

The Western Halal Market

16.1 Introduction

The halal ecosystem cuts across many industries, ranging from halal food and non-food products to halal-related services including Islamic banking and finance, certification, logistics, tourism and health care. The recent world population of 2.1 billion Muslims (which is far greater than earlier estimates) have a faith that shapes their Islamic way of life including their food consumption choices.¹ The value of this halal market is estimated at USD2.1 trillion and is fast gaining attention worldwide as the next world market force.² The Muslim consumer market is one of the hottest new niche market segments in the West. From food, to finance, from tourism to education, the Muslim consumer market is a unique opportunity segment.

This chapter explores the size, the opportunities and the challenges of building a halal market in the West. However, the market in the west faces significant challenges – least of which is anti-Muslim political environment in some markets. Bigger issues are around population fragmentation, product certification consistency, authenticity and distribution. These issues affect the markets of both Europe and North America. This chapter provides two case studies – USA and Europe – in which the reader will be provided with a deeper analysis into the markets, helping them appreciate the successes and the challenges.

16.2 European Muslim demographics

As of 2009, there were approximately 735 million inhabitants in Europe (not including Turkey). It is conservatively estimated that while Muslims comprise 5% to 8% of Europe's population, they exhibit a very high relative growth rate when compared to the general (non-Muslim) population. Pew Research Center estimate

that in 2009 there were approximately 38 million (5%) Muslims in Europe.³ This estimate is derived using census data (usually older) as a baseline, and then applying a conservative assumption that the Muslim population grew at the same rate as the rest of the population. Unfortunately, this assumption is flawed. Multiple surveys, national reports, and academic sources confirm that the Muslim population has been, in fact, growing at a much higher rate than the general population – especially in Europe.

For example, in the UK, the Muslim population grew ten times faster (6.68%) than the rest of population, according to a 2004-08 survey by The Office of National Statistics. This increase has been attributed to immigration, a higher birthrate amongst Muslims, and conversions to Islam. According to a 2008 estimate by Euromonitor, Europe's Muslim population increased at a rate of 140% from 1995 to 2005.⁴

DinarStandard estimates Europe's 2009 Muslim population to have been approximately 54 million which is 7.4% of Europe's total population. The 10 countries with the largest number of Muslims in Europe represent 90% of all Muslims in Europe. Russia has the highest Muslim population of 26 million (19% of total population.) Following Russia, France (6 million) and then Germany (4.1 million) have the highest estimated number of Muslims. Within the five Western European countries, France has the highest concentration of Muslims at 10.1% of the population.

A key distinction between the Western and Eastern European Muslims is that the makeup of the Western European Muslim population is composed primarily of recent immigrant populations originating from South Asia, North Africa and Turkey, whereas the Eastern Muslim population is almost entirely composed of people of indigenous origin.

¹ Population Data – CIA [Center Intelligence Agency] World Fact Book. 2009. <http://www.muslimpopulation.com/index.html>

² Dr. Hani M. Al-Mazeedi, Dr. Sharifudin Md. Shaarani, "Characterization of Global Halal Services Providers (GHSP)" School of Food Science and Nutrition UMS [University of Malaysia in Sabah], 2012

³ PewForum : Oct 7, 2009

⁴ <http://blog.euromonitor.com/2008/09/spotlighting-europes-muslim-consumers.html>

16.3 US Muslim demographics

DinarStandard conservatively estimates the American Muslim population in 2010 to range between 5.8 million and 6.7 million in 1.7 million to 2 million households, and that the aggregate American Muslim disposable income in 2010 ranged from USD107 billion to USD124 billion. The demographics of American Muslim consumers are further attractive in that American Muslims are younger than the national average, and their education and income levels are at par with the average American household profile.

A major dynamic of the American Muslim market is the challenge and opportunity it presents in its vast geographic fragmentation. Mainstream national chains, retailers and brands that are not yet engaged with this

The major ethnic segments in the US are Arab, South Asian (Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi backgrounds), African American, Caucasian American, with sizeable Turkic, Latino, European, Sub-Sahara African, Afghan, Iranian and East Asian populations.

16.4 Halal food brands in Europe

The European halal food market, in aggregate, is estimated to be worth between USD55-USD65 billion (including Russia). The Muslim population of Western Europe is comprised mostly of immigrants, and presents a more attractive demographic in terms of their halal market needs.

Figure 1: The US Muslim demographics



population are well positioned to address the geographic challenge, given their existing national channels and networks. By DinarStandard's estimation, fifteen states across the US represent approximately 85% of the total American Muslim population. These fifteen states run from coast to coast and are listed in descending order of their Muslim population size: California, New York, Texas, Illinois, New Jersey, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Georgia, Ohio, Massachusetts, Florida, Connecticut, and North Carolina.

Another key dynamic of the American Muslim market is the strong role of ethnic and indigenous sub-clusters that exist today within the market, as well as the impact of immigration cycles on consumer behavior, channels and preferences. It is important for marketers to understand that within major ethnic categories of American Muslims, there exists a strong cluster of ethnic media, organisations, events, concentrated mosques, Islamic centers, and product considerations (e.g., ethnic food) that influences their buying decisions. Each sub-cluster also effectively engages with national and indigenous American Muslim channels.

Major European brands have realised the economic rewards of targeting Muslim consumers and are increasing their halal offerings. Tesco, the British grocery retailer, has halal meat counters in 27 of its stores. It sells halal chicken, mutton, lamb and beef – including sausages, burgers, and ground beef provided by the National Halal Centre.

