



GLOBAL
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SUMMIT

Roundtable Series V:
Halal Products



ROUNDTABLE SERIES V HALAL PRODUCTS

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

SPEAKERS:

Abdulla Al Awar
Chief Executive Officer
Dubai Islamic Economy
Development Centre (DIEDC)

Mustafa Adil
Head of Islamic Finance
Thomson Reuters

The roundtable opened with introductory remarks from **Abdulla Al Awar**, Chief Executive Officer of the Dubai Islamic Economy Development Centre (DIEDC), and **Mustafa Adil**, Head of Islamic Finance at Thomson Reuters. Their remarks highlighted the tremendous upcoming growth of the global Islamic economy. Since Dubai's establishment of the DIEDC in 2013, the international market for Muslim goods and services has increased exponentially and is set to be worth \$2.6 trillion by 2020, noted **Al Awar**.

He also emphasised that, with the establishment of the DIEDC, Dubai has undertaken the responsibility of furthering the vision of the global Islamic economy across all sectors. He noted, in particular, that the DIEDC aims to promote the importance of standards within the sector and to work towards the harmonisation of those standards. **Al Awar** also highlighted the importance of reviewing the consumer perception of the Halal industry.

Adil agreed that the Emirate of Dubai has helped place the Islamic economy in the global spotlight. He also noted that the production of the Global Islamic Economy Report and the Global Islamic Economy Summit, as well as the government-supported news portals Salaam Gateway and MySalaam, are acting as a change platform for positive global developments in the industry. He concluded by explaining that all stakeholders must come together to help realise the Islamic sector as one of the largest and most innovative sectors of the global economy.



SESSION ONE:

From Farm to Fork: Ensuring Best Practices for Halal Food Testing and Ingredients

Summary:

- ☉ Convene a roundtable discussion that comprises of scholars, researchers, scientists, companies and consumers for the harmonisation process
- ☉ Appoint a taskforce to establish a global centre that collates Halal information sources
- ☉ Appoint a taskforce to establish regional research centres for Halal R&D
- ☉ Establish a taskforce to look into scientific replacements for non-Halal ingredients
- ☉ Appoint a taskforce to promote scholar engagement

MODERATOR:

Zohra Khaku
Founder
Halal Gems

SPEAKERS:

Amina Mohammad
Director
Dubai Accreditation Department

Rizvan Khalid
Executive Director
Euro Quality Lambs



Session overview

Panel moderator **Zohra Khaku**, Founder of UK-based premium restaurant finder site Halal Gems, opened the session by expressing the importance of listening to the consumer's voice in today's growing Islamic economy.

She explained that today's consumers are choosing to analyse the provenance of their food and are also demanding higher standards. **Khaku** proposed, therefore, that consumer pressure could eventually lead to a landscape where all Halal food products are transparent, ethical and organic. She said that, while this vision may not be immediately realisable, she hoped that the roundtable would encourage the reaching of a consensus and help connect people with the desire to evolve Halal standards.

The Halal Gems founder then introduced the first speaker, **Rizvan Khalid**, Executive Director of Euro Quality Lambs, the largest supplier of Halal lambs in Europe. **Khalid** concurred with **Khaku** that the consumer is of the utmost importance in the Halal industry.

Khalid suggested that some consumers have a negative or confused perception of Halal foods. He explained that the issue of slaughtering, while a fundamental aspect of Halal food, is not everything. He noted that consumers "don't know what to believe" and suggested that it is essential to provide them the right education. He also noted that the industry must allow for differences of opinion when it comes to Halal production, because there are many different interpretations of Islamic scriptures.

Khalid opined that many people talk about Halal without really understanding what the actual process is. He suggested that the industry should create an Islamic framework that will allow consumers to place where products are from their perspective and provide a transparent marketplace for consumer demand. This segmentation already exists, he said, but the main concern is clearly communicating this to customers and educating them.

Following **Khalid's** concerns about transparency, the second speaker, **Amina Mohammad**, Director of the Dubai Accreditation Department, explained Dubai's initiative to create a global framework for Halal accreditation.

As part of the DIEDC's overall mission to promote the global Islamic economy, Mohammad said that the Emirates International Accreditation Centre (EIAC) aims to be a world signature in Halal accreditation by 2021.

In 2015, **HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**, Vice-President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, issued law 27 for setting up the EIAC, which is now recognised by bodies such as the ILAC (International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation), IAF 9 International Accreditation Forum), OAC (Oman Accreditation Council) and ARAC (The Arab Accreditation Cooperation). It is the only internationally recognised accreditation body, she said.

Mohammad explained that, in 2015, the EIAC accredited 385

companies globally. She pointed out that the model includes Halal conformity assessment, testing methods for Halal products, Halal certification bodies and Halal inspection services. The innovative one-stop shop also requires its members to undergo a reassessment every three years to ensure quality, safety and conformance to *Shari'ah* requirements.

