The Possibility of Uniformity on Halal Standards in Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) Country

Mustafa Afifi Ab. Halim and Mohd Mahyeddin Mohd Salleh

Faculty of Syariah and Law, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800 Bandar Baru Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

Abstract: The objective of this paper is to analyse the Halal standards among OIC Country specifically on preparation of food standard. One of the reasons why the Halal industry cannot grow faster, despite rising demands for Halal products worldwide, is because there is no consensus on a Halal standard. Each country has its own certification body, which leads to disagreements over animal feed, slaughtering methods, packaging, logistics and other issues. Indeed, all sectors of the market from inter-government agencies to the smallest trader have recognized the need for one global Halal standard that is recognised by all importing countries. 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. It would be very difficult for countries to collectively agree on one global Halal standard as this would mean surrendering their sovereign rights. As a conclusion, uniformity and consensus especially among OIC Countries is very much important in order to ensure Halal standard for OIC Countries can be develop or otherwise it will be a dream forever. Implication of this paper is to educate people and industry on the importance of having uniformity for Halal standard. Hence, in the future research, it is suggested to study on the establishment of International Accreditation for Halal.

Key words: Halal standard • OIC country • Halal regulation • Halal certification

INTRODUCTION

The need to establish one global Halal standard is currently the most pressing issue within the Halal industry. Halal is an Arabic word that carries the meaning allowed or permitted. It does not apply to food only but also to relationship between people, clothing, business, occupation, finances, investment [1] and this definition is generally agreed upon by Muslims, display significant gaps when it comes to their application in the industry. Due to differing Halal standards not only between countries but also within each country (following the presence of various Halal authorities), confusion, misunderstanding and even abuse in the Halal audit and certification process have occurred. Additionally, supply chains have been broken whilst artificial shortages of raw material have emerged as a result of disunity between Halal certification bodies.

Industry players are the ones who best understand the impact of not having uniformity in the application of Halal standards. According to the World Halal Forum (WHF) Chairman, Khairy Jamaluddin, one of the reasons why the Halal industry cannot grow faster, despite rising demands for Halal products worldwide, is because there is no consensus on a Halal standard [2]. Each country has its own certification body, which leads to disagreements over animal feed, slaughtering methods, packaging, logistics and other issues. Indeed, all sectors of the market from inter-government agencies to the smallest trader have recognized the need for one global Halal standard that is recognised by all importing countries. 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. The governments of Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines, for example, have established institutions specifically for Halal certification. Given the increasing involvement of governments in Halal certification, it would be very difficult for countries to collectively agree on one global Halal standard as this would mean surrendering their...
sovereign rights. Other than these countries, members of Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) also have their own institution for Halal certification and the standards use is different from one country to another country.

This paper analyzes the possibility of having a standard Halal among OIC Countries specifically on preparation of food standard and to suggest possible uniformity which can be taken into consideration for standardization.

Standard and Certification

Halal Certification Bodies in the World: At present there are around 122 active Halal certifying bodies around the world consisting of government or part government bodies, non-governmental organisations, local mosques or Islamic societies [3]. There are even countries without any certifying bodies to monitor and ensure the Halal status of the product. As the demand for Halal products grows and the industry itself is fast heading towards maturity, there is an urgent need of one common direction to ensure all certifying bodies adopt of proper guidelines in its certification process. Due to the huge numbers of Halal certifying bodies, its lead to the different usage of Halal logo in the world (Figure 1). Apart from having different Halal Logo’s, there is also a different of standard used by Halal certifying bodies in the world.

Halal Standard in OIC and Malaysia: The certification of Halal standard for food products requires a lot of factors and elements according to the Islamic faith to be considered before the relevant authorities can do so. There are also complications faced in meeting the standards in the industry. These were discussed during a conference titled ‘Standards Development and the Implications for industry’ on the last day of the International Halal Market Conference in 2009. For example, Darhim Hashim, the Chief Executive Officer of International Halal Integrity Alliance presented his topic on the development of Halal Standards for the Organisation of Islamic Conference. He presented his findings, which state that out of 57 OIC member countries less than five have Halal Certification Bodies, less than half of the countries have Halal import regulations and none has a domestic Halal Act. However, the Halal-related organizations exist in non-OIC countries for example, USA and Australia. In this matter, five factors are considered in the development of Global Halal Standard, which include the five ‘mazhab’, science, industry, Ummah and Shariah [5]. Here are some examples of Halal Standard in OIC Countries with reference be made to three OIC Countries which are Maldives, Jordan and Brunei.