The German international confectionery company, Haribo, which produces gummy bears and other candy, produces certified halal gummy bears, and soft candy in its Turkish factory. Other German brands offering halal brand extensions are Dr Oetker, Muller, Pfanni, Storck and Maggi.

International food companies such as Nestle and Unilever have for years offered products that meet halal food standards. Their products are certified by the Halal Control Authority, which certifies products made by many of the major European food producers, including Nestle, Langnese, Elbmilch, Pfanni. Nestle earns more profits from its halal products than from its range of organic products.

16.5 Halal food brands in the US

The USA, though still lagging behind Europe in terms of the size of its halal food market, boasts many success stories in the halal food arena. One such successful halal brand is Saffron Road, a premium organic packaged food brand. Saffron Road successfully launched its line of halal frozen entrees at Whole Foods Market during Ramadan of 2011. To spread the word to Muslim consumers Whole Foods Market and Saffron Road jointly conducted a full scale social media campaign to create excitement around the launch. The online campaign included guest posts on Whole Foods Market blog by Muslim blogger, Yvonne Maffei of "My Halal Kitchen," Saffron Road's marketing partner, as well as running contests on My Halal Kitchen's blog. Expectedly, Whole Foods faced a lot of criticism for carrying a halal brand and "celebrating" Ramadan from a small group of vocal anti-Muslim bloggers. Instead of shying away from its association with Saffron Road, Whole Foods stood firmly behind its decision to promote Saffron Road's brand, and both Whole Foods and Saffron Road were rewarded for standing steadfast by increased awareness and sales of the Saffron Road brand at Whole Foods Market.

16.6 Islamic finance in the US

Closely following the food sector, the second largest Muslim market sector is finance. Although the US Muslim market is one of the most underserved affluent markets for Islamic finance, it is slowly gaining the industry's attention with the creation of financial products and services that cater to customer needs.

Just like its growth around the world, the Islamic finance industry in the US has grown significantly over the last 15-20 years. Today there are a few national players in the field such as Guidance Residential, Zayan Finance, and Amana Funds that are able to adequately serve a national market with proper supervision of Shari'a advisors and close partnerships with regulators and key financial institutions. These firms are bringing Shari'a compliant products to the American Muslim market.

While the Islamic finance industry in the United States stands to gain in the midst of a market with underserved demand for financial products and services a number of challenges remain; most providers entered the market with compelling value propositions, but none has been able to deliver a full-suite of financial products to the market. Limited product sets, lack of service quality based on industry standards, and non-competitive pricing have been challenges faced by market players. However, these issues are changing as the market becomes more sophisticated and starts demanding competitive pricing and world class service standards. The nascent market in the US still presents a tremendous opportunity for companies looking to offer a full-suite of products with effective marketing and distribution strategies.

16.7 The global Muslim lifestyle travel market

Travel is another growing Muslim market segment in the West. In a recent study, the 2012 Global Muslim Travel Market, that was conducted by DinarStandard in partnership with Crescentrating, it is estimated that the global Muslim tourism market in 2011 was USD126.1 billion in outbound expenditure (not including core religious travel expenditure of Hajj & Umrah, but covering leisure, business, and other tourism segments). This constitutes 12.3% of the total global outbound tourism expenditure in 2011 at USD1034 billion as estimated by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation.

Among the top 10 tourism destinations for Muslims are Western markets of Russia, France and Italy. Other western tourism destinations are UK, Germany and the US. In addition, while the top Muslim tourist source countries by expenditure are Saudi Arabia, followed by Iran, UAE, Kuwait and Indonesia based on 2011 data, Muslim communities living in non-Muslim countries also have a sizable outbound tourism expenditure share including in the West. Out of the Top 50 Muslim tourist source markets, 29 are mostly Muslim majority OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) member countries and 21 are non-OIC member countries. The largest of Muslim tourist markets from non-OIC countries are Germany, Russia, France and UK (Figure 2).

Giving the significance of Muslim travelers, the Western markets hold tremendous opportunity to further service this segment. Some are already making targeted efforts. Munich International Airport prepares a travel guide in Arabic and identifies family friendly sights and outings. Australia's Gold Coast is attracting Muslim tourists by offering a Gold Coast Ramadan Lounge. In Thailand, spa-outlets have introduced the concept of Muslim-friendly spas in a bid to lure tourists from the Middle East. Global Health City, in Chennai, India, has gotten halal certified to better serve its growing medical tourists from Muslim countries. Even in Muslim majority destinations, hotels/resorts such as De Palma Group of Hotels in Malaysia, Al Jawhara Hotel in Dubai, Amer Group of Resorts in Egypt, Ciragan Palace Kempinski Hotel in Turkey are offering Muslim lifestyle related services by not serving alcohol, separate recreation services/timings for women, prayer facilities and more. Airlines and destinations are just beginning to pay attention.

The unique Muslim lifestyle consumer drivers are centered around food, family friendly environments, religious practices accommodation, gender relation nuances, and other areas. While this is a large travel segment, very few hotels, airlines and tourism destinations have moved to meet demand, giving industry players a unique opportunity to lead in adding this segment to their multi-cultural marketing mix.