Norbert Kahmann, Strategic Kosher/Halal Officer – Global Regulatory Affairs at Symrise, responded by saying that there is a need for harmonisation between the different bodies for accreditation. He highlighted an urgent need to decide on common Halal standards and processes.

Kahmann explained that harmonisation is important because it facilitates trade and consumer demand. He posited that regional Halal R&D centres would help develop best practices and collate and harmonise the best practices from countries around the world, such as Malaysia.

He added that the main issue of contention when attempting to harmonise the Halal industry has been the clashes between different cultures and different geographies. **Kahmann** acknowledged that, while it should be known that some geographies are different, efforts should be made to recognise and register those differences.

The Symrise officer concluded that there are different ways of interpreting the Halal process and new R&D centres could pull together and resolve those issues and differences. He explained that Halal R&D would be both scientific and scholarly. Currently, these two areas are separate and they need to be brought together, he urged.

Khaku responded by asking the audience whether leadership in the Halal industry was an issue. Who should lead the Halal harmonisation initiative – scholars, governments, or the industry?

Imran Kouser, Co-Founder of premium Halal food brand Haloodies, responded by saying that it is possible to implement global standards, explaining that this has been achieved before in other industries.

Kouser, who has a background in pharmaceutical development, explained that the global pharmaceutical industry has managed to establish global quality standards across the US, Europe, Japan and other markets.

Kouser said that, in terms of leadership, this is the approach the Halal industry should follow. He explained that examples that have worked in other industries should be taken and applied to the Halal industry, in context. "I think, perhaps, there is a chance for organisations to be able to play a role here as well," he said.

He added that there would still be room for local or legislative differences that can have an impact at a local or regional level.

He explained that the ICA organisations in the US have an international registry: companies can check the registry and see what they can and can't work with. Asking why the Halal industry doesn't have a similar registry, **Kouser** elaborated that it is not feasible for different organisations to create different rules and guidelines, depending on which country

they are based in.

Khaku responded by asking the audience, "Why don't we have [a common registry] in our industry?"

Khalid from Euro Quality Lambs stated that primary Halal research still needs to be conducted. He said that, to his knowledge, no single body has collated all of the sources, regardless of interpretation. He suggested that this primary research be adopted into the syllabus and, eventually, into the certification process.

He went on to explain that once the primary research is completed, differences can be registered and a general balanced interpretation can be arrived at. He concluded that scholarly and commercial needs should be brought together and added that, ultimately, every person in the industry is responsible for ensuring that the end consumer is allowed to fulfil their dietary requirement at the highest level, in the same way as vegans, vegetarians or people suffering from celiac disease.

Khalid urged that harmonisation does not simply mean one standard; it means bringing together a manageable number of standards. He said he feels that, while some scholars have disagreed at the implementation level, they haven't sat down to agree on what the actual basics of the Quran and the Hadith are. From this discussion, **Khalid** said a framework could be created, based on which valid interpretations can be allowed to manifest in the marketplace, leaving consumers to decide for themselves.

Shuja Shafi, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, suggested that scholars should also acquire specialist knowledge and be aware of the practical issues within their particular industries, such as the local laws, knowledge of animal welfare and practical knowledge of how an industry works.

Shaykh Tauqir Ishaq, Head of Certification of the Halal Authority Board, agreed that scholars need to be trained and informed, but conceded that it's best to recognise the differences than to argue about them. Ishaq also expressed a need for clear scientific research into the complexity of additives, such as alcohol, and the necessity of engaging scholars in this. He explained that scholars currently sit separately and, if and when they're brought together, all of their information will be collated and useful outcomes will be achieved.

Khaku concluded that consumers, companies, researchers and scholars need to get together and conduct their own roundtable to strengthen and harmonise the global Islamic industry before it expands.

Zain Sikafi, Founder and CEO of Doctoori.net, agreed that industry innovation could only arise by getting everyone to come together and work towards a common consensus. He also suggested that R&D bodies should look for replacement ingredients, adding that there needs to be a major push on the technical side for solutions.

Saqib Mohammed, the Chief Executive Officer of the Halal Food Authority, suggested that companies from the industry could sponsor research and parameters could then be decided

for what is and isn't acceptable.

Dr Stephan Heck, Senior Director –Quality Management at DSM Nutritional Products, urged that recognised international standards would provide clarity and safety. Meanwhile, **Abel Williams** of ALA Dentonic Products said that it was possible to assess the standards based on evidence and take the best practices and apply them. He added that there is a role for a supra-national body that still leaves room for local industries. He agreed with **Dr Heck** that a harmonisation initiative is not feasible unless it is coordinated globally.

