



## **HALAL FOOD CERTIFICATION CHALLENGES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR MUSLIM SOCIETIES WORLDWIDE\***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Halal (legal or permitted) food regulations define what Muslims are allowed to eat. Because there are both ingredients and processes that are controversial, these conflicts makes it hard for consumers to determine which foods are Halal. In principal, consumers have the right to obtain information from the companies producing food and to be assured that the information is accurate. But a Halal certification system, using trademarked symbols, provides that same guarantee to consumers with much less effort. However, there are currently over 200 Halal certification bodies in the world, so consumers need to understand the differences between these organizations. The attempt to create a unified halal standard is unlikely to be successful unless the standard is broad enough to allow for legitimate differences on critical issues. Thus, any standards document that emerges that wishes to be broadly accepted within the Muslim community will have to accept and clarify these conflicting standards. Thus, some Halal certification bodies will be unacceptable to other certification bodies. Whether Halal certification should be regulated and/or organized by the state or done without government involvement is a debate that should occur in each country. The outcome of both establishing a broad standard and its implementation will have a significant impact on the future of this now multi-billion dollar business world-wide serving both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers.

**Key Words:** Halal food certification, Islam, International trade, Halal standard, Halal foods

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## HELAL GIDA BELGELENDİRMEDEKİ ZORLUKLAR VE DÜNYA MÜSLÜMAN TOPLUMLARINA ETKİLERİ

### ÖZET

Helal (İslami olarak izin verilmiş) gıda yönetmeliği Müslümanların neyi tüketip tüketemeyeceği konusunda izin verilen gıdaları tanımlamaktadır. Hem gıda katkı maddeleri ve hemde gıda işleme sırasında ilave edilebilecek olan bazı maddeler konusunda tartışmaların olması, tüketiciler için tam olarak neyin Helal olabileceği konusunda karar vermekte bazen zorlanmaktadırlar. Prensip olarak, tüketiciler gıda üreten şirketlerden bilgi edinme ve bilgilerin doğru olduğundan emin olmak hakkına sahiptir. Ancak markalı, Helal sertifika sembollerini kullanarak Helal belgelendirme sistemine sahip olan ürünler daha az çaba ile tüketicilere aynı garantiyi sağlayabilmektedir. Ancak, dünyada şu anda 200'ün üzerinde Helal belgelendirme kuruluşları vardır. Tüketicilerin bu kuruluşlar arasındaki farkları tam olarak bilebilmeleri mümkün değildir, ancak bilme haklarına sahiptirler. Bazı Helal belgelendirme kuruluşları, diğer belgelendirme kuruluşları için kabul edilemez durumdadır. Ayrıca bunu anlayabilmeleri çok zordur. Bu standartların bazıları kritik konularda meşru farklar için izin vermede çok katı olmasına rağmen bazıları ise çok esnektir. Bunun için birleşik bir helal standart oluşturmak yerinde olabilecektir. Ortak bir noktada buluşmadıkça da ortak bir standartın hazırlanması mümkün değildir. Böylece, geniş Müslüman toplumların kabul edebileceği koşulları ortaya koyan bir standart kabul edilebilir ve çelişkileri ortadan kaldırabilir. Helal belgelendirme sistemi düzenlenirken devlet müdahalesi olmadan yapılması önerisi birçok ülkede tartışılmaktadır. Yaygın, kullanılabilir ve kabul edilebilir bir helal standardı ve bu standartının kurulması ve uygulanması ile hem dünya çapında Müslümanların daha rahat etmesine ve Müslüman olmayan tüketicilerinde daha güvenli bir hizmet almalarına yardımcı olacaktır. Ayrıca multi-milyar dolarlık bir dünya helal ticaret işinin geleceği üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahip olacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Helal gıda sertifikası, İslam, Uluslararası ticaret, Helal standart, Helal gıda

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Religious commitments play an important role in people's lives through their beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes<sup>1</sup>. The impact of religion on food consumption depends on the specific religion and on the extent to which individuals follow the teachings of their religion and how they interpret these requirements. These religious commitments and beliefs influence the feelings and attitudes of people towards food consumption<sup>2</sup>.

Sheriah, Islamic laws, is one of the most important foundations of Muslim life. A Muslim is expected to live within and comply with these regulations, which includes regulating their food

<sup>1</sup> Rehman, A. & Shabbir, M. S. (2010). The relationship between religiosity and new product adoption, available at: <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/1759-0833.htm>.

<sup>2</sup>Jamal, A. (2003). Marketing in a multi cultural world: The Interplay of Marketing, Ethnicity and Consumption. Eur J Mark, 37(11), 1599-1620.

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consumption. It is believed that a Muslim will be judged in the afterlife for every bite he/she took, and for every sip he/she enjoyed. So he/she has to make sure all of these products comply with the requirements of Halal<sup>3</sup>.

Halal is an Arabic word which means legal or permitted for Muslim consumers. Halal food is permitted by Allah (swt; Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala," which roughly means "The most glorified, the most high" where Allah is the Arabic word for the one God). The opposite of Halal is Haram, unlawful or prohibited by Allah (swt) for Muslims. The Halal or Haram status of many products are obvious, but there are some products that are not as easy to classify. Some foods are neither but fall into the category of Makrooh, questionable or suspect, which covers products that are generally avoided by serious Muslims. But what is classified as Makrooh varies greatly depending on the religious school being followed and local custom. How each Halal certification agency handles Makrooh ingredients will differ and complicates the international trade in Halal food products. There are also a few ingredients and processes that are controversial with respect to whether they are Halal or not. Halal foods must also be "Tayyab" (wholesome), that is they are also expected to only include foods that are healthy and will not cause harm as interpreted by the appropriate religious leaders. Eating Halal foods is very important for each Muslim's spiritual health. For most Muslims everything throughout their life must be Halal. They want to know about what they eat, what they drink and the source of their foods<sup>4</sup>.

Some of the most important Haram foods are listed below<sup>5, 6</sup>.

- Swine/pork and all products made from them,
- Animals slaughtered inappropriately (not Halal slaughtered), carrion,
- Animals slaughtered while invoking the name of any god other than Allah (swt),
- Alcohol and intoxicating substances,
- Carnivorous animals, hunting birds and land animals without a visible external ear,
- Animals torn by wild animals,
- Blood and blood products, and
- Products that come into direct contact with any of the above products also becomes

Haram.

In the modern global food industry, a large number of ingredients may come from either animal or plant sources. Those that come from animal by-products includes animal fats and proteins, gelatin, glycerine, enzymes, hormones, emulsifiers, and some flavor compounds.

Determining if a product is Halal becomes more difficult when working with the modern food processing industry, especially if a product has a complex collection of ingredients and

<sup>3</sup>Büyüközer, H.K. (2011). Yeni Dünya düzeni ve helal gıda. Çevik Matbaacılık, Davutpaşa Cad. Besler İş Merkezi, No:20/18-19. Topkapı İstanbul.