A first of its kind online survey of Muslim tourists from select top source markets was conducted by DinarStandard and Crescentrating. The survey covered questions related to Muslim tourists travel profile, destination, lodging, and airline/transportation experience, needs and satisfaction level. On the question of, "Overall, which of the following are important to you when travelling for leisure?" top answers were, "Halal Food" (67%), followed by "Overall price" (53%), and "Muslim-friendly experience" (49%).

Figure 2: Tourist destinations for Muslims

TOP SOURCE COUNTRIES (FROM OIC* COUNTRIES, BASED ON MUSLIM OUTBOND TOURISM EXPENDITURE - 2011)	TOP SOURCE COUNTRIES (FROM NON OIC* COUNTRIES, BASED ON MUSLIM OUTBOND TOURISM EXPENDITURE - 2011)
Saudi Arabia	Germany
Iran Islamic Rep.	Russian Federation
United Arab Emirates	France
Indonesia	United Kingdom
Kuwait	Singapore
Turkey	United States

16.8 Developing the Muslim consumer market

As demonstrated, the Muslim consumer market opportunity in the West is robust, but in its infancy. To improve the value of the Muslim consumer market, Islamic capital needs to look at Western halal sectors. Currently much of the western 'halal' niche market is served by SME's. This is especially true in the halal food sector in the West. There is tremendous opportunity to create larger more productive players and to create regional halal brands from the West (rather local only). However, there is still some reticence in investing in halal brands. Saffron Road, started by a food industry veteran, is a premium and organic halal food line by a food that is distributed across "Whole Foods Markets" in US, the largest organic products supermarket chain. Its introduction was hailed as a "historical launch" by Whole Food execs.

The founder first went for Islamic Capital but was very disappointed. The Islamic capital investors were seeking quick return, not ready to invest in brand. The founder ended up with success with traditional food industry investors from Switzerland and US and their targeted USD5 million raise was oversubscribed and closed at above target.

Given SME financing nature, investors need to take long-term (5-10yr) investment horizon to build sustainable brands. The industry can be expected to give 25-50% IRR in the halal food space. However, investors need to do their homework and due diligence (visit plants/ operations) and have industry specialist on team.

As demonstrated by success of Saffron Road in the US, the Western Muslim consumer market needs to be nurtured to become a mainstream offering. Certainly the values and virtues extend beyond appeal to the Muslim audience only. While this is a higher level mission, the very basics of having good reliable standardisation of halal processes or Islamic financing rules continue to be a challenge. Finally, the industry should certainly seek to raise its product quality and innovate. After all, Muslim consumers ultimately expect high quality innovative products that happen to be halal. No wonder the

largest halal products producer in the world is a Western company – Nestle!

Case Study 1: France and the European Halal Industry

Introduction

Studying the current state of the French halal industry provides both a unique and potential model for Europe to define its future hopes. This case study will be broken down into two main sections: the current state of the French and European halal industries, and then the future hopes of the industry. In the first section, European halal regulations will be presented from an historic perspective. The state of the halal meat industry will then be explained. Finally, halal guarantees. In the second section, the halal market stakeholders, their relationships and the role of the Muslim stakeholders will be presented. The need of local halal meat solution will be summarised, and finally, the international organisation involved in the halal market will be explored.

The French halal industry: current state

European regulation: The history of the halal market is strongly related to the history of slaughter methods in Europe and French. The first captive bolt, a device that cracks the skull of an animal to render it unconscious, was invented in 1928 by Jean Duchenet and Karl Schermer. Both of the creators spoke about the efficiency of their invention in protecting abattoir employees and enhancing the production rate. In 1930, the captive bolt was introduced in France. The mayor of Lyon argued that his choice of the captive bolt for his municipal abattoirs was also for animal welfare reasons. But this was absolutely a personal judgment of the Mayor even while some animal welfare groups welcomed his declaration.⁵ Under pressure from the animal welfare lobby, stunning became required for regular slaughter in France in 1964. Unfortunately, this decision has had a negative impact on religious slaughter.

In fact, until 1964, religious slaughter - unstunned slaughter using a razor sharp knife to cut the animal at the throat severing the carotid arteries, the jugular veins, the esophagus and the trachea, but not cutting the vertebral bones and the nerves therein - had not been challenged because of the new slaughter methods. But it should be noted that the authorisation for religious slaughter has not always been allowed in France; religious slaughter without stunning was prohibited in France and some other European countries in the period from 1940 to 1944 while under the occupation of Nazi Germany.

Since 1964, the French and European legal corpus has evolved under pressure from the animal activist lobby that thrives on using cultural prejudices, such as Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, to drive their animal welfare agenda and to misuse objective scientific data.⁶ Thus, religious slaughter has been authorised in France only as an exemption from the obligation of prior stunning, although proper scientific evaluations of good

religious slaughter are not available.

At the European level, the 1979 European Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter, and the Council Directive 93/119/EC of 22 December 1993 on the Protection of Animals at the Time of Slaughter or Killing reduced the right of practicing religious slaughter of animals to an exemption. According to the former law, each Contracting Party (country) may authorise derogations from the provisions concerning prior stunning in the case of slaughtering in accordance with religious traditions. The latter stipulated that the requirement of stunning might not apply in the case of animals subject to particular methods of slaughter required by certain religious practices.

The Council Regulation (EC) no. 1999/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing, which abrogated the above-mentioned Directive, maintain this right as an exemption, but give to states the possibility to impose more restriction regarding their internal organisation of the religious slaughter of animals.

