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Willie sows songs to raise cash crop for farmers

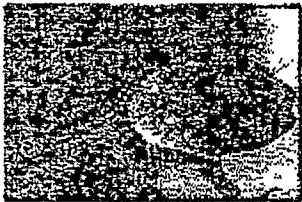
An Associated Press Report

IRVING, Texas — Willie Nelson and nearly 50 other country and rock stars jammed Saturday in the fifth Farm Aid benefit for organizations that help rural America.

"We need everybody's help to educate the American people to how important it is to keep the family farmer on the land," Nelson said before the 12-hour show.

More than 50,000 people enjoyed sunny, 80-degree weather for the party at Texas Stadium. About half of the concert was telecast by cable's The Nashville Network.

Those joining Nelson included Paul Simon, John Mellencamp, Richard Marx, Michelle Shocked,



Country singer Willie Nelson was a co-organizer of the first Farm Aid concert in 1985.

the Kentucky Headhunters and Peter. Comedian Rosanne and Tom Arnold and Steve Allen introduced some of the acts.

Concertgoer Ray Sutton, who has attended every Farm Aid, drove overnight from Kansas City to make

this show.

"Family farmers are disappearing," he said. "They'll probably all disappear because of corporations but until then we can try to help them."

Rocker Neil Young decried the spread of corporate farming to developing nations. Farmers in those countries are being persuaded to grow cash crops and rely on imported food, much of it from the United States, he said.

"We're living in a dream here that we're feeding the world when really we're choking the world," Young said. "I'll be here the rest of my life to stop that."

The concert was expected to raise more than \$1 million for Farm

Aid, a non-profit organization that supports dozens of food banks, assistance hot lines and other service groups in rural areas.

The first Farm Aid concert in September 1985, the height of the farm crisis, raised \$7 million. The three since, including the last one two years ago, and other fund-raising have brought in only \$5 million more since then.

About 84 percent of the funds are dispensed to non-profit groups, many church-related, in virtually every state.

Organizers said they want to call attention to health care problems and persistent migration from rural areas.