<sup>4</sup>Büyüközer, H. K. (2012a). Halalen tayyiben. Erkam matbası, Gimdes, Tekstilkent. A-22 Blok No:53 Esenler, İstanbul, Turkey.

<sup>5</sup>Anonymous, (A). Artibel system certification, available at: [http://www.artibel.com.tr/ISO\\_9001\\_belgesi/ISO9001-C70/kalitebelgesi-P1.html](http://www.artibel.com.tr/ISO_9001_belgesi/ISO9001-C70/kalitebelgesi-P1.html)

<sup>6</sup>Anonymous, (B). NY-Danışmanlık available at: [http://www.nydanismanlik.com/helal\\_gida.html](http://www.nydanismanlik.com/helal_gida.html)

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processing aids<sup>7</sup>. Vegetable products are normally Halal, unless they are contaminated with unlawful ingredients or processing aids or contain intoxicating substances<sup>8</sup>.

It is critical that Halal foods be prepared in accordance with Islamic rules and that product integrity be maintained throughout the supply chain. Namely, everything related to the food preparation, handling, and packaging must be Halal<sup>9</sup>. Thus, to write “No Pork” on the package does not make the product Halal<sup>10</sup>. Today, the use of ingredients in food production is increasing. In a country like Turkey, where the senior author resides and which is the country generally being used to provide more concrete examples, many of the ingredients are imported without Halal certification, making it harder to assure their proper Halal status because they often come with insufficient paperwork to make an appropriate judgment.

Those who live their lives as recommended by Allah (swt) do so regardless of where in the world they live and the nature of the government they live under. They show their respect through what they eat especially with respect to meat and poultry, where the proper slaughter of animals is so important<sup>10</sup>. To be Halal and to provide Halal food to one’s family is a requirement of the Muslim’s faith<sup>11</sup>. Before Islam, Kosher standards existed going back to Hebrew scriptures<sup>12, 13</sup>.

The concept of lawful food existed even with Adam (Peace be upon him, pbuh) who was the first man and the first prophet of humanity. Adam and his wife, Eve, were deceived by Satan when he tempted them to eat the forbidden fruit. This caused their exclusion from Heaven (or the Garden of Eden in Hebrew scripture). Moving to modern times, the concept of Halal foods was dealt with directly during the period of the Ottoman Empire. The stamp on foods of "Tahir" meant that the stamped foods were harmless or okay. However, the first "Hisba Organization" was specified during the time of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) but was formally established during the time of Omar's rule between the years 634-644 of the Common Era. Thus, the idea of Halal foods goes back to the beginnings of Islam<sup>14</sup>. The Hisba organization was responsible for the regulation of markets and assuring fair business practices. This organization protected consumers in the markets from the earliest Islamic communities until close to the end of the Ottoman empire. The muhtasibs, i.e., those working for the Hisba organization were there to assure that the market ran properly. Therefore the Hisba organization served to fulfill the Qur’anic verse “Let there arise out of you a band of people invited to all that is good, enjoying what is right, and forbidding what is wrong<sup>15</sup>”.

## 2. HALAL-HARAM IN HOLY QURAN AND HADITHS

From the Muslim’s point of view, the Halal food decisions affect a Muslim’s food and drink consumption<sup>16</sup>. Today, Islam is the fastest-growing religion globally, with the Muslim

<sup>7</sup> Al-Mazeedi, H.M., Regenstein, J.M. & Riaz, M.N. (2013). The issue of undeclared ingredients in halal and kosher food production: A focus on processing aids. *Comp Rev Food Sci Food Safety*, 12, 228-233.

<sup>8</sup>Riaz, M. N. (2010). Fundamentals of halal foods and certification, available at:[http://www.preparedfoods.com/-Articles/Feature\\_Article/BNP\\_GUID\\_9-5-2006\\_A\\_1000000000000734431](http://www.preparedfoods.com/-Articles/Feature_Article/BNP_GUID_9-5-2006_A_1000000000000734431).

<sup>9</sup>Yıldırım, B. (2011). Helal gıda, available at: <http://www.gidagundemi.com/helal-gida-makale,17.html>.

<sup>10</sup>Karaman, H. (2012). Helal gıda (1-2), available at:[http://www.gidahareketi.org/Helal-Gida-\(1-2\)-585-yazisi.aspx](http://www.gidahareketi.org/Helal-Gida-(1-2)-585-yazisi.aspx).

<sup>11</sup>Akgündüz, A. (2012). Helal gıda meselesi, Avrupa’da helal gıda problemleri ve çözüm yolları. In *İhracat İçin Helal Sertifikası Sempozyumu Bildirileri, Güney Marmara Kalkınma Ajansı*. Balıkesir. pp:1-14.

<sup>12</sup>Riaz, M.N. & Chaudry, M. M. (2004). *Halal Food Production*, CRC Press LLC, Boca Raton, Florida, 33431, USA.

<sup>13</sup>Regenstein, J.M., Chaudry, M.M. & Regenstein, C.E. (2003). The kosher and halal food laws. *Comp Rev Food Sci Food Safety*, 2(3), 111-127.

<sup>14</sup>Yıldırım, B. (2011). Helal gıda, available at: <http://www.gidagundemi.com/helal-gida-makale,17.html>

<sup>15</sup>Erdem, E. (2010). The functions of state in determining economic policies in islamic tradition. *Erciyes Üniversitesi İİBF Dergisi*, 35(1), 19-36.

<sup>16</sup>Nakyisinge, K., Che-Man, Y. B. & Sazili A.Q. (2012). Halal authenticity in meat products. *Meat Sci*, 91, 207-214.

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population recently estimated to have exceeded 1.8 billion<sup>17</sup>. With the global Halal market estimated to be worth about US\$150 billion a year and the Halal food industry pegged in 2007 to grow at a rate of 2.9% annually businesses that can produce Halal products should indeed be tapping into this growing market segment<sup>18</sup>. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an discussing what one should eat: "You, people! Eat of the things on earth, Halal and clean ones. Do not obey the steps of Satan. Because it is an outright enemy to you"<sup>19</sup>. "You, Messengers, eat pure and Halal foods. Make good and better things.

Because I know what you do"<sup>20</sup>. "Dead animals, blood, pork, animals slaughtered in the different name apart from Allah (swt), drowned and shot animals have been forbidden"<sup>21</sup>. "Do not eat animals slaughtered by a different name except for Allah (swt). Of course, this is an ultimate sin"<sup>22</sup>. The last prophet, Muhammed (pbuh), focused on the importance of a Muslim's Halal foods and drinks consumption. He set many examples of best practices in his life to show Muslims how to refrain from the Haram. His guidance has been enlightening for Muslims. According to one historical report: one person who uses alcohol as a drug comes to our beloved Prophet (pbuh), and he claims "It is not a cure for the disease, however, it is the disease itself. Each intoxication and every drink is Haram" he said<sup>23</sup>.