The French government during the recent electoral cycle pandered to certain electoral lobbies such as the animal activists and the Islamophobic extreme right to politicise halal food issues.⁷ Based on the new EU Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals during slaughter operations, a set of regulations was published in France [Decree and Order of December 28, 2011]⁸ (hereafter known as the '2011 Decree') on the right to religiously slaughter animals. The Order of August 22, 2012 presents the obligations for the training of slaughter men. This is an important step to actually enhance animal welfare conditions for all animals, but requires the government to recognise the unique aspects of Islamic slaughter and to work with the Muslim community to collectively improve religious slaughter of animals. Unfortunately, the Islamic communities of Europe remain skeptical of the intentions of their respective governments. On the other hand, the Muslim community recognises the importance of working with the government to improve the religious slaughter of animals, and ensure that it is executed according to religious requirements.

The halal market as a market of clearance for the meat industry: In Bordeaux, in the south of France, the number of halal butchers had increased from one in 1975 to 12 in 1996, then to 24 in 2000.⁹ Indeed, the halal market has represented a clearance market for the French meat industry. According to Florence Bergeaud-Blackler:

"Low prices for halal meat are explained by the small margins. These are offset by the quantities sold. But they are also offset by savings on the purchase of live animals. Supply chains are provided by halal for animals whose physical characteristics exclude them from standard marketing channels."

⁵ Vincent, J (1997) "La mise à mort des animaux de boucherie : un révélateur des sensibilités à l'égard des bêtes à l'époque contemporaine" Cahiers d'histoire [En ligne], 42-3/4 | 1997.

⁶ Regenstien, J. (2012) "The Politics of Religious Slaughter - How Science Can be Misused" http://www.meatradenewsdaily.co.uk/news/110812/uk_the_politics_of_religious_slaughter_how_science_can_be_misused.aspx

⁷ ASIDCOM evaluates the government and declared candidates for the presidential election, http://www.asidcom.org/IMG/pdf/Letter_to_the_French_Ministers_Quotas_Ritual_slaughter_2012.pdf

⁸ <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000025047078&dateTexte=&categorieLien=id>

⁹ Florence Bergeaud-Blackler, "La viande halal peut-elle financer le culte musulman ?", Journal des anthropologues [En ligne], 84 | 2001, mis en ligne le 01 janvier 2002, consulté le 09 août 2012. URL : <http://jda.revues.org/2604> (translated by Hanen Rezgui)

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Here she implies that animals regarded to be of a lower quality than would be acceptable in the normal French market find their way into the halal market. These animals are required to pass the national meat inspection system, and often do so. She continues:

“Two groups of animals are introduced into the supply chain to produce ‘halal’ meat: Old animals especially sheep, past their usefulness and animals from non-compliant market standards for cattle. In the region of Gironde, these animals are always reserved for the ‘Allah’ market, the sheep are known as ‘couscous sheep.’ These animals are called animals of reform when they can no longer perform the tasks for which they were being used; either they are too old or weak to produce milk or give birth, or that have developed other defects related to malnutrition or parasitic diseases that prevent them from breastfeeding or providing milk for human use. The name ‘couscous sheep’ indicates recipients for whom they are reserved but also that they are deemed to provide a tough meat that only slow broth cooking manages to soften. These sheep have a reduced or no market value in the ordinary meat sector.”¹⁰

Thus, halal supply chains are part of the ordinary commercial supply chains and do not constitute a specific sector. The “quality” or the age of animals passing through these markets depends on the secular meat industry. This probably has an impact on the choice of animals available to Muslim butchers. We will see later the drastic consequences of this policy of “the halal market being a clearance market” on the Muslim consumers’ rights and their religious slaughter of animals.

The current challenge of guaranteeing halal: It should be noted that before the 1970s there was no halal market, and only a few halal butchers in France. Generally, Muslim consumers in France and Europe often arranged their own animal slaughters. But, since the early 70’s there has been an increase of specialist halal butchers. It is in this context that in 1982, the rector of the Paris Mosque initiated signed halal certificates in France. Unfortunately, the certificates were not seriously monitored because the Mosque of Paris was not controlling their issuance, and this situation continues to this day. Furthermore, the signed halal certificates were often forged with impunity by the butchers themselves. In fact, no regulations or organised structures have emerged to regulate this new market. Most consumers, unfortunately, have little doubt about the authenticity of the supervision of halal meat. Muslim consumers have confidence in the stakeholders providing halal products. They were not, with a few exceptions, aware of the stunning issue (i.e., that a large number of so-called halal slaughtered animals had been pre-stunned prior to slaughter, which was inconsistent with the Prophetic method of animal slaughter) and the political-economic challenges facing religious slaughter in Europe.

This unsatisfactory situation remained until the beginning of the 2000’s. During this period some

notable events occurred:

(a) Multiplication of Halal Control Bodies (HCB)

Most of these bodies have followed the example of the earliest HCB such as the Paris Mosque in France, and the Halal Authority in the UK. In 2008 and 2009, the Association of Awareness, Information and Defense of Muslim Consumers (ASIDCOM) conducted for the first time a survey of the activities of these HCB. The survey (available on-line at the ASIDCOM site)¹¹ pointed out several difficulties and problems with respect to the efficacy with which they performed their supposed role in the marketplace. In fact, they present themselves as a guarantee that the products met halal criteria. But almost all of them could not provide an established set of halal standards that would inform consumers about their specific halal specifications.

