

**Delight over KFC Tibet decision**

A spokesman for the Dalai Lama has applauded news that the Kentucky Fried Chicken fast-food chain has abandoned plans to open outlets in Tibet.

The exiled Tibetan spiritual leader had publicly urged the company not to go ahead with the plans.

He said the mass slaughter of chickens violated Tibet's traditional values.

KFC's parent company, Yum Brands, says it has called off plans to operate in Tibet because it does not think it would be profitable.

**Concern for chickens**

An animal rights group PETA ( People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) published a letter from the Dalai Lama this week calling on Yum Brands to rethink its decision.

In the letter, the Dalai Lama said that Tibetans rarely consumed chicken and fish before China took control of Tibet.

Instead, he said, Tibetans traditionally ate larger animals such as yaks - of which fewer had to be killed.

The Dalai Lama, exiled in the Indian hill town of Dharamsala since 1959, said that introduction of "industrial food practices" into Tibet would perpetuate animal suffering.

He said in the letter: "I have been particularly concerned with the sufferings of chickens for many years.

"It was the death of a chicken that finally strengthened my resolve to become vegetarian.

"These days, when I see a row of plucked chickens hanging in a meat shop, it hurts.

**'Not economically feasible'**

Yum Brands, which operates Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets in most of China, said in January that it was considering opening outlets in Tibet.

Following this week's publicity over the Dalai Lama's letter, the company now says it has given up on the idea.

But it says the decision was taken some time ago, before the Dalai Lama's intervention.

"We did look into entering Tibet earlier in the year," spokesman Jonathan Blum told Reuters news agency.

"But we decided not to move forward because it isn't economically feasible for us to do business there today."

A spokesman for the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, Tenzin Taklha, told BBC News Online: "We welcome the decision of KFC."

However, Yum Brands has not permanently crossed Tibet off its marketing possibilities.

"Maybe someday it will be less costly and we'll continue to explore this option at that time," Mr Blum said.

There are more than 1,000 KFC outlets in China, which is Yum's fastest growing and most profitable market outside the US.

The Dalai Lama fled Chinese-occupied Tibet in 1959 after a failed coup attempt, but in recent years has been trying to engage Beijing in negotiations over a potential return.