

Farm Aid V Certain To Raise \$1 Million For Farmers

IRVING (AP) — Acoustic country-bluegrass singer Michelle Shocked, after a rollicking first Farm Aid performance, candidly admitted she knew little about the cause for which she played.

"I can't sit here and say I feel anything in my heart at this point," said Shocked, who performs several songs calling for political activism.

For Shocked, who has just finished recording an album tracing the roots of country music with performers like Doc Watson and Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, playing Farm Aid was less a political cause than a chance to come home.

"I feel very relaxed because I know where these people come from," said Shocked, who grew up in Gilmer. "I come from the same place."

Even superstar Paul Simon deferred questions when he told reporters during Saturday's concert about a New York-based children's health program that was expanding

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— Willie Nelson
Farm Aid V Spokesman

to rural areas.

He only offered, "I'm sure that as the economy has worsened the health services have deteriorated" in the countryside.

Eager to step in, of course, was Farm Aid organizer Willie Nelson.

"It's something that everyone who eats should brush up on," Nelson said. "The people who grow their food are losing their homes, losing their land."

With the fifth Farm Aid certain to have raised more than \$1 million for dozens of rural aid groups nationwide, Nelson's populist charity work clearly strikes the same responsive chord with fans and music industry pals that his singing does.

"He didn't have to be very persuasive at all," Simon said of Nelson's invitation to play. "I admire his work and I admire what he's doing here."

"Willie has started a thing that has helped a lot of people," said Eddie Rabbitt, who, like Simon and Shocked, was playing his first Farm Aid.

Nearly 50 other artists and groups joined them in the 12-hour benefit before a crowd estimated between 30,000 and 40,000. About 50,000 were expected to attend the event at Texas Stadium and featured nationwide on cable TV. Performers included John Mellencamp, the Kentucky Headhunters, Asleep at the Wheel, Tracy Chapman, Richard Marx, Kris Kristofferson and Waylon Jennings.

While the farm foreclosure crisis that spurred Nelson to begin Farm Aid in 1985 has slowed, he and others at the concert emphasized that problems persist in rural America.

Health insurance, dying hospitals and low crop prices daily worries, they said. A problem that has grown since the upheaval in the nation's banks and thrifts is the availability of financing.

"Credit is very scarce," said Betty Puckett, who runs a Farm Aid-supported assistance hotline in LeCompte, La. "They're looking at cash flow and past history. And the recent past has been low production, low prices and disasters."

"It's clear to me that the disregard for the plight of family farmers and rural America runs parallel to the disregard for workers in urban America," said the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who has been at all five concerts.

"The farm economy is related to the national economy," Nelson said. "It's the domino effect we've been talking about since 1985. First it was the farmers, now it's General Motors."

For most of Saturday, though, Nelson concentrated on the logistics of a pulling off such a large event. The task has gotten easier after four earlier tries, he said.

"Everybody wants to help. Everybody wants to see it happen," Nelson said. "I think it's incredible."