Several attempts have been made to produce common halal standards for many European countries and at the European level. These include a formal definition of halal developed by Dr. Hamidullah that was ratified in 1982 by 60 French Muslim associations. More recently, following the creation of the CFCM (Muslim Council of France) in 2003 by the French government, a commission was created to establish standards for halal meat. But faced with the many different financial interests of the various stakeholders, the commission failed to establish a common specification, agreeing for now only on the spelling of the word “halal”. In the UK, after several attempts by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) to establish national halal standards, no such standard has emerged although two national certification organisations certify halal meat. Both the Halal Food Council (HFC) and the Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC) certify meats, with only the later requiring solely unstunned slaughter. On a European level, the Austrian proposal for standards and the two years study on the feasibility of a European halal standard have failed to lead to an agreement on standards for the religious slaughter of animals. Muslim consumers and organisations like CFCM (France), the MCB (UK) and ASIDCOM oppose any use of stunning within a European halal standard, while industrial participants and animal welfare organisations oppose non-stunning before execution. In fact, they will only support halal standards that include the use of stunning with or without labeling of the slaughter methods.

(b) New regulation and restriction against the religious slaughter of animals

In recent years, with increasing interest in animal welfare, religious slaughter of animals has become a concern in many Western countries where secular methods of slaughter are presumed to be more humane, especially when poorly done research is used to prove that hypothesis.¹²

In France, the issue of the religious slaughter of animals was discussed in the 2012 presidential election politics. The enforcement of the 2011 Decree requires additional requirements for religious slaughter and some restrictions on how many animals can be

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ http://www.asidcom.org/IMG/pdf/halal_certification_agencies-ASIDCOM_survey.pdf

¹² American Meat Science Association, “The Politics of Religious Slaughter – How Science can be Misused”, Joe M. Regenstein, Professor of Food Science, Cornell University, Head: Cornell Kosher and Halal Food Initiative, Stocking Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-7201, USA, JMR9@cornell.edu

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slaughtered religiously. Two official reports, in 2005 and 2011, have been written to justify this populist change in regulations. We can read in one of the earliest commentaries on these reports:¹³

"In France, 80% of sheep, 20% of cattle and 20% of poultry are slaughtered by the halal method. This tendency to generalise the religious slaughter, especially for sheep, is also evident among our European neighbours. In Denmark, 90% of sheep meat is obtained from halal slaughter as well as 3 to 4% of cattle meat and almost all poultry. Overall, 20% of the total number of animals is religiously slaughtered including 100% of sheep and goats and 15% of cattle."

The report continues:

"In Britain, highlighting the pre-stunning of halal slaughter by Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC), a quasi-governmental organisation has led to the exact opposite effect from what the organisation was promoting, since the rate of pre-stunned animals has decreased from 92 to 50%."

However, it is relevant to specify that such meat is often obtained from conventional slaughter, such as mechanical slaughter, or a religious slaughter with prior or post-cut stunning.^{14,15} True religious slaughter required by conservative Muslim consumers must be without any kind of stunning before or after the cut.^{16,17}

ASIDCOM has attempted to convince non-Muslim consumers that they are being deceived because they are unknowingly consuming halal meat, while it is the Muslim consumer that is actually being deceived.

"Producers of sheep and cattle have an economic interest in organizing a strong complementarity between the traditional distribution channels and halal from animals ritually slaughtered. In fact, back pieces (of the animal) are opportunities for non-Muslim consumers while front pieces and offal are directed mainly to Muslim consumers."¹⁸

Such statements have been rejected by Muslim butchers. They confirm that they buy the entire carcass and that the amount of offal purchased, if they choose to sell it, cannot in any case be greater than the number of carcasses.¹⁹ But it should be noted that the multiplication of the number of Muslim butchers has created strong competition between them. Thus, some of them choose products of very low quality in order to offer more attractive prices. The behavior of these butchers helps create the view that the halal market is a clearance market. When properly informed of these actualities, the Muslim consumer is surprised and will often actively reject supporting such actions.

But for several reasons European country authorities have used misleading reports and facts to justify inappropriate new regulations. These regulations have imposed more and more restrictions on the practice of religious slaughter of animals in Europe. However, religious slaughter of animals without stunning is still allowed in the majority of the European countries, and it will depend on the strong support of the Muslim

communities to assure that the Islamic method of animal slaughter will be permitted to be practiced by the community. Similar issues are also arising in Australasia. Joe Regenstein writes:

"The current situation: New Zealand and Australia have for many years required an intervention prior to religious slaughter for meat destined for export. In Australia, the Jewish community is permitted to slaughter, but is doing a post-slaughter intervention for cattle. In New Zealand, the local Jewish community was permitted to slaughter. After rejecting the advice of his animal welfare committee the agricultural minister banned domestic religious slaughter. It turned out that he had a financial interest in a halal slaughterhouse and worried that the Muslim export community would also ask for this right! After various legal maneuvers, the situation is that the Jewish community is permitted to slaughter as it always has, but on paper kosher slaughter of animals is prohibited. The next step in the legal process is up to the government and there appears to be no interest in moving any legal action forward."²⁰

The French halal industry: future hopes

The halal market stakeholders There are five categories of stakeholders in the French halal market: the public sector, religious representatives, halal control bodies, commercial operators, and consumer (Muslim and non-Muslim) and animal welfare organisations.