Most of the other inebriants are also Haram<sup>24</sup>. If some one believes in Allah (swt) and eternity, he should not drink alcohol, and he should not sit at a table where alcohol is available<sup>25</sup>. As it is understood from the above verses and from the Hadiths, the consumption of even a little bit of an alcoholic beverage is prohibited for Muslims. While other foods are being prepared, alcoholic drinks, such as wine or beer, should not be added for flavoring or even as a carrier of flavorings. In another Hadith, the Prophet (pbuh) says, "Surely Halal is certain, Haram is also evident. There are many suspected things that people do not know between them with certainty whether Halal and Haram. Whoever preserves himself from those suspicious things, he aims at protecting the honor of religion"<sup>26</sup>. However, the use of foods derived from alcohol such as vinegar is permitted, even if it might have a trace of residual alcohol. Other products, like orange juice, which also may have a trace of alcohol are also permitted.

One of the most important needs when preparing Halal foods is to have an animal slaughterhouse that is properly designed so that animals slaughtered there meet both Halal and modern animal welfare standards. Although normally a Muslim is required to slaughter an animal, the Holy Qur'an also recognizes the slaughter of the people of the book, in modern times mainly Jews or Christians.

The animal to be slaughtered Halal has its throat cut with a razor sharp knife. The knife should not be sharpened in front of the animal or any other animal. And no other animals should

<sup>17</sup>Hanzaee, K. H. & Ramezani, H.R. (2011). Intention to halal products in the world markets. *Interdiscipl J Res Bus*, 5(1), 1-7.

<sup>18</sup>Al-Harran, S. & Low, P. (2008). Marketing of halal products, the way forward. *Halal-Journal*, Retrieved from, available at: <http://www.Halaljournal.com>

<sup>19</sup>Al-Baqara, 168

<sup>20</sup>Muminun, 51

<sup>21</sup>Maide, 3

<sup>22</sup>Enam, 121

<sup>23</sup>Abu Dawud-Sahih al-Bukhari

<sup>24</sup>Abu Dawud-Tirmidhi

<sup>25</sup>Tabarani

<sup>26</sup>Numan b. Bashir

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witness the slaughter. The person doing the slaughter must say the name of Allah (swt), or "Bismillah Allah-u Akbar" for each animal<sup>27</sup>.

### 3. FOOD CONSUMPTION CONCERNS OF CONSUMERS

Consumers have the right to obtain reasonable information related to all aspects of food production although as a practical matter all of this information cannot be presented on the label and should not be – label space is limited. They also need to be assured that the information they are being provided by a company is accurate so that it eliminates consumers' uncertainty<sup>28</sup>. With respect to Halal, this in most cases is best provided by a credible certification system with a trademark symbol on the package. The information about the Halal status of a food needs to be indicated on the "food label" in an understandable way<sup>11</sup> in keeping with the second article of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights which protects the freedom of all with respect to race, color, sex, language and religion<sup>29</sup>. However, because of differences in interpretations, the symbol, as this paper will discuss, should be a trademarked symbol of the certifier so that the source of the certification is known.

Many tourist hotels and restaurants in Turkey have pork on their menu and make no effort to segregate the utensils used for handling pork from other traditionally Turkish Halal foods.

For example, a recent newspaper article<sup>30</sup> reports on how a 5-star hotel was fined for offering pork while also preparing an Iftar (the evening meal each day of Ramadan). The juxtaposition of pork with Halal meats is forbidden in Turkey and a violation of Halal according to most Halal authorities<sup>31</sup>. There is also the risk of porcine-derived additives being used in the food industry<sup>32</sup>. The production and consumption of alcohol has increased in Turkey over the years. Alcohol-containing food ingredients (e.g., flavor extracts) may also be used in the food industry<sup>11</sup>. Work in the US<sup>33</sup> has demonstrated that this alcohol does not all boil off.

At least 5% of the added alcohol is available after 2 hours of boiling. Some modern Halal certification agencies have attempted to come up with a pragmatic standard for alcohol which reflects the fact that small amounts of alcohol may be found in many natural food products where consumers would not expect to find it. If a true zero tolerance were enforced, there would be many fewer foods available to Muslims. Thus, the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA) has proposed and now allows 0.1% alcohol in a final product and 0.5% in an ingredient, e.g., dried vanilla extract. (A good vanilla flavor needs an alcohol extraction. By insisting that it is dried before use as an ingredient the bulk of the alcohol is removed and it is clear that the resulting product does not cause intoxications, but does suffer a slight quality loss).

These types of issues in the modern food system causes uncertainty among Muslims even in Muslim majority countries as to whether the foods they are eating is really Halal. The recent horsemeat scandal in Europe that included some Halal products suggests that the current system is not working! In the absence of a working and trustworthy certification system Muslim consumers cannot be sure foods and beverages meet their standards or are even some level of Halal. Without a

<sup>27</sup>Özek, A., Karaman, H., Turgut, A., Çağrıç, M., Dönmez, İ.K. & Gümüş, S. (1992). Kuran-ı kerim ve türkçe açıklamalı mealı, Mushafı Şerif Basım Kurumu. 2009. İstanbul.

<sup>28</sup>Büyükozer, H.K. (2011). Yeni Dünya düzeni ve helal gıda. Çevik Matbaacılık, Davutpaşa Cad. Besler İş Merkezi, No:20/18-19. Topkapı İstanbul.

<sup>29</sup>Kostak, F. (2006). Helal gıda belgesi, available at: <http://www.etikadanismanlik.com/fky24.htm>.

<sup>30</sup>[http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem\\_dana-ile-domuz-etini-ayni-tavada-pisiren-otele-ceza\\_2115964.html](http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_dana-ile-domuz-etini-ayni-tavada-pisiren-otele-ceza_2115964.html)

<sup>31</sup> Anonymous, (2012). Türk Gıda Kodeksi Et ve Et Ürünleri Tebliği (Turkish Food Codex Notification of Meat and Meat Products).

<sup>32</sup>Batu, A. (2012). Türkiye'de helal (mahzursuz) gıda ve helal belgelendirme sistemi. Tekn Araşt GTED, 7(1), 51-61.

<sup>33</sup>Larsen, J. (1995). Ask the dietitian. Available at: <http://www.dietitian.com/alcohol.html>.

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reliable Halal certification system, it is almost impossible for the consumer to independently research the Halal status of the wide range of products used by a modern consumer.

#### 4. WHY IS HALAL CERTIFICATION ESSENTIAL?

Halal certification (meaning the third party auditing of food products to assure that they are produced according to Halal regulations) provides benefits to consumers and a competitive advantage for food producers. For the consumer, the benefits of a reliable Halal certification are clear: He or she does not have to bother checking all the ingredients and learning all about the production. It also allows the consumers to confidently make an informed choice at the time of purchase. The consumer can purchase the product with the assurance that it does not contain anything that is Haram or Makbooh<sup>34</sup>.