Al Awar reiterated that the Emirate of Dubai intends to carve a path as a global accreditation body and could take on the role of collating best practices and procedure. He said that, while the Dubai government has proposed global measures, the tough part would be the implementation.

Khaku concluded that there is a need for global cooperation on some level and that efforts need to be undertaken to close the global research gap by engaging universities and research centres. She added that there is a need to specify the acceptable and unacceptable levels of ethanol within the industry and then move forward.

Shafi highlighted that the required technology is available and all the industry needs to do now is to identify a set of questions to be clarified by the stakeholders and researchers. Bringing them together and letting them decide what's acceptable and what's not will solve a lot of the confusion, he explained.

Khaku concluded that harmonisation might not just mean one standard, but the clarification of a set of different standards. Above all, she said, Halal harmonisation is not just a religious debate, but also a scientific one. She summarised by saying that stakeholders need to work with scholars to access texts and fully engage them in the certification process.



Recommendations:

1. Convene a roundtable discussion that comprises scholars, researchers, scientists, companies and consumers. These parties should be brought together to discuss their differences and agree on ‘lowest common denominator standards’ to create a path forward for the Halal harmonisation and certification process. A series of simple questions should be asked and clarified. This roundtable would marry religion and science in the interest of simplifying matters for consumers and manufacturers.
2. Appoint a taskforce to establish a global centre that collates Halal information sources. These sources would not be interpreted or implemented; instead, they would serve as the world’s first resource of primary sources for reference purposes.
3. Appoint a taskforce to establish regional research centres for Halal R&D. These centres would work together to establish common best practices, standards and solutions globally.
4. Establish a taskforce to look into scientific replacements for non-Halal ingredients. This body would look into acceptable alternative ingredients to replace pork and alcohol. The results would then be shared with the global industry.
5. Appoint a taskforce to promote scholar engagement. Scholars are currently separated from the rest of the Halal production process. These key stakeholders should be placed at the heart of the harmonisation process and communicated with regularly.

SESSION TWO:
Halal Ingredients and Food: Harmonisation and Competitiveness in Halal Certification for Global Muslims

Summary:

MODERATOR:

Shuja Shafi
Secretary General
Muslim Council of Britain

SPEAKERS:

Saqib Mohammed
Chief Executive Officer
Halal Food Authority

Dr Stephan Heck
Senior Director –
Quality Management
DSM Nutritional Products

Norbert Kahmann
Strategic Kosher/Halal Officer –
Global Regulatory Affairs
Symrise

- Appoint a taskforce to ascertain the gaps in scholar training across different Halal sectors
- Reduce the number of Halal criteria
- Appoint a taskforce to establish the creation of a ‘supra-global’ accreditation body
- Appoint a taskforce to conduct research into organic, kosher and pharmaceutical certification frameworks
- Appoint a neutral organisation to conduct extensive consumer research

Lead panellist **Shuja Shafi**, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, opened the session by highlighting that the Halal industry needs to raise the bar in the certification field. He also urged the community to foster more skills and create the highest level of competence to avoid contamination.

Once again, **Shafi** returned to the critical issue of leadership within the Halal industry, urging that someone should take the first step. He explained that, currently, only the UAE has picked up the baton of global stewardship, adding that all of the global players needed to agree on a leader; otherwise, “the project will be dead”, he said.

The secretary general noted that now is the time for harmonisation, as the industry is only becoming ever more globalised. He added that the industry currently has upwards of 400 certifiers and 96 recognised criteria. **Shafi** suggested that the maximum number of criteria should be reduced to approximately 65.

The second speaker, **Dr Stephan Heck**, Senior Director – Quality Management at DSM Nutritional Products, warned that there is no room for failure. He pointed out that products are either Halal or not – “It’s like pregnancy: you cannot be half-pregnant, you are either pregnant or you’re not,” he stressed.

Dr Heck explained that DSM wants to become the number one ingredient supplier for the Islamic world and he hopes the industry can align on key aspects and provide maximum transparency for consumers. He added that the industry needs to do its best for humans and for society.

He then reiterated a point that was made earlier: once the various Halal ingredients and processes are clear, it’s up to the consumer to decide what they want to accept. DSM, he said, wants to support the Islamic community, but “it needs to know how”.

The third speaker, **Norbert Kahmann**, Strategic Kosher/Halal Officer Global Regulatory Affairs at Symrise, followed up by saying that the Halal industry needs to work closely together to close the existing gaps.

Symrise, he said, is active in 120 countries and has 23 Halal-certified products. Like **Heck**, he urged the Halal industry to be clear on what is and isn’t allowed in each country, which would make it easier for Symrise to create the right product. The officer added that he faces similar challenges with kosher and organic products. **Kahmann** summarised by saying that Halal belongs to Muslims, but “it is your decision to work on the standards”.