• The public sector

The public sector has key roles in the future hopes for the French halal industry. They have a mission at each stage of the halal supply chain from production to final consumption. First, their agents supervise and control animals, products and services of the halal branch. They have the obligation to make respectful regulations, and to enforce the rights of all parties. Second, they need to collaborate with halal stakeholders to better develop the market with respect to the actual needs of consumers and their respective economic interests. They should also collaborate with consumer and professional organisations to enable them to protect and ensure their member rights, including the development of appropriate commercial trade standards.

• Religious representatives

The representation of Muslim communities in Muslim minority European countries has not yet been resolved. Each European country has its own model for Muslim representation, although none has formal recognition. Even in France, where the French government had urged the creation of CFCM in 2001, the latter is an NGO under Association Law (1901) without specific government recognition. Thus, a government can arbitrarily choose some or any organisations to discuss Muslim issues. But the choice tends to be based on political considerations. At the same time, the chosen organisations are often not representative of their communities. For example, in France at least 50% of the Muslim communities say they

¹³ http://www.asidcom.org/IMG/pdf/COPERCL_2005.pdf,

¹⁴ Only 5% of the meat produced in France is obtained from a religious slaughter without stunning. ASIDCOM (2010) "Survey of the Halal Certification Agencies – year 2009" http://www.asidcom.org/IMG/pdf/halal_certification_agencies-ASIDCOM_survey.pdf

¹⁵ Dr Shuja Shafi, deputy general-secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain said that "Over 90% of halal meat is stunned before slaughter," 7 May, 2012, <http://www.foodmag.com.au/news/rate-of-animals-slaughtered-without-stunning-rises>

¹⁶ MBC (Muslim British Council), CFCM (Muslim Worship French Council) and ASIDCOM (Association of Awareness, Information and Defense of Muslim Consumers, France) claim a religious slaughter without any stunning. During the frameworks of the European Study of the feasibility of a halal standards

¹⁷ About 97% of Muslim consumers require that their meat be obtained from a religious slaughter without any stunning. "The Muslim Consumer as the Key Player in halal", ASIDCOM, 12 April, 2012, http://www.asidcom.org/IMG/pdf/ASIDCOM_Report-french_muslim_consumers.pdf

¹⁸ http://www.asidcom.org/IMG/pdf/COPERCL_2005.pdf,

¹⁹ ASIDCOM is currently conducting a survey on the Muslim butchers in the North of France. About 26 butchers have already met ASIDCOM's team and answered their questionnaire.

²⁰ See ft note 6

²¹ "The Muslim Consumer as the Key Player in Halal", ASIDCOM, 12 April, 2012, http://www.asidcom.org/IMG/pdf/ASIDCOM_Report-french_muslim_consumers.pdf

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do not know about CFCM. ²¹

- **Halal operators**

The halal manufacturing sector covers the food industry and several non-food production channels. This sector also includes several other services that meet present Islamic needs. These halal operators can be Muslims or non-Muslims. Generally, most participants have not received any specific training on the specific requirements of slaughter according to halal standards, and Islamic trade principals to help them do their work properly. There are several areas that need to be satisfied: the butcher's job, hygiene and health standards, halal control, the job of Muslim slaughterers, Islamic solidarity between the halal market stakeholders, halal standards, animal welfare, training to learn about public or private organisations, and economic aid available for these economic stakeholders. A step in this direction is also closely linked to the Islamic spirit regarding the obligation to be informed first before exercising any business line. Umar bin Khattab, the 2nd leader of the Islamic community following the death of the Prophet Muhammed, banned market traders who had not received training on Islamic rules of trade to work in the Medinan markets. Interestingly, he also appointed inspectors, such as Shaffa bint Abdullah, to curb fraud and deception on the merchandise.

Audit work and upgrading halal plans and commercial objectives are also required. This work can be subcontracted by the audit bodies competent in the matter. In France, funding for this work is supported by the training tax. Indeed, this tax is intended to finance the development of the technological and vocational training. It is paid mainly by companies engaged in commerce, industry or craft.

- **Halal control bodies**

The traceability and confirmation of the halal status of products found on retail shelves is almost always complex. The use of a halal logo on food packages has proven to be a useful marketing tool. The value of such a logo has prompted more and more food manufacturers to apply for halal certifications. But, in its survey work, ASIDCOM has described these halal control bodies as:

"Organisations, which are in the form of associations or societies. They do not have a common definition of "halal" nor agreed upon control procedures and traceability. Unfortunately, a single standard, despite efforts to put such together, has not occurred and is unlikely in the near future. Note that the controls implemented by individual agencies are all very different: it can go from an annual audit of the slaughterhouse or an occasional analysis for porcine materials at the certified establishment, to checking each production with permanent controls in place and on-going independent auditing of the company that manufactures the halal product... these differences lead to very different human resources being employed with some organisations just having a secretariat to manage the "paperwork" of the "halal certification" to others having real controls in place

with trained controllers in the field."²²

- **Consumers (Muslim and non-Muslim) and animal welfare organisations (AWO)**

First, it is important to stress that in Europe both consumer (whether Muslim or not) and AWO are concerned about animal welfare. Thus, the various attacks on religious slaughter are not seen as an animal welfare issue by the Muslim community, which strongly believes that religious slaughter of animals is humane. Those bad practices found in some slaughterhouses are not related to the Prophetic method of humane religious slaughter of animals. These are issues that must be addressed by the Muslim community in conjunction with the genuine animal welfare community.