The producer gets access to the expertise of the staff of the certification body in reviewing its products, the ingredients, the preparation and processing in modern manufacturing. One question that the Halal certification bodies may have to address in the future is just how involved do they become in evaluating products because of the issue of Tayyab, i.e., the question of the wholesomeness of the food.

This concept covers such a wide range of issues that it is NOT generally covered as part of Halal certification at this time. Yet it is a central tenet that needs to be considered by all Muslims. But the Halal certification process may not be the best way to deal with this issue. However, at the same time any responsible Halal certification agency would at the least want to assure itself and the Muslim consumer that the company was meeting the minimum regulatory requirements for the production of food in the country of origin. All of the details about a company obtained during certification is confidential, so there should be no concern of competitors learning anything about the product(s) involved in the certification process. Any agency that violates confidentiality is not likely to last long. Manufacturers can use the certification as a marketing tool to secure a bigger market share as Halal foods are suitable for both Muslims and non-Muslims. The extra supervision is viewed favorably by many non-Muslims.

At the international level, it can enhance the marketability of the products especially in Muslim countries as there is an increasing awareness on the part of Muslim consumers all over the world of their obligation to consume properly prepared Halal food<sup>35</sup>. And just because it says Halal on the package is insufficient. Muslims have become much more educated about this issue in recent years. The Halal certificate and logo only guarantee Muslims that what they consume or use is Halal as interpreted by the certification agency and subject to the agency's ability to actually monitor and enforce their standards.

The certification process also puts pressure on the Halal certification agency to do things right so that they may be respected in the community, be widely accepted by other certification agencies so their certifications of ingredients are acceptable, and provides the company employing them the best return on investment. Thus, retaining the respect of the Muslim community and of the businesses they certify becomes important to the agency's success. But this requires the Muslim community to take Halal certifications seriously and become sophisticated enough to distinguish between different certifications. They need to reject products that simply say Halal in either Arabic or the local language. Responsibly certified Halal products are gaining recognition as a new

<sup>34</sup>Audi, S. (2007). Is kontos on your plate? Authentic halal mediterranean flatbreads and desserts in your grocery store, IFANCA. Halal consumer 12. Available at: [http://www.ifanca.org/img/uploads/magazine/magazine/hc\\_12.pdf](http://www.ifanca.org/img/uploads/magazine/magazine/hc_12.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Mohd, H. (2004). Halal certification shame. Stand Qual News, 11(4), 4-5.

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benchmark for safety and quality assurance. Products that are produced with Halal certifications are readily acceptable by Muslim consumers as well as consumers from other religions<sup>36</sup>.

## 5. SOME ISSUES RELATED TO HALAL CERTIFICATION

### 5.1. Respects for Consumers

Even in predominantly Muslim countries there is a range of opinions as to what is Halal. Some Muslim groups may want to impose their own opinion and put pressure on other Muslims to conform. This is wrong in terms of human rights and respect for others within Islam, which as a religion expects a high level of individual responsibility. Each Halal certification agency needs to be transparent with respect to keeping consumers informed. They must also respect other certifications that are doing a good job, even if they are following slightly different standards, while retaining the right to only allow ingredients into plants they supervise that meet standards similar (but not necessarily identical) to theirs. This is a delicate balancing act and needs to be done respectfully, while being true to the certification agency's own standards and to the expectations of those who consume their certified products.

The concept of and the use of processing aids, i.e., those ingredients that secular law does not require to be labeled on food products causes problems for the Muslim consumer who think they can look at a product label and determine if the product is Halal. In the modern world this simply cannot be done<sup>37</sup>. Companies wishing to serve the Muslim consumer have two choices to gain the consumer's confidence. One is to list all the ingredients (including processing aids and other information not normally provided along with a statement on equipment clean-up).

This is simply not possible as they often do not know the details of the sub-ingredient systems, and their suppliers do not necessarily want to supply this information, and their handling details at those plants. Thus, the only choice for a credible Halal certification agency is to have a trademarked symbol so that they can be held accountable while they can also protect the integrity of their symbol, i.e., they have to be ready to go to court to defend against the misuse of their symbol and to also share that information with consumers in a timely fashion, i.e., to put this information out in the media. And such an agency must insist on learning the details of all ingredients, often going back to the field! This had not been the tradition in Halal certification to date and is necessary if the integrity of the product is to be established. (The Kosher certifying agencies do this as a matter of course.) The use of the word Halal or even an "H" to indicate Halal is simply not credible in modern society.

Most serious Kosher observant Jews have done the same, products with just a "K" are simply not acceptable. Products using controversial ingredients or processes such as those for non-alcoholic beer should clearly indicate the amount of residual alcohol in the product along with the Halal certifying agency's symbol. A certification agency also needs to think carefully about whether they want to be associated with such products in the eyes of the Muslim consumers<sup>38</sup>.

### 5.2. Food Additive Issues For Halal Foods

There are many different ingredients used in food<sup>39</sup>. However, the source of these additives and their production methods are generally not very well known by consumers<sup>40</sup> and they may also

<sup>36</sup> Jalil, F. & Musa, N. (2012). Halal products – Malaysian Constitution Perspective, International Halal Conference, PWTC, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 4-5 September, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Mazeedi, H.M., Regenstein, J.M. & Riaz, M.N. The issue of undeclared ingredients in halal and kosher food production: A focus on processing aids. *Comp Rev Food Sci Food Safety*, 12, 228-233. 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Abu Dawud-Sahih al-Bukhari

<sup>39</sup> Nakyisinge, K., Che-Man, Y. B. & Sazili A.Q. (2012). Halal authenticity in meat products. *Meat Sci*, 91, 207-214.

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have many different sources and production methods. The companies are not legally required to share this information. It is also not clear what other products/ingredients may be using the same equipment. That is part of why consumers cannot determine which foods are Halal by reading the label<sup>41</sup>. For example, putting “bovine gelatin” (see below for more discussion of gelatin) on a label is insufficient for informing Muslims of whether the product meets their needs, i.e., has the animal been slaughtered according to Muslim requirements<sup>41</sup>. Again reliable Halal certification would help to eliminate this uncertainty and is really needed for all food products other than possibly fresh unprocessed non-meat products such as fish, fruits, vegetables, and grains. But if these “fresh” products are dried, packaged, coated (not easy to determine unless properly labeled under secular law), etc. then certification is needed.

