

Hootie to come back to USC for Farm Aid

STAFF REPORTS

Hootie and the Blowfish are back. The band will perform at Farm Aid '96, their first Columbia show since their MTV Unplugged performance last April.

Farm Aid president Willie Nelson and Hootie and the Blowfish manager Rusty Harmon, announced the plans for Farm Aid '96. The family farm benefit is scheduled to take place at Williams Brice Stadium in Columbia on Oct. 12. Tickets for the show will go on sale in September.

Nelson said, "We are proud to hold Farm Aid '96 in Columbia, S.C., a region with a rich agricultural tradition and hard working men and women who struggle every day to make a living on the land."

"We hope this concert will remind the nation that we need to change the way we think about the food we eat and the people who grow it. It's important that we have someone there growing food who cares for the land."

Nelson will perform along with fellow Farm Aid founders, Neil Young and John Mellencamp. Other performers include the Beach Boys, Martina McBride, Grand Old Opry star John Conlee and Jewel.

Nelson announced that The Nashville Network will telecast Farm Aid '96 on Saturday, Oct. 19, at 6 p.m. eastern standard time.

Nelson said a string of natural disasters this year has made it harder than ever for farmers to make a living from the land. The current drought in the Great Plains and Hurricane Bertha, which caused crop damage in the Carolinas, have hurt family farm income, according to a Farm Aid press release.

"Bad farm policies are already causing 500 farmers a week to lose their land, even without the complications of hurricanes and drought. Families who were on the verge of bankruptcy have now had to face natural disasters," Nelson said. "As long as these men and women are willing to work in the fields all day to provide us with wholesome, good quality food, Farm Aid will stand behind them."

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Willie Nelson, country singer

Hootie and the Blowfish, in a statement read by Harmon, said, "We are very proud and honored that Willie, Neil, John and the folks at Farm Aid chose our home town of Columbia, S.C., for this year's benefit. It is our privilege to bring to light the fact that the plight of the family farmer exists, not only in America's heartland, but in everyone's backyard."

They added, "We had a great time playing with some of our heroes in Louisville last year, and we were amazed to learn how the Farm Aid organization touches the lives of our farmers in need."

Nelson said, "We are grateful that Hootie and the Blowfish have taken such a leadership role in helping family farmers. Their dedication is invaluable to this organization, and we are proud to bring Farm Aid '96 to their hometown"

Columbia Mayor Bob Coble was among many state and local officials who appeared at the news conference to welcome Farm Aid to Columbia.

Coble said, "We're elated to be the host city for this wonderful event. Columbia is a city with heart, and we're thrilled to be part of something that helps so many people."

Farm Aid was founded in 1985 by Nelson, Mellencamp and Young to raise public awareness about the plight of the American family farmer and to provide assistance. In the past 11 years, Farm Aid has granted nearly \$13 million to more than 100 farm organizations, churches and service agencies in 44 states.

Farm organizations in South Carolina have received more than \$200,000 since 1985.



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