Shafi agreed that the industry needs to increase transparency and accuracy by defining the differences between certification and accreditation. He suggested that there needs to be a higher organisation to set the different standards for certifiers and to check that they are doing what they say they will do. He urged that national bodies with the necessary expertise need to be set up to check whether certifiers are meeting their obligations.

Haroon Latif, Director of Strategic Insights at Dinar Standard,

agreed that the Halal industry demands accreditation and harmonisation at the highest level. He then commended Dubai for taking the first steps towards achieving this. **Latif** pointed out that the standards themselves and the differences between them are not very clear and added that the broader and bigger issue is how those standards are actually implemented by the industry.

Zain Sikafi, Founder and CEO of Doctoori.net, said the industry could progress by classifying non-Halal ingredients as ‘allergies’ to help the operational process. He added that the Halal industry could learn from the organic industry. If the industry treated pork as an allergy, it would “become very clear to anyone what to look for and those technological capabilities are already here”, he insisted.

The third panel speaker, **Saqib Mohammed**, Chief Executive Officer of the Halal Food Authority, responded by agreeing about the need for transparency and suggested the creation of a global watchdog, with monitoring and certifying powers. “We need to come up with specifications that should be agreed upon by leading Islamic authorities,” he said, adding that the industry should create a register of individualised certification bodies. “We will not gain global confidence without global unified certification,” he insisted.

In response, panel leader **Shafi** stressed that the certification and accreditation bodies have two completely different functions: “The certification body sets the standards, while the accreditation body is actually a third party, an independent body, which confirms to the consumer that the criteria they’re saying they’re following are actually being followed. This is the key factor in terms of consumer confidence,” he said.

DSM’s **Dr Heck** agreed that confidence is lacking in the Halal industry. He explained that DSM relies heavily on its certifiers for this knowledge and to have peace of mind about its products. “We need to have alignment on the key points that make [anything] Halal,” he urged.

On the topic of the myriad standards and viewpoints, the industry needs to consider the lowest common denominators and the minimum standards that will be accepted, said **Shafi**, adding that he would like to encourage the creation of more accreditation bodies at a higher level.

Kahmann conceded that the industry has to work closely together to make standards clearer and more accessible to manufacturers and suppliers: “We are able to produce the ingredients; we have the power and the system. We just need to know how we can proceed and make it workable.”

Shafi announced that there is a near unanimity among stakeholders, but the challenge remains in getting people together to talk about it.

Shaykh Tauqir Ishaq, Head of Certification at the Halal Authority Board, responded by saying that the world is a nation of tribes and a global solution is not going to be easy. However, we need to accept the status quo and try and work with it, he said.

Noman khwaja, co-founder of Haloodies, concluded that the industry needs more consumer research, so providers can standardise what the consumer wants. He said the industry must start with a simple set of consumer questions dealing with the stunning and provenance of animals. “Only then can we see what the consumer wants, make decisions and stop their confusion.”

Latif suggested that dedicated Halal industry websites, such as Thomson Reuter’s Salaam Gateway, are a good tool for discussion and research. “Then, we can look at our gaps and then fill them,” he said.

In summary, **Shafi** concluded that national and international certifying bodies should get together and come up with commonalities and best practices. The more questions that can

be asked, the better, he said.

Shafi noted a strong common desire for transparency from all stakeholders, including manufacturers, consumers, researchers and accreditors. In agreement with the previous Farm to Fork session, the panel said harmonisation is important and can be achieved by inviting consumers, scholars and scientists to have a frank discussion.

Shafi concluded by saying: “There is certainly a need, as everybody agrees, for harmonisation. We agree that there should be certifying bodies; we should get together and form policies, assemble a series of questions and analyse them together. The consumers need transparency in the system and the way to get that transparency is through communication and clarification.”



Recommendations:

1. Appoint a taskforce to establish the creation of a ‘supra-global’ accreditation body. This body would manage a series of national accreditation bodies with common standards and quality checks. There is no need for singular harmonisation, but standards need to be registered, recognised and adhered to. A global register of Halal-approved companies would also be welcomed.
2. Appoint a taskforce to ascertain the gaps in scholar training across different Halal sectors. This body would promote the acquisition of specialist and practical knowledge around Halal industries, such as local laws, animal welfare knowledge and practical knowledge of how a particular industry works.
3. Reduce the number of Halal criteria to 65 or less; currently, there are more than 90.
4. Appoint a taskforce to conduct research into organic, kosher and pharmaceutical certification frameworks. Parallel industries have been working on detection technologies and processes for decades. It would be useful to see if any best practices can be shared between these industries.
5. Appoint a neutral organisation to conduct extensive consumer research. Finding out what the consumer really wants will guide processes, production and future consumer labelling initiatives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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