Many fruits and vegetables in the marketplace are coated with a spray that may contain animal products, possibly even lard based. In the USA such products must be identified on the bulk packing carton or on a sign at the point of sale. As a practical matter, the industry has removed animal-based products from the list of coatings that can be used. However, lac-resin is still permitted and this ingredient is an exudate from an insect – so its Halal status needs to be determined, although most authorities permit it. US law requires it to be singled out if it is potentially used, but does permit a “may contain” label on fruit and vegetable shipping cartons, so that some products with this label may not contain this ingredient. Better to be cautious and occasionally not eat something than to eat something that may be Haram.

### 5.3. Gelatin in the Food Industry

Gelatin is a pure protein obtained ONLY from animal raw materials containing collagen. It is always of animal origin and is a major food ingredient. It is currently available commercially from cattle, pigs and a limited amount from various fish species. The main raw materials are bones and skins of pigs and cattle<sup>42</sup>. A great deal of it is of porcine origin. Gelatin is unique in being capable of forming a reversible cold-setting gel and so no substitutes for it are currently available.

Gelatin is a functional gelling protein biopolymer widely used in many industrial fields especially in the food and pharmaceutical industries. For instance, the food industry uses gelatin extensively in the manufacturing of deserts, candies, bakery products, and jellied meats<sup>43</sup>. Gelatin may also be used in the production of pastes and glues. In addition, it is the main material of hard or soft gel capsules. It is also used as a binding agent for many tablets and pills.

In Islamic law according to most authorities, Halal gelatin is permissible only when it is obtained from a Halal source, i.e., the animal was slaughtered Halal (and possibly Kosher) and processed using Halal methods<sup>44</sup>. If the source of the raw material for the gelatin is unknown, it cannot be said to be Halal. Some properly supervised Halal beef gelatin is available and also in more limited supply Halal supervised fish gelatins<sup>45</sup>. For fish gelatins, the species used to prepare the gelatin may be of importance. Some Muslim communities have the tradition of only using

<sup>40</sup>Küçüköner, E. (2011). Halal gıda sertifikasyonunda gıda katkı maddelerinin yeri, 1. Ulusal Halal ve Sağlıklı Gıda Kongresi, Gıda Katkı Maddeleri: Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri. 19-20 Kasım, 2011. Ankara, pp:12-17.

<sup>41</sup> Haug, I. J. & Draget, K. I. (2009). Handbook of hydrocolloids. (second edition), Phillips G.O. and Williams, P.A., (Ed.), Woodhead Publishing Series in FoodScience, Technology and Nutrition No. 173, pp: 948.

<sup>42</sup> Boran, G. (2011). Bir gıda katkısı olarak jelatin: yapısı, özellikleri, üretimi, kullanımı ve kalitesi. Gıda, 36 (2), 97-104.

<sup>43</sup> Yang, H., Wang, Y., Jiang, M., Oh, J. H., Herring, J. & Zhou, P. (2007). Step optimization of the extraction and subsequent physical properties of channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*) skin gelatin. J Food Sci, 72(4), C188–C195.

<sup>44</sup>Batu, A., Regenstein, J.M., Doğan, İ.S. (2014). Gelatin issues in Muslim society (in preparation)

<sup>45</sup>Schrieber, R. & Gareis, H. (2007). Gelatin Handbook: In Theory and Industrial Practice, Wiley-VCH Verlag GmbH and Co. KGaA, Weinheim, Germany, p.335.

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gelatin from fish with fins and scales. Thus, catfish gelatin (which has at times been available commercially in the US) would not meet that Halal Standard<sup>44</sup>.

#### 5.4. Halal Certificate Forgery

As Halal certification becomes more prevalent, it can be expected that some companies will try to use a trademark symbol without authorization. Thus, both the certification agencies and the consumers must double check when new products appear in the marketplace that the certificate is authentic. A system of alerts for products that are mis-labelled needs to be developed so that consumers can rapidly learn of products with specific problems, often unintentional, but making the product Haram just the same.

The greater availability of the Internet makes this possible and should also serve to discourage intentional misuse of trademarked symbols or violations of a food company's agreement with the certifying agency. The appropriate use of a properly carried out set of laboratory testing protocols can also be used to back up the certification process by checking for compliance by products produced between auditor visits. Just knowing that this is being done is an additional deterrent to discourage companies from cheating.

Companies providing Halal products must be inspected at intervals consistent with the complexity of the product and how often ingredients are likely to change. Thus, some plants like meat plants and restaurants probably need continuous inspection, although in some cases daily visits are sufficient, while other plants probably can be visited about once every 6 months. Visits of fewer than once every 6 months cease to have a deterrent effect on the company and its employees (out-of-sight, out-of-mind). A key component of a good Halal certification system is a system that will spot changes in suppliers of ingredients. So the Halal certification agency needs to have a full list of ingredients in a plant along with the supplier and in many cases, the actual Halal (and Kosher) certification letters for these ingredients. At least once every 6 months they need to be sure that the actual products in the plant are consistent with the list. Some ingredients can be Halal or Haram depending on the source and processing method. Thus, in a plant producing both Halal and non-Halal products, it might be necessary for the Halal certification agency to insist that for a specific ingredient in the plant only the Halal version is present. Otherwise the company might be tempted to switch if they run short of the Halal ingredient or this switch might happen by accident.

Another concern is the moving of product labels between plants within the same company, particularly those that may have both Halal certified and non-Halal certified facilities or use different Halal certifications in different production plants. The use of a plant number identification as part of the trademarked Halal symbol put on the products may help control this by making the misuse of such labels obvious. However, this is something a food company may be less accepting of as that means that any private label products from the plant can be traced back to the manufacturing plant.

Over the years there has been an increase in the number of Halal certification organizations. The competition has helped encourage some agencies to do a better job, but others have simply collected their fee and do very little supervision. In some cases, this lax supervision may have actually been going on for a long time<sup>46</sup>.

A Halal sign on a product or in a store window was usually enough to convince any Muslim that the food sold was appropriate for them. The Halal food business is certainly a profitable one, especially in Muslim neighborhoods. Modern Muslim customers must assume some

<sup>46</sup>Alhabshi, S.M. (2013). Halal food dilemmas, case of Muslims in British Columbia, Canada. *Int J Asi Soc Sci*, 3(4), 847-870.

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responsibility for their purchases by insisting on products with a properly accountable Halal certification. As a community they may wish to develop a local standard and identify the agencies that meet the standards of the local mosque<sup>47</sup>. There are appropriate “semantics” for talking about such Halal standards: One should never accuse a Halal certification agency of not being Halal, unless one is prepared to file criminal charges under various consumer protection laws. Such a statement in some countries would be considered “libelous.” Thus, it is always safer and probably more appropriate and respectful to say, “This product, this company or this Halal certification does not meet my standard, my community’s standards or our mosque’s standard.”

