



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

New report examines national parks, rural revitalization in Tibet

<https://savetibet.org/new-report-examines-national-parks-rural-revitalization-in-tibet>

February 7, 2024

China's Red meat machine or national parks reserve: What is China's vision for Tibet's future?

That's the question the International Campaign for Tibet raises in its new report, "National Parks, Rural Revitalization? A Report on the Future of Tibet's Peopled Landscapes."

Released today, Feb. 7, 2024, the report examines two large-scale policy initiatives—rural revitalization and national parks—that are resulting in a tightening Chinese grip on Tibet, the Himalayan neighbor that China has illegally occupied for 65 years.

These two policies are upending Tibetans' traditional lifestyles, displacing Tibetan pastoralists and violating the Tibetan people's Buddhist values.

At the same time, the manner of implementation of rural revitalization and national parks is putting them in conflict, with the former transforming Tibet into a massive slaughterhouse for industrial-sized meat production to meet the demands of the Chinese population, and the latter seeking to remake it as pristine wilderness for tourists.

"China now has competing master narratives mapping the future of rural Tibet as territories of meat production or tourism consumption," ICT's report says. "These narratives contradict each other with little clarity as to which will prevail."

[Read the report.](#)

Rural revitalization

The report arrives just two weeks after Chinese Premier Li Qiang chaired a meeting of the State Council to "mull measures to advance rural revitalization on all fronts," according to Chinese state media outlet [Xinhua](#).

In addition, at the Rural Work Conference of the Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee in Lhasa, Tibet's capital city, on Jan. 24, Wang Junzheng, party secretary of the TAR, instructed attendees to study and implement Chinese General Secretary Xi Jinping's directives on the "three rural" work (agriculture, rural areas and farmers) for the ["revitalization of the countryside."](#)

ICT's report says that rural revitalization is a "broad basket of policy initiatives that, in Tibet, primarily means intensifying the slaughter rate of yaks and sheep." The goal is to turn both beef and mutton production into RMB 100 billion (about US\$ 14 billion) industries, despite the Tibetan people's deep reluctance to see animals as assets for monetization.

Under the emergent system, the first and last stages of the process—breeding the animals and slaughtering them—are in Chinese hands. Tibetans, meanwhile, are left with just the least profitable and highest-risk phase of growing the animals and maximizing their weight gain.

The new system downgrades Tibetan livestock producers from skilled entrepreneurs to “rural laborers.” It also runs afoul of their traditional practices and beliefs.

According to the report, Tibetan “drogpa” (nomads) knew each animal individually and would kill only those necessary for survival. They also used all parts of the animal for food or other purposes, with special techniques to ensure nothing was wasted.

Today, however, everything except muscle meats, which are at most 51% of a slaughtered yak’s weight, go to waste.

National parks

ICT’s report traces rural revitalization in Tibet to 2021, when Chinese authorities announced plans to intensify meat production on the Tibetan Plateau in the wake of an epidemic that crashed China’s pork industry.

At the leading edge of this process are national parks that give China’s government central control over prime livestock production landscapes in Tibet, repurposing them for tourist consumption.

Once again, Tibetans are cut out of their traditional role under this new vision, with the government forcing Tibetans off their ancestral lands and into hastily built settlements.

“Tibetan nomads, accustomed to the freedom of the open range, are seldom keen to migrate hundreds of miles to a sedentary life with no livelihood to work at, dependent on official handouts, and becoming demobilized and disempowered,” the report says. “The official offer of relocation is an offer that can be resisted for a while, but in the end must be accepted.”

Unresolved conflict

ICT’s report says the contest between China’s rural revitalization in Tibet and its national parks planning has yet to be resolved.

Whichever vision wins out, Tibetans’ culture and lifestyle will be sacrificed to make way for China’s grand designs.

“Both visions of the future require big changes to the lives of Tibetan pastoralists,” the report says. “Both rely on thought work to pressure Tibetan pastoralist producers to dramatically change their mode of production, or get out. Both require a high proportion of nomads to quit altogether and move elsewhere.”

Read ICT’s report, [“National Parks, Rural Revitalization? A Report on the Future of Tibet’s Peopled Landscapes.”](#)



International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) | 1825 Jefferson Place NW | Washington, DC 20036 | United States of America
Phone: (202) 785-1515 | Fax: (202) 785-4343 | info@savetibet.org

ICT Europe
Funenpark 1D | 1018 AK
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
icteurope@savetibet.nl

ICT Deutschland e.V.
Schönhauser Allee 163 | 10435
Berlin, Germany
Phone: +49 (0)30 27879086
Fax: +49 (0)30 27879087
info@savetibet.de

ICT Brussels
11, rue de la linière | 1060
Brussels, Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
info@savetibet.eu