The stakes are particularly visible in Virginia, where family farmers face growing competition for land from development, including the state’s rapidly expanding data center industry. In Virginia Beach, more than 23,000 acres of farmland exist alongside neighborhoods, businesses and one of the nation’s largest military communities.

“When farmers can’t make it, we lose access to food, businesses lose customers and communities lose people and land that can’t be replaced,” said Farm Aid President and Founder Willie Nelson. “Farmers aren’t any different from the rest of us. They want a fair chance to make a living, take care of their families and improve the land they love. When they get that chance, we all benefit.”

The festival capped several days of events that put farmers and their experiences at the center of the conversation, including the Distressed Borrowers Assistance Network training, the annual Farmer Forum, two local farm tours, and the Farm Aid Family Reunion: “We the Farmers” Takeover.

The festival featured a full lineup of music, featuring by Farm Aid board members Willie Nelson (& Family), Neil Young (& The Chrome Hearts), John Mellencamp, Dave Matthews (& Tim Reynolds), Margo Price and Nathaniel Rateliff, as well as Turnpike Troubadours, Lukas Nelson, Ty Myers, Mike Campbell & The Dirty Knobs, Jesse Welles, Sierra Ferrell, Mon Rovia, I'm With Her, Amythyst Kiah, Lily Meola, Chris Pierce and the Wisdom Indian Dancers.

Farm Aid's HOMEGROWN Village engaged festivalgoers in hands-on activities exploring climate, soil, water, energy, food and farming, while HOMEGROWN Concessions® showcased food from family farmers highlighting the flavors of Virginia and the Chesapeake region. Attendees sampled Well Sown Estate Lager, a special festival beer grown and brewed by Wheatland Spring Farm + Brewery, offering a true taste of Virginia agriculture.

CNN aired a four-hour special featuring live performances, artist interviews and on-the-ground reporting from the festival, while SiriusXM provided exclusive audio coverage and backstage conversations with artists and family farmers. Fans around the world also followed the festival through livestreams on [FarmAid.org](https://farmaid.org), [Farm Aid's YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv3v3v3v3v3v3v3v3v3v3v3) channel and nugs.

Sponsors of Farm Aid 2026 include Virginia Tourism Corporation, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Visit Virginia Beach, Tractor Beverage Co., Horizon Organic, Virginia Spirits and Intertribal Agriculture Council. This year's festival and pre-festival events received support from "Our Shared Future: 250," a Smithsonian-wide initiative supported by private philanthropy and created to commemorate the nation's 250th anniversary and advance the Smithsonian vision for the next 250 years.

The annual Farm Aid festival is the organization's largest fundraising event of the year, and family farm supporters are encouraged to visit farmaid.org/donate to make a donation. Additionally, the Farm Aid 2026 Memorabilia Auction is now live at farmaid.org/auction. This collection of rare, unique and signed memorabilia items is open for bidding through Friday, October 9 at 5 p.m. ET. Proceeds support Farm Aid's work.

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, Margo Price and Nathaniel Rateliff 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. Since 1985, Farm Aid, with the support of the artists who contribute their performances each year, has raised more than \$90 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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