## 6. WHO IS AUTHORIZED TO ISSUE HALAL CERTIFICATES?

Halal certification agencies must establish appropriate technical-scientific committees to review company applications and company requests for changes in ingredients and procedures. They also need a fiqh committee predominantly of respected religious leaders to assure that the agency’s actions are consistent with the religious rulings and customs of their community. Both committees should be mainly people who are not employees of the certification agency, although those who serve may be compensated for their time and expenses. The technical-scientific committee should include well respected academics, preferable from at least a few different countries and ideally including non-Muslims, who help give the committee broader credibility. The fiqh committee should also contain a few members of the technical-scientific committee to be sure information is accurately presented to the fiqh committee. Religious leaders can only make good decisions if they are given the right technical information to consider. Ideally the non-proprietary deliberations of both bodies will be made public, but this must be done with care so as to not compromise the confidentiality that is so important to the Halal certification agency in obtaining the company information needed to properly monitor products.

However, the first loyalty of the certification agency must be to the consumers even though a modest charge is made to the company to pay for the expenses of certification<sup>10</sup>. The certification agency should not have any other connection with the companies they certify (and absolutely no ownership role) although many Halal certification agencies do appropriately help their companies to promote the Halal status of their products. A key responsibility is to be sure that all of the people working for the certification agency, particularly those reviewing ingredients and processes, and doing audits have no conflicts-of-interest and are properly trained and supervised to do things correctly while fully protecting confidential information. The quality of the certificate issued by the agency will depend on the quality of these people’s work.

Although it may seem that a secular government, particularly one in a Muslim majority country, should be able to issue Halal certificates, this is probably inappropriate in most cases. It is certainly a conflict of interest for a country to be both the standard setter and the enforcer. This forces the country to decide what is the right Halal standard for all of its citizens and thus precludes the rights of those Muslims whose beliefs are not consistent with those of the particular government in power at the time. The government on the other hand can have a role in assuring the integrity of a system of private certifications by requiring them to register their symbols and making their standards public, that is they can act as an accrediting body if they are willing to not dictate on religious issues but focus on assuring that certifying agencies are functioning properly. A government agency also can often act much more quickly when there is a case of fraud within the system. The key role for government is to hold the Halal certification agencies and the food companies that are Halal to “Saying what they do and doing what they say.” These issues come directly out of “Truth-in-Labeling” and “Consumer Right-to-Know” concepts and even in the US,

<sup>47</sup> Siaw, C. & Rani, N.S.A. (2012). A Critical review on the regulatory and legislative challenges faced by halal start-up SMEs food manufacturers in Malaysia. *Proced-Soc Behav Sci*, 57, 541–548.

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where the separation of church and state is a major Constitutional right, the courts have accepted this approach as keeping the government out of the “religious aspects” of these activities.

### 7. EXAMPLES OF HALAL FOOD PROBLEMS IN EUROPE AND IN TURKEY

One of the biggest problem in Europe with respect to Halal food issues is the lack of knowledge and understanding by Muslim consumers of the differences between Muslim groups and Muslim certifying agencies. As already established in this paper, it is not always easy to distinguish which finished food products are Halal or Haram. That is why some Muslims prepare handbooks, booklets, and even handwritten lists for Muslim consumers of which products are acceptable. But how reliable are these lists? They may be correct at the time of printing, but rapidly become out of date if the companies have no agreement with a Muslim certifying agency. They do not have to make changes in their products, which may be as simple as changing a supplier of an ingredient, known to Muslim consumers. Therefore, a move to trademark-based certification will better protect the Muslim consumer. The most important issue for Muslims is usually the matter of Halal meats. The most controversial issue is the acceptance of various pre-slaughter stunning methods prior (and possibly even post-slaughter stunning ) to the throat cut by slaughtermen under the supervision of the Halal certification agency. The appropriateness of any of these stunning procedures has not been resolved and is complicating consumer understanding of the status of the Halal meat supply. It is unfortunate that most of the Halal certification agencies have not shared their slaughter standards with their consumers. Thus, many Muslim consumers are only now learning about the pre-slaughter interventions being used. For example, all meat available for sale from Australia and New Zealand is pre-stunned, yet both countries sell a great deal of product in the Muslim countries. In one US plant visited by the second author, animals were being irreversibly stunned, cut with a Western cut (“sticking”) by a Muslim rather than using a horizontal neck cut and the beef livers were certified for export to a major Muslim country!

A system of identifying how Halal meat was prepared is needed so that consumers can clearly determine if the method of slaughter meets their requirements. Packages indicating that the Halal meat or poultry was prepared without stunning are now showing up in some meat products moving internationally. Halal agencies must only use plants that do not slaughter pigs. This includes paying attention to materials used in all food contact equipment, such as the lubricating greases in machinery that can often be made with porcine derivatives. The recent scandals in Europe that included products labeled and sold as Halal with respect to their containing significant amounts of horse meat in the beef supply (which was probably intentional fraud) along with traces of pork DNA (which was probably bad plant management and/or a willingness of Halal certifying agencies to permit pork products to be run in the same plants as Halal products) reiterates the importance of responsible Halal supervision along the entire chain of custody for meat starting with the slaughter (possibly before if the *tayyab* concept is properly enforced) but also including all subsequent movements of the product until in the possession of the consumer. For some, the issue of what the animal was fed in the last few days (40 days to 3 days depending on the animal) may also be an issue. To date, it does not appear that any major Halal certification system specifically includes this in their concerns when certifying meat although one major American Halal certification agency is at least beginning to explore how this might actually be done.

In Turkey many congregations and religious associations determine which foods are Halal, but these solutions are ad-hoc and lead to possibly wrong decisions as discussed earlier. In the 1970s in particular, Turkish consumers became concerned about meat, particularly in restaurants, and that was followed with concerns about margarine. Many Muslims at that time did not use tooth paste because they thought that it contained pig fat. Muslims have become more careful in the intervening years. Various Internet sites started to evaluate the European E-codes that are used for

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ingredients for their Halal-Haram status. Social media was also and continues to be used to share Halal information. As a result of the opportunity to earn income by certification, there are many 'Halal certificate providing bodies' and 'Halal certified' foods in the marketplace. In 2003, a website<sup>48</sup> was started by volunteers who created an outstanding listing of Halal foods available in Turkey and this site continues to function and provides a great deal of information to Turkish Muslim consumers. In 2005, a voluntary group established a "Food and Other Basic Auditing and Certification Research Association (GIMDES)".

GIMDES has been working on Halal food issues very seriously and effectively in a participatory manner with the certification agencies to assure that they are operating properly<sup>49</sup>. The authors believe that a system of consumer oversight through an appropriately constituted Muslim organization along with potential accreditation standards may be a model that will in the long term provide a better system than one with direct government involvement. The Turkish Standardisation Institution (TSI) is a Government company that was formed in 1960 that was started to study Halal food certification related issues, and to prepare Halal standards. But it is also providing Halal certification, a possible conflict of interest! Because of their work, many companies want to get Halal certification from TSI. The Institute is responsible to the Prime Minister's office. The Institute is a public foundation which functions with a unique set of rules established by law. It also has some "judicial" roles in assuring Halal integrity in Turkey.

