CONTENTS

04 Introductory Remarks

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

09 Session Two: Halal Ingredients and Food: Harmonisation and Competitiveness in Halal Certification for Global Muslims
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

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.
Khalid suggested that some consumers have a negative or confusing perception of Halal foods. He explained 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 products from their perspective and provide a transparent marketplace for consumer demands. This segmentation already exists, he said, but the main concern is clearly communicating this to consumers 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 DIEC'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 (International Accreditation Forum), OAC (Oman Accreditation Council) and ARAC (The Arab Accreditation Cooperation). It is the only internationally recognised accredited 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 conformity to Shariah requirements.

Norbert Kahlmann, Strategic Kosher/Halal Officer – Global Regulatory Affairs at Synrise, 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.

Kahlmann 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. Kahlmann acknowledged that, while it should be known that some geographies are different, efforts should be made to recognise and register those differences.

The Synrise 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.

Khalid explained that while Halal certification is a popular and profitable industry, he suggested that R&D bodies 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.

Shuja Shafi, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, suggested that scholars need to be trained and informed but conceded that it’s best to recognise the differences than to argue about them. Shafi also expressed a need for clear scientific research into the complexity within industries, 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.

Khalid 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 Sikri, Founder and CEO of Doctornut.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 Chair 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.
**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:**

- 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

**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
L lead panelist Shuja Shafi, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain, opened the session by high-lighting 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 even more globalised. He added that the industry currently has upwards of 450 certifiers and 90 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 – “If it’s like pregnancy: you cannot be half-Halal, 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 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 Kahlmann, 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. Kahlmann 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 betwen 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.

Kahlmann 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.

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 national 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

Roundtable Leadership and Management

Hassan Al Hashemi
Vice President, International Relations
Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Abdulla Al Awar
Chief Executive Officer
Dubai Islamic Economy Development Centre

Saeed Kharbash
Head of Strategy & Planning
Dubai Islamic Economy Development Centre

Mustafa Adil
Head of Islamic Finance
Thomson Reuters

Abdulaziz Goni
Strategic Execution Specialist
Thomson Reuters

Juhaina Kasimali
Proposition Manager
Thomson Reuters

Mazen Al Saleh
Strategic Execution Manager
Thomson Reuters

Dua’a Al Masqati
Senior Strategic Execution
Thomson Reuters

Authors

Alicia Buller

Karthik Subramanium