Currently, in Maldives, they are no specific Halal Standards. However, a regulation is drafted on Halal Products 2011. Inspection and monitoring is only limited to port of entry. The majority of the imported goods being checked at the Port of Entry are only checked for the presence of pork, pork products or alcohol and Halal certificates for the poultry and meat products. The drafted Halal Regulation is difficult to be implemented. It covers mainly imports, exports and inspection and enforcement as well as the public awareness. Many concerns were raised during the stakeholder’s comment regarding the regulation [6].

Meanwhile, in Jordan the subject of Halal is considered a critical subject which has received wide attention from the government of Jordan. The local authorities seek to enhance the credibility of local products in the Islamic markets. In order to achieve these aspirations, it has recently been finished a draft system of granting Halal logo products in Jordan. This system was prepared by a technical committee included representatives from the following sectors such as
Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Agriculture, Jordan Food and Drug Administration (JFDA), Jordan Organization for Standards and Metrology (JSMO) and Department of General Ifta. The Halal subject was organized according to clear legislative frameworks which control of both imported and locally produced Halal food products. The main task of Department of General Ifta is to assign any official competent body to implement this system. The Jordan Organization for Standards and Metrology (JSMO) is considered a reference body at both local and regional levels in the fields of standards, certificate of conformity and accreditation. It provides services to several sectors such as; industry, trade, agriculture and services, public and semi-official organization, regional and international organizations, scientific institutions and scientific research centers and laboratories and all citizens. The Conformity Assessment Centre (CAC) at the Royal Scientific Society (RSS) has taken a significant role in developing the Halal certification scheme in Jordan based on its genuine belief that Halal certification is an urgent need due to the expanding markets worldwide. CAC has participated in the Halal Committee to help developing Halal regulations in Jordan [7].

Halal Standard in Brunei is put under the Department Of Syariah Affairs, Ministry Of Religious Affairs. Halal Food Control Division (HFCD) is responsible for the enforcement of Halal Meat Act Chapter 183 and its regulations, Halal Certificate and Halal Label Order 2005, as well as monitoring Muslim’s food. In 28th May 2005, Halal Certificate and Halal Label Order was gazetted and was enforced on the 1st August 2008. It was legislated in conjunction with the Titah (Royal Address) by His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei on His 54th Birthday, 15th July 2000. This is a voluntary order for restaurants and food manufacturers. The national Halal standard used in Brunei is the Brunei Darussalam Standard for Halal Food, PBD 24:2007. There are four guidelines being used which is; the Guidelines for Halal Certification (BCG HALAL 1), Guideline for Halal Compliance Audit (BCG HALAL 2), Guideline for Certification of Halal Compliance Auditor (BCG HALAL 3) and Guideline for Halal Surveillance Audit (BCG HALAL 4). International and local applicants who want to reach out to global market have to go through another agency (Ghanim International Food Corporation Sdn Bhd - semi-government agency) to market their products as “Brunei Halal” products. Initially a project by Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources (MIPR) together with Islamic Religious Council of Brunei (IRCB), Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) and Ministry of Health (MOH). The carefully selected applicants will be required to acquire the Halal Certificate and Halal Permit first (audited by HFCD) [8].

In Malaysia, Halal Standard is governed by the Development of Standards Malaysia, as the national standards and accreditation body of Malaysia. However, Standards Malaysia has appointed SIRIM Berhad as the sole National Standards Development Agency manages the development of Malaysian Standards including those related to Halal. The main function of Standards Malaysia is to foster and promote standards, standardisation and accreditation as a means of advancing the national economy, promoting industrial efficiency and development, benefiting the health and safety of the public, protecting the consumers, facilitating domestic and international trade and furthering international cooperation in relation to standards and standardisation.

Halal standards in Malaysia are developed through consensus by committees which comprised balanced representation of producers, users, consumers and others with relevant interests, as may be appropriate to the subject of hand. To the greatest extent possible, Malaysian Standards are aligned to or are adoption of international standards. Approval of a standard as a Malaysian Standard is governed by the Standards of Malaysia Act 1996 (Act 549). Malaysian Standards are reviewed periodically. The use of Malaysian Standards is voluntary except in so far as they are made mandatory by regulatory authorities by means of regulations, local by-laws or any other similar ways [9]. As of June 2010, there is a total of 6 Halal Malaysian Standards published by Standards Malaysia such as [10]; MS 1500:2009 (E), Halal Food - Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage - General Guidelines (Second Revision), MS 2200:Part 1:2008, Islamic Consumer Goods - Part 1: Cosmetic and Personal Care - General Guidelines, MS 2400-1:2010, Halal an-Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline - Management system requirements for transportation of goods and/or cargo chain services, MS 2400-2:2010, Halalan-Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline - Management system requirements for warehousing and related activities, MS 2400-3:2010, Halalan-Toyyiban Assurance Pipeline - Management system requirements for retailing. The MS 1500:2009 (E), Halal Food - Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage - General Guidelines (Second Revision) provides practical guidance for the food industry on the preparation and handling of Halal food (including nutrient supplements) and to serve
as a basic requirement for Halal food product and food trade or business in Malaysia. However this standard does not contain all requirements which may be required for certification. Halal certification may be sought by arrangement with the competent authority in Malaysia such as Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) [11]. In carrying out its role, JAKIM collaborates with relevant local agencies such as the Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism, Ministry of Health, Veterinary Services Department, local councils and States Religious Departments (JAINs). Collaboration with foreign Islamic bodies or counterparts is for the purpose of monitoring Halal products imported into the country. Only Halal certificates issued by foreign Islamic bodies recognized by JAKIM are acceptable.