Currently, in Europe non-Muslim consumer organisations are much more developed than Muslims ones. In the majority of cases the sole representative of Muslim consumers has been those organisations directly tied to religious worship. But in the last 6 years we have been witnessing the mobilisation of Muslim consumers by different consumer groups whose goals are to educate and inform on issues in the halal marketplace. In 2006, ASIDCOM was created for the defence of Muslim consumers in France. ASIDCOM is a citizen's organisation established to protect their rights, make known their true needs and to gain recognition of these rights and needs by various institutions and stakeholders within the economic and political spheres within France. In order to amplify the Muslim consumer voice, there is a need to establish a network of consumer organisations such as ASIDCOM.

- **The halal market stakeholders' relationships**

Figure 1 represents an attempt by ASIDCOM to explain the current structure of the halal market in France. This representation could be generalised to other European countries, with only a few modifications.

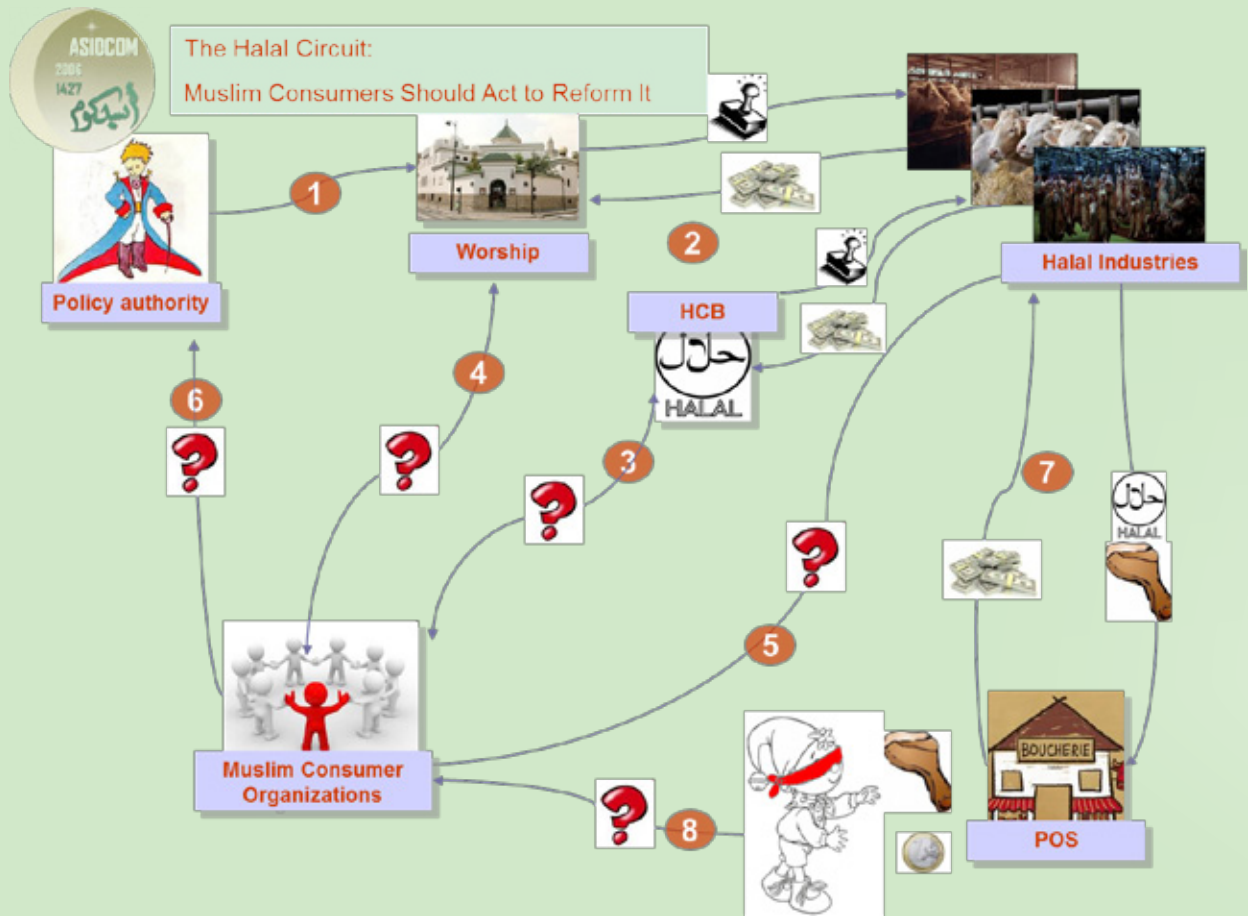
- **The role of Muslim stakeholders in the halal market**

The ASIDCOM survey in March 2012 showed that Muslim consumers in France are committed to their religious obligation of consuming only halal food. But they are often unaware of how their animals or poultry were slaughtered and whether the slaughter act complies with religious requirements or not. They assumed that the method of slaughtering animals follows traditional methods with no pre- or post-slaughter interventions. However, the survey indicated that only 5% of the meat sold to Muslims is obtained from slaughter without stunning. The survey identified various efforts by Muslim consumer groups to disseminate information and educate consumers. This has led to changes, particularly in consumer behavior, attitudes and concerns among Muslims about the foods they consume. They have become better informed and more cautious in their selection of food. About 56% of the respondents abstained from purchasing doubtful products.

