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News | 24.09.2013

EU-Thailand Free-Trade Agreement

Thousands protest on the streets of Thailand



The 2nd round of the Thailand - EU Free-Trade Agreement (FTA) talks took place last week in the city of Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand. Since the start of the negotiations, civil society has expressed its fear that the EU, as it did in the recent past with India, is pushing levels of "intellectual property" protection beyond World Trade Organisation standards. Civil society organisations and citizens in Thailand have alerted their government on how this comprehensive trade package with the EU risks affecting the prices of medicines, as well as seed and agricultural products in Thailand. Last week thousands of health, consumer, and farming activists marched to Le Meridien, the Hotel in Chiang Mai, where the trade talks are being held. Three major areas of concern were expressed by Thai civil society:

- Requirements to increase the level of protection of intellectual property beyond the requirements of the WTO. This will hamper generic competition and can directly impact public access to medicines and the national health security system;
- The introduction of a dispute resolution mechanism between private investors and states. This will empower investors to sue governments for compensation and harm public policies and consumer's protection.
- The requirement that Thailand ratifies the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) Treaty 1991 and the Budapest Treaty, which will lead to the

monopolisation of plant varieties and threat food security.

"Access to medicine should not be hampered by a free trade agreement with the EU" stated Green MEP and member of the Trade committee, **Ska Keller**. The Greens/EFA group is calling upon the European Commission not to push bilaterally provisions it could not hope to impose through regional negotiations with the ASEAN, especially when such provisions would endanger public health policy, the protection of the environment or the subsistence of Thai farmers.

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Ska Keller

Member

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