Officially, among the tasks of TSI are: to prepare many different standards, to investigate and to accept standards prepared by others, to publish and promote voluntary standards, and to eventually have standards that are compulsory<sup>50</sup>. Only the standards that have been accepted by TSE can be marked on packages with a TSE mark, which is not a certification although consumers might not have realized this. However in 2011, the TSI started to provide Halal certification directly<sup>51</sup> so they now clearly have a conflict of interest! Is this really an appropriate structure to protect Halal in Turkey and is this a reflection of the problem of having a government agency too intimately involved in Halal?

## 8. EXAMPLES OF INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS IN HALAL FOOD CERTIFICATIONS

As previously mentioned, there are about 200 Halal certification bodies in the world, all of whom it is hoped are bound by one central objective: To maintain a reliable system of certification and information on Halal. And as many more agencies form, the challenges will become greater. However, there is no unified Halal standard in the world as there are many different Muslim sub-groups with different ideologies<sup>46</sup>. Approximately 90% of Muslims are Sunni, while the other 10% are Shia<sup>44</sup>. Thus, the proposition that there be one Halal standard that is recognised by all importing countries and all Muslim communities<sup>52</sup> is unlikely unless that standard deals respectfully with differences and allow a range of options. Unless the standard is big enough to allow variations (labeled and identified so consumers are not misled), the process is likely to continue to be unsuccessful. Thus, it may be one document that is created, but it will still have multiple standards. This means that different certification bodies will remain acceptable or unacceptable to other certification bodies. The latter situation may not be as much of a problem as one might at first glance think. If Halal certification bodies are transparent, then those with similar standards will

<sup>48</sup>[www.gidaraporu.com](http://www.gidaraporu.com)

<sup>49</sup>Büyükozer, H.K. (2012b). Yeniden gıda raporu, yediklerimiz, içtiklerimiz helal mi ? haram mı ? ve sağlığımıza ne kadar uygun ? . Çevik Matbaacılık. Davutpaşa Cad. Besler İş Merkezi. No:20/18-19. Topkapı İstanbul.

<sup>50</sup>TSE, (2012a). TSE'nin görevleri, available at: <http://www.tse.org.tr/tse-hakkında/kurulus-ve-gorevleri>.

<sup>51</sup>TSE, (2012b). TSE helal gıda belgelendirmesine başladı, available at: <http://www.tse.org.tr/haberler/2011/12/27/helalgida>.

<sup>52</sup>Wan-Hassan, W.M. (2007). Globalising halal standards: Issues and challenges. The Halal Journal, July–August, 38-40.

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accept each other's products and create a "group" standard that works in commerce. On the other hand, one would hope that within the broader groupings, small differences between agencies would not get in the way of exchanging ingredients and products between companies prepared by the different Halal certifying agencies within the group.

Amidst the growing number of agencies issuing Halal certificates, there is also an increasing trend for local government departments to take charge of Halal certification as a result of the increasing demand for the export of Halal goods<sup>53</sup>. This is fine as long as it helps provide accurate information to the marketplace but not when it imposes a single government standard on all Halal certification bodies within its jurisdiction. Thus, the current status of Halal certification bodies in the world is somewhat in disarray. Individual countries have established standards, but acceptance of those standards beyond their own country is limited. However, these standards are often used to control imports into the country. This may be accomplished by specifically recognizing Halal certification bodies in other countries whose standards are acceptable. But one must ask if this is an unfair restraint of trade and disrespectful of the diversity within each Muslim country?

The stun versus non-stun debates have affected Halal standardization debates at the global level, where tensions, for example, between Malaysia and the OIC collide in a way that hinders the development of a global Halal standard and enhances market complexity. The OIC's Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation has been working to develop Halal standards for over three decades. For most of this period they were against stunning per se, but in 2010 scholars from the OIC's Islamic Fiqh Academy in Jeddah made a landmark announcement that stunning could be used in the slaughter of poultry<sup>54</sup>. Similar developments are evident in Malaysia. When the state standard MS1500 was launched in 2004 it came with a qualification that stunning is not recommended, but in 2009 the standard was revisited with a commitment to accommodate pre-slaughter stunning under certain conditions<sup>55</sup>. But it is not clear if these changes are actually acceptable to the average Muslim or represent a government responding to a particular interest group. The meat industry prefers these methods as production is sped up and often a bit less complicated. But does this serve the best interests of the Muslim consumer?

A group such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA-Canada) in Canada was founded in 1963 as a non-governmental organization (NGO) to conduct studies on issues affecting the daily lives of Muslims. In the United States the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA), established in 1982, has served as a Halal certification body. In addition, it has continued to help consumers through education and advocacy. It is trying to model what a responsible certification agency should be doing.

Muslim-majority countries like Malaysia and Indonesia have been pioneers in Halal certification work. These countries have created their own Halal standards and specifications. The university systems in these countries have also received support to do research relevant to Halal, especially with respect to developing testing methods to detect food products that are falsely represented as being Halal. However, such testing must be used appropriately and with some understanding of the limits of testing. And again, their standards tend to reflect the values of the dominant Muslim groups in their country! The Standards and Methodology in Islamic Countries

<sup>53</sup>Riaz, M. N. (2010). Fundamentals of halal foods and certification, available at:[http://www.prepared-foods.com/Articles/Feature\\_Article/BNP\\_GUID\\_9-5-2006\\_A\\_10000000000000734431](http://www.prepared-foods.com/Articles/Feature_Article/BNP_GUID_9-5-2006_A_10000000000000734431).

<sup>54</sup>Nazar, S. (2010). Stunning is halal, Says OIC's Islamic Fiqh Academy. Available at: <http://Halalmedia.net/stunning-is-Halal-says-oic-islamic-fiqh-academy>.

<sup>55</sup> Miele, M. & Lever, J. (2012). The growth of halal meat markets in Europe: An exploration of the supplyside theory of religion. *J Rur Stud*, 28(4), 528–537.

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(SMIIC) organization has emerged as an umbrella semi-official organization in Turkey. Even though Turkey is a member of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC, the organization of the self-identified Muslim countries) all Muslim countries have not supported SMIIC<sup>56</sup>.

This is supposed to be a newly established umbrella institute among the Muslim countries and Muslim societies in non-Muslim majority countries. It was supported by the Republic of Turkey at the outset, but was not supported by Malaysia, Indonesia and some other countries such as Pakistan and the Arab countries. However, nowadays many Muslim countries are increasingly supporting its missions. SMIIC was established to reduce the differences in standardization protocols, and to ensure the integrity of the Halal certification bodies in Muslim countries. SMIIC prepares new standards for member states to facilitate trade and accelerating standardization<sup>57</sup>.

