

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

The dominant neoliberal norm in global food governance has had an impact on Thailand. This economic and political ideology places a strong emphasis on changing the regulatory environment in favor of the market while ignoring the more significant structural factors that affect market behavior. Due to this ideology, Thailand has a limited perspective on the food system. It only sees it as a way to extract private value, failing to acknowledge the universal right to adequate food (a legal entitlement), the security of food and nutrition (a global public good), or the significance of food justice and food sovereignty.

Thailand uses foreign direct investment (FDI) to expand its economy and move money in the CLMV sub-region, and as agriculture remains important, agrifood outbound investment will continue to grow. The Thai government facilitates investment, but there is no OFDI regulation and current policies prioritize efficiency over addressing social and environmental issues. Outbound investment poses risks such as border haze and human trafficking, and it is difficult for Thai investors to operate responsibly without trustworthiness, credibility, and legitimacy in the host country. To ensure sustainable agriculture, the home country must act responsibly in policy design and implementation, recognizing that food issues are a shared global responsibility.

The purpose of the research is to challenge or change Thailand's hegemonic power over the country's food system and cross-border investment that are continuing to preserve the status quo. It focuses on the government's regulation of the four layers of agriculture, outbound investment, food security and the right to food, and civic movement for food justice. The study seeks to explore alternative actions and movements to promote human rights protection and uphold them in Thailand and other countries. Therefore, the primary research question is **How can the Thai government leverage its duty as a state actor to transform current food production and agribusiness outbound investment toward rights-based sustainable agriculture?**

The research challenges Thailand's control over its food system and cross-border investment by examining the government's regulation of agriculture, agrifood investment, food security, and food justice movements. The findings reveal the influence of political ideology, power dynamics, and human rights violations on Thailand's national objectives in food production and investment. The results call for alternative strategies to shape Thailand's role in the food system and FDI in the CLMV countries in a more responsible manner.