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PRESS RELEASE

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Farm Aid Grant to IATP Connects Health and Food Policy

MINNEAPOLIS — The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy was awarded a grant from Farm Aid to incorporate public health into the national farm policy debate with the goal to promote family-farm-centered food production. Concern about obesity, in particular, is reshaping the public health agenda. A growing body of research indicates that flawed government farm policy has contributed to the obesity problem.

The Farm Aid grant to IATP will be used to develop closer collaboration and consensus among family farmers, sustainable agriculture organizations and the public health community. IATP hopes that by further involving the public health community in farm policy discussions, it will promote 1) fair prices for commodities, 2) market-based policy tools to help reduce excessive production of hydrogenated fats and sweeteners that are potentially detrimental to public health. 3) expanded farmer opportunities to produce fresh, regional fruits and vegetables, and 4) existing Farm Bill provisions with proven public health benefits.

“By driving down the price of commodities such as corn, U.S. farm policy has made heavily processed foods extremely cheap to produce and buy, while simultaneously driving farmers out of business,” said Mark Muller, director of IATP’s Environment and Agriculture Program. “These processed foods are what we, as a nation, already over-consume. It doesn’t have to be this way. We can have farm policies that make healthy food more affordable and farming economically viable.”

Much of the money raised by Farm Aid for farmers this year was the result of a sold-out fundraising concert September 18 at the White River Amphitheatre outside Seattle, WA. Farm Aid grants were distributed to 48 family farm organizations across the country supporting a variety of programs that help farm families stay on their land and strengthen family farm-centered food production. Funds will also support local efforts to confront the threat of increasing corporate control of agriculture, as well as hotlines and advocacy efforts that help farm families recover from disasters and financial hardships.

“Family farmers are America’s best guarantee for fresh, healthful food that is grown in ways that are good for the land, water and air,” said Farm Aid President Willie Nelson. “Our grants this year support efforts that help farmers achieve the positive changes they need to stay on their land and provide us with the good, healthful food we desire.”

Willie Nelson, Neil Young and John Mellencamp organized the first Farm Aid concert in 1985 to raise awareness about the loss of family farms and to raise funds to keep farm families on their land. Dave Matthews joined the Farm Aid Board of Directors in 2001. Farm Aid has raised \$26 million to promote a strong and resilient family farm system of agriculture. Through public education and direct grants, Farm Aid supports national, regional and local efforts to build and strengthen family farm food systems. Farm Aid promotes sustainable agriculture, fights factory farms, advocates for fair farm prices, and provides credit counseling and direct assistance to farm families.

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy promotes resilient family farms, rural communities and ecosystems around the world through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy. For more information, go to: www.iatp.org.