There are some other organizations in the Muslim countries that also claim to be umbrella organizations that are trying to establish a common Halal standard for Muslims. The World Halal Council (WHC) is a global body that is a federation of Halal certifying bodies that meets regularly to work towards improving Halal certification and accreditation processes.

It was established in Jakarta in 1999. It currently has members representing 60 countries. Originally, this organization was initiated by certifiers from Indonesia, the United States, Australia and Holland. The WHC was first registered in Jakarta, Indonesia and again registered as a World Body in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In fact, it took the WHC nine years to be able to formulate, ratify and adopt its charter. The World Halal Foundation (WHFo) is a Malaysia-based international umbrella organization whose objective is to create an institution in the United Nations which accredits countries that meet the "Halal-ISO" standards.

ISO is the International Standards Organization, that works globally to set up procedures for proper auditing of many processes across the entire industrial spectrum. The desire is to have an ISO standard particularly tailored to Halal. The UN through its Codex Alimentarius process, jointly sponsored by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) has already approved a Halal standard, that was originally proposed by Malaysia. Again, does that document truly represent the range of Muslim practices?

Malaysia was the first country to provide government certification of Halal foods through the Islamic Development Department of Malaysia. In 1968, the Malaysian Council of Rulers decided that there was a need for a body that could mobilise the development and progress of Muslims in Malaysia, in line with the country's status as an Islamic country (about 55% of its population). A secretariat for the National Council of Islamic Affairs of Malaysia was formed to protect the purity of the faith and the teachings of Islam. This secretariat was later expanded to become the Religious Division in the Prime Minister's Department, which was later upgraded to become the Islamic Affairs Division (BAHEIS). On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1997 the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) was established by the Government of Malaysia to take over the role of BAHEIS<sup>58</sup>.

Additionally, the International Halal Integrity Alliance ("IHI Alliance") and Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC) are also involved in Malaysia's efforts to promote Halal and to assure the integrity of the Halal process. The IHI Alliance, formed in 2007, is an **international non-profit** organization created to uphold the integrity of the Halal market concept in global trade through recognition, collaboration and membership.

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<sup>56</sup><http://www.smiic.org>

<sup>57</sup> Smiic, (2012). The Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries, available at: <http://www.smiic.org/smiic-1>.

<sup>58</sup> Jakim, (2013). Malaysia department of islamic development (Jakim), available at: <http://www.islam.gov.my/en/about-jakim>.

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The global Halal industry lacks a significant NGO presence that can provide accreditation to certification bodies. One of the main impediments is the absence of a working forum for the food and related Halal producing companies and the Halal certification organizations to communicate and network. The formation of the IHI-Alliance was the outcome of a resolution that was passed at the inaugural World Halal Forum (WHF) in May 2006 by international delegates representing all areas of the Halal industry value chain (including food, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics) from about 30 countries<sup>59</sup>. During the official opening the seven-point Charter of the WHF that forms its guiding principles were endorsed.

The Goals of the World Halal Forum are:

- To create a focal point for the global Halal industry,
- To gather Halal industry leaders, experts and specialists to share their views, knowledge and expertise,
- To establish an arena for discussion and collaboration to stimulate the growth and development of the Halal market,
- To facilitate problem resolution within the Halal Industry,
- To coordinate subject-specific industry groups and technical committees to support excellence, innovation and improvement in the Halal market,
- To develop world-class Halal industry standards covering the entire value chain, and
- To promote the concept of Halal so that it may realise its full potential as a globally recognized symbol of quality and safety.

Additionally, the WHF continues to review issues within the Halal markets around the world, and strives to address current matters when it seems possible and appropriate<sup>60</sup> through regular meetings.

The HDC also was established in Malaysia in 2006 as an independent corporation within the Malaysian government's economic development structure. HDC coordinates the overall development of Halal industries in Malaysia. Focusing on the development of Halal standards, auditing and certification along with capacity building for Halal products and services, HDC promotes participation and facilitates the growth of Malaysian companies in the global Halal market. Intent on building a global Halal community with Malaysia as the "Halal Hub," HDC brings the Malaysian Halal industry together to work towards a common goal. By nurturing growth and the participation of local businesses in the global Halal market, HDC sets the bar for Halal best practices in Malaysia and to drive the development of Halal standards globally<sup>61</sup>. Similarly, the World Halal Forum (WHF) which is Malaysia-based, provides a way for the Halal food industry to discuss critical issues.

But all of these efforts have had limited success because their efforts are misguided. The emphasis on a single Halal standard rather than a focus on assuring that all certifying agencies follow best practices and can be properly held accountable for their certification. And many countries attempts to become THE Halal Hub need to be replaced with a more respectful goal to become "A" Halal Hub that serves the needs of their Muslim consumers and provides products and services that promote the global growth of Halal products and services.

<sup>59</sup>IHIalliance, (2011). Welcome to IHI Alliance, available at: <http://www.ihialliance.org/home.php#>.

<sup>60</sup>WHF, (2006). World Halal Forum, available at: [http://www.worldhalalforum.org/about\\_intro.html](http://www.worldhalalforum.org/about_intro.html).

<sup>61</sup> HDCglobal, Halal Industry Development Corporation, available at: <http://www.hdcglobal.com/publisher/about>. 2008.

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## IN CONCLUSION

The production of Halal foods is now a multi-billion dollar business world-wide. The demand for Halal foods is increasing and is now widely accepted by both Muslim and non-Muslim consumers. It is important that potential Halal food manufacturers understand the actual requirements for Halal certification so that they may capture their fair share of this growing market.

The most important task for the Halal food certification agencies is to provide an independent, impartial and thorough review of the entire food production system. All ingredients and processes must be carefully reviewed both by scientific/technically competent staff and by fiqh scholars with the constant goal of consumer protection. The role of the state, if it chooses to get involved, should be to assure that the system is working properly, not to set standards.

All parties need to work together to provide more information to help Muslim consumers make an informed decision. Whether this should be regulated by the state or voluntary is a debate that must occur and may be resolved differently in different countries, but the authors strongly support attempting to do this through a non-governmental organization that serves all Muslim citizens of a country by focusing on the integrity and process of the system, and not try to judge the standards of individual certifying agencies. A global Halal Food Fatwa Committee (HFFC) might be established that would be accepted by almost all Muslims to provide rulings on issues through the consensus process, an established principle within Islam. It will be a real challenge to bring all the Muslim communities together. It must include both the Sunni and Shia communities if it is to truly meet global marketing needs. And it must include representatives of the Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki and Hanbali mazhabs (schools) of the Sunni community. Although this remains a dream for the future, in the meantime a system that respects differences but protects both company and consumer needs is needed and such a HFFC might reduce differences or at least clarify the actual differences, which need to be respected. All respected international Halal certifiers should then become members of this reliable umbrella organization and operate within the procedural rules set forth by this group.

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