November 5th 2026

STATEMENT

SOLIDARITY WITH FARMER MOVEMENTS' DEMANDS IN THE IMF-WORLD BANK ANNUAL MEETING IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

The 2026 Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group took place from October 12th – 18th in Bangkok, Thailand. La Via Campesina and several other peasant and farmer organisations, including Thailand's Assembly of the Poor (AOP), took to the streets to denounce the World Bank and IMF's destructive policies and the EU-Thailand Free Trade Agreement (FTA).



Picture Source: La Via Campesina - Facebook

Debt and free-trade policies pushed forward by the IMF and the World Bank have created increased fiscal pressure in Global South economies, requiring drastic cuts to public support, defunding critical areas for development, and privatising natural resources and assets that are key for farmers' lives and the food they grow to feed

themselves and urban consumers. In Thailand, farmers have carried the weight of the country's industrialisation by creating cheap export food without clear improvement in their lives. They are experiencing increased taxes, contamination of their environment and water sources through agrochemical runoffs, and intoxication and poor health, while at the same time receiving no wage increases nor more nutritious food. As seen by Thailand's experience, these policies go hand-in-hand with corporate concentration and pathways towards ecological crisis, instead of supporting farmer and peasant agroecology and shared governance of the commons.

Furthermore, the ongoing negotiations for the **EU-Thailand FTA** include the implementation of the 1991 Convention of the Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV). UPOV 1991 protects commercial plant breeders' rights by establishing intellectual property rights for seeds, and it has been historically pushed by a handful of Western countries' corporate interests. Through complex and expensive seed registration systems, this convention narrows the criteria needed to register plant varieties to only four conditions: novelty, distinctiveness, uniqueness, and stability. In addition, UPOV 1991 distorts the Nagoya Protocol's goal of fair and equitable benefit sharing from the utilisation of local and traditional plant genetic resources and knowledge systems. By integrating local commercial crops and wild relatives into UPOV-registered varieties, this convention can provide the means for commercial breeders to bypass the access and benefit-sharing requirements of the Nagoya Protocol by claiming breeder's exemption for creating new varieties.

Hence, UPOV 1991 creates further barriers to protecting peasants and small-scale farmers' seeds, while at the same time allowing legal gaps for misappropriation of local plants' genetic material. This forces peasants and farmers away from traditional seed exchanges, weakens seed sovereignty and contravenes rights protected under other international treaties, like the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and Other People working in rural areas (UNDROP) and the Nagoya Protocol. On September 23rd, over 100 farmers' groups marched through Bangkok and submitted a letter to the Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives protesting the possible adoption of UPOV 1991 in Thailand's Plant Variety Protection Act.

Thai and European farmers and peasants (organised across over 100 farmers' groups, including the Assembly of the Poor, and the European Coordination of the Via Campesina) are standing together against the EU-Thailand FTA. In Thailand, the FTA agreement is also expected to expand the poultry and corn monoculture production, reinforcing pathways towards increased greenhouse gases resulting from large-scale stubble burning and benefiting only a handful of poultry industry giants. In Europe, food sovereignty will be threatened by the incoming flux of cheap industrial poultry from Thailand. The FTA agreement will put at risk food sovereignty and peasants' rights in both Thailand and Europe, advancing only concentration and contamination.

CASAS stands with peasant organisations and farmers protesting the possible acceptance of the UPOV 1991 and the FTA agreement and supports La Via Campesina's

demands for placing people and ecologies at the heart of economic policy, instead of corporations' interests. We support the need to cancel debt in Global South countries, tax corporations and reallocate the budget towards farmers, peasants, indigenous peoples and local communities' needs. We support the transformation of the global food system through food sovereignty and agroecology, as part of the wider socioecological change needed for addressing the multi-faceted crises evident today.

CASAS

COLLECTIVE OF AGRARIAN SCHOLAR-ACTIVISTS FROM THE SOUTH