

Halal Manufacturer - what does it take?

From multi-nationals to boutique local food manufacturers, businesses worldwide are creating an ever more diverse array of halal products. As a general rule of thumb, the priority of Shari'ah requirements in the manufacturing of halal products and goods followed by the following requirements: ingredients, workers, processing (or slaughtering), storage, packaging and labeling, equipments and transportation. Before embarking on the steps to be certified as a halal manufacturer, it is essential to understand the basic principles of food and drinks classification in Islam.

Some of the more important aspects in getting certified as a halal manufacturer include ingredients, processing, labeling, storage and packaging.

According to the Islamic weltenschaung (worldview), all food and drinks can be classified under one of the following¹, according to their sources:

- I. Halal (lawful) food or drinks under this category is permitted for consumption. Most food and drinks are considered Halal unless they are stated clearly in the Qur'an and hadith (Prophetic Traditions) as forbidden or non-Halal.
- II. Non-Halal, also known as Haram, means unlawful or unallowable. Any food or drinks which are non-Halal is prohibited for consumption. In general, all harmful things are non-Halal. Some examples include the meat of dead animals and birds, flesh of swine, intoxicating drugs and alcoholic beverages.
- III. Any food or drink which lies within the grey area and does not fall clearly under the Halal or the non-Halal category is classified as Shubhah (dubious). An example of a Shubhah food ingredient is lecithin, which can either be derived from plants or animals. Halal lecithin is sourced from plants but non-Halal lecithin may come from pigs or animals that are not slaughtered in accordance with the Shari'ah (Islamic law) Until the status becomes clear, Muslims should avoid consuming Shubhah food or drinks. The Prophet s.a.w. has given a guideline concerning Shubhah matters as the hadith states:

*What is halal is clear. And what is haram is also clear. And in between those two is a dubious area in which many people do not know about. So whoever distanced himself from it, he has acquitted himself (from blame). And those who fall into it, he has fallen into a state of haram.*²

Slaughtering of poultry must be carried out in accordance with the Shari'ah, whereby MUIS (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura - The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore) has

laid four stages³ of halal control system for its halal-certified poultry abattoirs which involves:

- I. the sorting and assessing of poultry
- II. the slaughtering process of poultry
- III. a halal monitoring system
- IV. labeling halal-certified meat

For the production, preparation handling and storage of halal products, mainly food, it must fulfill the following conditions⁴:

- I. does not contain any parts or product of animals that are non-halal by shari'ah or any parts of products of animals which are not slaughtered according to the shari'ah
- II. does not contain najis (impurity) according to the shari'ah.
- III. safe for consumption, non-poisonous, non-intoxicating or non-hazardous to health.
- IV. not prepared, processed or manufactured using equipment contaminated with najis according to the shari'ah
- V. does not contain any human parts or its derivatives that are not permitted by the shari'ah
- VI. during its preparation, processing, handling, packaging, storage and distribution, the food is physically separated from any other food that does not meet the requirements stated in items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6 or any other things that have been decreed as najis by the shari'ah.

All foods shall be prepared, processed, packaged, transported and stored in such a manner that they are in compliance to hygiene and sanitary requirements of the relevant authorities (Islamic councils). Presently, MUIS offers 7 types of halal certification schemes⁵ to suit different types of halal manufacturers. They are the eating establishment scheme, endorsement scheme, food preparation area scheme, poultry abattoir scheme, product scheme, storage facility scheme and whole plant scheme. MUIS also provides halal food certification for social functions organised in hotels, exhibition halls or outdoor locations.

Once the proposed halal manufacturer has made ample requirements stated, they can then apply for the halal certification through the local Islamic councils. In Singapore, all applicants are required to comply with the Singapore MUIS Halal Quality Management System. After determining which halal certification scheme is applicable to the nature of the business, they can then make an application either via e-mail or by written media. The Islamic council may or may not conduct an audit or inspection at the premises to ensure the company has complied with the council's halal terms and conditions. Upon approval of the application, the company may collect the halal

certificate with approval notification and necessary payment made. Halal manufacturers may or may not need to renew their halal certifications, pending on the council's terms.

1 I have used "Bab Korban, Aqiqah, Makanan & Perubatan - Panduan Ilm Fiqh Sheykh Omar Al-Khatib" (On the Chapters of Qurban, Aqiqah, Food & Medicine - A Fiqh

Guide by Sheykh Omar Al-Khatib" arranged by M. Salleh bin A. Hamid, Sah Publications. Singapore: 2006

2 Bukhari & Muslim

3 For a more detailed explanation, please refer to <http://www.muis.gov.sg/cms/services/hal.aspx?id=1708>

4 The Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia Islamic Councils have all come with this consensus regarding production and preparation of handling and storage of halal products.

Please refer to www.muis.gov.sg, www.mui.or.id and www.islam.gov.my5 For further information, please refer to <http://www.muis.gov.sg/cms/services/hal.aspx?id=1702>

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