



## Review

## Positioning food safety in Halal assurance



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## ABSTRACT

Muslims follow the religion of Islam and the food they eat should be Halal, meaning lawful or permissible. Muslims are allowed to eat halal and wholesome food that has been provided for them. However, some of the main prohibitions are swine flesh, blood, carrion, animals not slaughtered according to Islamic laws and alcoholic drinks. At present Halal assurance is in a complicated state, with various Halal standards differing from each other without gaining mutual acceptance. The world is starting to understand the need for an influential globally accepted standard that would open doors to global markets and gain consumer confidence. This paper discusses issues mainly related to food safety in Halal assurance. The aim was to discover and describe the approach to food safety requirements in Halal food provision and how this is incorporated in the Halal assurance systems. The position of food safety regulation within Halal requirements or Halal standards' requirements for food safety is still unclear. This review also considers whether current Halal standards include criteria in common with internationally accepted food hygiene standards and emphasizes the potential of using the HACCP system for Halal assurance.

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## 1. Introduction

International trade, migration and travel are increasing and as a result contaminated food might find its way into many countries and be a threat to a wide range of consumers (WHO, 2007). Product recalls due to contaminated ingredients will considerably damage

producers' and might even damage countries' reputation affecting trade, tourism and international relations (WHO, 2007). Food safety standards and certification are crucial to ensure food safety and are important for trade and consumer trust (ISO, 2015). One important food certification is Halal assurance. Halal is an Arabic phrase referring to lawful and permissible according to Islamic law and principles. Halal foods are foods that are free from any components that Muslims are prohibited from consuming (Riaz & Chaundry, 2004). Just like contaminated food, food believed to be Halal, but actually not so, can spread and find its way to Muslims around the

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globe, which is a reason why Halal standards and certification are crucial in Halal assurance. The more complicated question, which will also be addressed in this study, lies in the food safety expectations of Halal food and how the concept of Halal is interpreted regarding food safety. In other words, are the food production methods believed to produce Halal products also following necessary food safety requirements and should they do so?

No matter the geographical position or ethnic diversity, the religion of Islam is a way of life for Muslims and eating Halal is an inseparable part of a Muslim's life (Riaz & Chaundry, 2004). The global Muslim population in 2010 was approximately 1.6 billion, which makes 23.4% of the world's population. It is estimated to continue increasing. There are around 49 Muslim-majority countries, which are situated mainly in the Middle East, South-East Asia regions and Africa, where around 74% of the global Muslim population are situated. However, around 26% of the global Muslim population live in Muslim-minority countries (Pew Research Center, 2011). The Muslim population is spread across the seven continents and it is acknowledged that the Halal market has great potential for both Muslim and non-Muslim countries for local producers and exporters alike (International Trade Centre, 2015; WHF, 2009). The Halal food market's potential is constantly rising with the global market value of about USD547 billion in 2006, USD720 billion in 2009 (H-Media, 2011) and an estimated USD1.37 trillion in 2014 (International Trade Centre, 2015). To be a part of that market it can be a benefit, especially for non-Muslim countries, to have Halal certification and labelling (International Trade Centre, 2015; Ruzevicius, 2012). Although, a trustable Halal certification scheme may support export, it is equally important for Muslim-majority countries to develop their Halal food industry to protect their consumers from consuming non-Halal products (Ratanamaneichat & Rakkarn, 2013).

The main aim of Halal certification is to determine whether a product to be consumed by Muslims is Halal or not. After obtaining the certification, companies could use Halal labels on their packages, which is necessary for consumers to make informed decisions (Shariff & Abd Lah, 2014). Muslims are supposed to make an effort to obtain Halal food of good quality and refrain from things that are doubtful to be sure to avoid consumption of haram (prohibited and unlawful) substances (Riaz & Chaundry, 2004). Hence, a Halal logo on the package could give the necessary assurance and eliminate consumers' uncertainty (Batu & Regenstein, 2014). However, various Halal logos are used, which in turn reflect different Halal standards (Halim & Salleh, 2012). Therefore, it is important, that Halal certification bodies (CB) would have competence in awarding certification, which accurately reflects correct and expected Halal practices by the producer (Din & Duad, 2014).