Proposal for Uniform Halal Standard among OIC Country: The aim of developing a Halal food standard is to provide the much needed international benchmark for Halal food product certification for the common good of Islamic communities all over the world even in non Muslim countries. On the consumer side, there is a growing demand on Halal food in international trade which should be perceived as a consumer right. Different Halal authorities follow different Islamic rulings regarding issues such as gelatine, food flavourings, animal enzymes, phosphates, mechanical slaughter, stunning of animals and the usage of thoracic stick sometimes creates confusion for producers who may not know which authority to consult in order to get their product certified for the right market [12]. To form a uniform Halal standard, these issues should be overcome first.

An effort has been done by OIC. In order to prepare on Halal Food Standards, OIC has set up his own Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC) and under COMCEC, they have set up OIC Standardization Expert Group. On 10th meeting of the OIC Standardization Expert Group, under the agenda item 6th of the meeting, the draft text of the OIC Halal Food Standards was discuss within three days and unfortunately, the documents on certification and accreditation for Halal food Standards fail to get consensus during this meeting (COMCEC). On the second session of the 10th Meeting of the OIC SEG to finalize the pending issues (COMCEC). in the light of the views and commends of the International Islam Fýkh Academy, all of three draft documents were finalized to be submitted for the ratification of the 25th Session of the COMCEC. On the 25th session of the COMCEC, the Standardization Experts Group finally finalizes three documents namely “OIC General Guidelines on Halal Food”; "Guidelines for Bodies Providing Halal Certification”; and “Guidelines for the Authorized Accreditation Body Accrediting Halal Certification Bodies”. However, all these documentation has yet to approve by all OIC Countries.

Other than COMCEC, there are other International institutions for standardization which are related to Halal. First is The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) which seems to be the obvious choice to look at the proposal of having uniformity among OIC Countries and even can be apply to all countries in the world; however ISO will not develop any standards based on religious requirements. Second is a Codex Alimentarius Commission whereby this institution have guidelines for the use of the Term “Halal” but stays clear of the most contentious issues and third, The World Halal Council is an association of Halal Certification bodies from around the world predominantly from food exporting countries. There are also several suggestions made on how to achieve Global Halal Standards. According to Hashim [4], there are three options to be done in order to achieve Halal standard. First option is by having a compromise among Muslim countries or organizations with regard to the Halal standard which has been set up and they should be ready and willing to withdraw a pre conceived position. Second option is to set a standard which are universally accepted by all Muslims for example no stunning, no mechanical slaughter knife, hand slaughter by a Muslim and recitation of ‘Tasmiyah’ on each and every animals. Third option is by allowing diversity and accept differences but consolidate to a few standard.

In addition, during the World Halal Forum in 2006, one of the forum resolution is to form International Halal Integrity (IHI) Alliance. IHI is a non-profit, non-governmental and non-national body, it “aims to provide a platform for its members to share information and work towards upholding the integrity of the Halal industry; to provide a communication channel for its members with relevant parties; and to strengthen the Halal industry to fulfil its highest potential [13], one of its duty is to cater on the standardization of Halal in the world. Kamaruzaman [14] also suggested for harmonization among standards that the Muslim country already have. Harmonising of Halal certification system would also help industries to expedite product development, assuring the consumers, reducing the number of multiple certifications.
CONCLUSION

In the context of international trade, from a global point of view, uniformity and consensus of Halal standards which unite OIC Countries and Muslim majority countries worldwide are the targeted ideals. This harmonization, will strengthen the Halal Industry and avoid confusion among the various schools of thoughts or mazhabs. The unresolved issues will remain to be addressed, as long as there are no governing bodies with regards to Halal standard which serve as a platform for the accreditation of the Halal Certification Bodies. Hence, An International Accreditation Forum must be established with the slogan ‘once certified, accepted anywhere’.

REFERENCES