

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

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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* certificatio

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

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 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 '*Tasmiyyah*' 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'.

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