In the late 1980s, in order to penetrate the South-East Asia and Middle East markets, the certification and production of Halal foods started to increase (Riaz & Chaundry, 2004). The Halal certification process started from meat and poultry products and with the initiative of the South East Asia countries expanded to processed foods (H-Media, 2011). Since a public body did not exist to guide the process, the interpretation of Halal assurance and responsibility for Halal certification were dependent on various institutions like local mosques, governmental, part-governmental bodies and private organisations (IHIA, 2015). Moreover, at present a halal certificate is allowed to be issued by any Muslim, Islamic company or association, however, the key is the acceptability of the certificate by the interested party (Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011). From an estimated 300 Halal certification bodies around the world, only around a 120 are officially registered as active Halal certification bodies (CBs) (IHIA, 2015). It is also worth to note, that despite the large number of certification agencies, Arabic countries, representative of the largest Muslim consumer market, do not play a significant role in

Halal standards and harmonizing certification (Hashimi, Saifuddeen, & Salleh, 2010).

In the global Halal industry a fast growing sector is logistics (H-Media, 2011). This is also demonstrated by studies on the Halal supply chain (Manzouri, Rahman, Saibani, & Zain, 2013; Muhammad, Isa, & Kifli, 2009; Omar et al., 2013a; Talib, Hamid, & Zulfakar, 2015; Tieman, 2011; Tieman, Vorst, & Ghazali, 2012; Ngah, Zainuddin, & Thurasamy, 2014; Zailani et al., 2010b; Zulfakar, Anuar, & Talib, 2014), logistics (Tarmizi, Kamarulzaman, Latiff, & Rahman, 2014; Tan, Razali, & Desa, 2012; Ibrahimi, Kamaruddin, & Shabudin, 2012; Tieman, 2013; Tarzimi, Kamarulzaman, Latiff, & Rahman, 2014; Talib & Hamid, 2014; Tieman, Ghazali, & Vorst, 2013; Kamaruddin, Ibrahimi, & Shabudin, 2012b; Tieman & Ghazali, 2014) and traceability (Poniman, Pruchase, & Sneddon, 2015; Samsi, Ibrahim, & Tasnim, 2012; Shafii & Khadijah, 2012; Zailani et al., 2010a). The logistics sector is trying to take a step further by suggesting a minimum standard for non-Muslim countries and a preferred standard for Muslim countries, which non-Muslim countries could adopt over time (Tieman, 2013). However, these efforts might be of little consequence if approaches like conventional Halal certification still exist, which covers only the slaughtering process (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008; Tieman, 2013), e.g. in Belgium, it is only certified whether the slaughterer is a Muslim (Bonne & Verbeke, 2008). However, another extreme is well demonstrated by Malaysia with its governmental support for Halal assurance and with the publication of multiple Halal standards covering different sectors (Department of Standards of Malaysia, 2009; HDC, 2015). Moreover, a majority of research on the Halal food industry (Abdul, Ismail, Hashim, & Johari, 2009b; Abdullah, Zubairi, & Ghani, 2007; Affi et al., 2013; Badrudin et al., 2011; Latif et al., 2014; Marzuki, Ballantine, & Ballantine, 2012; Mohamed & Backhouse, 2014; Noordin, Noor, Hashim, & Samicho, 2009; Shariff & Abd Lah, 2014) (Bohari, Hin, & Fuad, 2013; Kadir, Zaino, Duad, & Sapuan, 2015; Majid, Abidin, Majid, & Chik, 2015; Omar, Omar, & Karim, 2014; Rahman et al., 2013b; Samori & Sabtu, 2014; Shallah & Hussin, 2013; Tahir & Abdul, 2013; Talib, Zailani, & Zainuddin, 2010; Yunus, Chik, & Mohamad, 2010) and consumer awareness of Halal food (Abdul et al., 2009a; Ahmad, Abaidah, & Yahya, 2013; Ambali & Bakar, 2014; Golnaz, Zainalabidin, & Mad Nasir, 2012; Golnaz, Zainalabidin, Mad Nasir, & Eddie Chiew, 2010) is conducted in Malaysia.

Possibly due to variations in Halal requirements' interpretation and different standards used for Halal certification, at present divergence within Halal assurance activities is prevailing (Pointing, 2014). This paper aims to find out how the concept of Halal is interpreted regarding food safety requirements and whether they are incorporated into Halal assurance systems.

## 2. Materials and methods

Literature searches were conducted on the topics of Halal requirements, standards, certification and legislation to get an overview of the latest developments on Halal assurance systems. In addition, research was conducted on topics like food safety management systems in Muslim-majority countries and using the HACCP system for Halal assurance.

First, an overview was made on the basic Halal requirements showing how food safety would be a part of the Halal concept. Furthermore, Halal standards, Halal certification and food safety assurance were discussed. In addition, an analysis was made on how basic food safety practices are integrated into one Halal standard and whether they are sufficient to assure food safety. Finally, the broadening of the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system as a Halal assurance tool was analysed and

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