If Muslim consumers are faced with a lack of reliable information with respect to the halal status of products,

²² "Survey on the halal certification agencies – year 2009" ASIDCOM, published on line 2010, http://www.asidcom.org/IMG/pdf/halal_certification_agencies-ASIDCOM_survey.pdf

Figure 1: Current structure of the halal market in France



- 1** Weak Muslim representation in policy making.
- 2** A conflict of interest relationship exists between mosques and halal industries.
- 3** A conflict of interest relationship between (self-proclaimed) halal control boards (HCB) and the halal industries.
- 4** There is currently confusion between Muslim Consumer Organizations (MCO) and HCB. It is inappropriate for a Halal Certification Body to create an MCO.
- 5** Too many Muslim consumers are not aware of the current need or existence of MCO.
- 6** MCO are a new phenomenon in Europe and the process of obtaining official recognition is very difficult.
- 7** The halal butchers are not knowledgeable about the intricacies of Halal issue (e.g., how exactly was the meat slaughtered including whether stunned or not, was the animal facing Mecca, was the knife sharpened without any animal seeing the sharpening, and was each animal killed so it was not seen by other animals.) making it difficult for them to guarantee the Halal authenticity of their products.
- 8** The Muslim consumer is subject to intentional deception. He is not properly informed about the details of the products he is purchasing. Also, his faith is often used as an excuse for racism by political factions.

Case Study 1: France and the European Halal Industry

87% indicated that they were willing to pay more for a halal product produced with integrity. Consumers attribute primary responsibility for the deception that occurs with some halal products to the certification agencies, to the State, to Muslim butchers and to themselves. This has led to their commitment to contribute to the reform of the halal market and reduce the fraudulent cases to a minimum. But the reconciliation process between demand and the available supply is very complex in France and the rest of Europe. Many of the policies of the government and of the major stakeholders in the marketplace are contrary to the development of religious slaughter practices that actually meet the needs and demands of Muslim consumers.

For this market to reach its full potential, stakeholders in the Muslim halal market need to learn to work together. For many Muslim consumers, the best halal guarantee in Europe is provided by the Muslim butcher.²³ However, questions still arise as to the reliability of butchers. Most butchers surveyed by ASIDCOM said they would welcome the establishment of a halal butchers' organisation. Yet, almost all of them have not had the training with respect to what is required of a halal butcher.

In March 2011, Kuwait organised a workshop whose goal was to create a Global Halal Fund for Halal Development and Research. If this goal can be accomplished, Muslims

around the world, including in Europe, will benefit.

Need for solutions at the local level The distribution of Muslims varies greatly between different European countries. The location of halal shops, especially butchers, is a reflection of where a sizable Muslim population lives. At the same time, many of these shops have significant numbers of non-Muslim consumers who often seek slaughtermen who consider the welfare of their animals and treat the animals with respect.

Until now governments have been very comfortable with these butcher shops because of several specific constraints:

- The closest abattoirs refuse to practice the Prophetic method of religious slaughter of animals. Thus, many Muslim butchers' accept these products, and fail to inform the Muslim consumer on the issue. The alternative has been to seek suppliers elsewhere, but this is more complicated and makes it more difficult for butchers to visit these abattoirs and assure themselves that the slaughter is being done properly.
- In some countries, like France, the halal market has become a clearance market for the meat industry. Thus halal butchers have been restricted by their suppliers to a narrow choice of marginal quality products. The complicity of some Muslim butchers, and the price factor have been crucial in perpetuating this state, where the needs of the Muslim consumer

International organisations and solutions

Several countries both with Muslim majorities or minorities have established their own halal standards and control models. Since 1963, Malaysia has been monitoring halal products, but it was only in 1971 that an official letter to confirm a product's halal status was first issued by the Malaysian Islamic Authority. Then in 1975, a law to protect the use of the word "halal" was incorporated into the Trade Description Act of 1972. Halal certification was introduced by JAKIM (the Department of Religious Development of Malaysia) in 1994. The Malaysian halal standards document (MS1500:2000) was developed in 2000 and has been revised two times and supplemented with new standards. Since January 2012, certification of food products by a JAKIM accredited control body is required for products sold in Malaysia. Before this date, halal certification was voluntary in Malaysia.²⁴ Also, in certain other countries of ASEAN (the Association of South East Asian Nations) like Indonesia, there is a halal certification body accreditation similar to that of Malaysia. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Standardization Organisation (GSO) in 2008 adopted the GCC halal standard. The standard was developed by the Technical Committee for the Foods and Agriculture Products Section of Kuwait and is entitled "Halal Food, Part (2): The Requirements for Accreditation of Issuing Halal Certification Centers."²⁵

New Zealand has taken the bold step of regulating halal certification under their newly announced halal notice, which comes under the jurisdiction of the Federal Food Safety Authority. The Austrian national standards' body, ASI, submitted its new halal standards to CEN (the European Committee for Standardization). This proposal has led to a two year European study about the feasibility of an European Halal Standard. In 2012, the study was published. There was no clear conclusion with respect to the feasibility of a halal standard at a European level. Currently, the project is awaiting a CEN member to propose and lead a further European halal project study. Turkey seems to be the favorite candidate because it is a majority Muslim country. However, Turkey may not be the right country. Despite being a Muslim majority country, Turkish stakeholders have consent to and committed to the introduction of stunning into any International or European halal standard.

In the attempts above to provide compliant halal standards, the Muslim consumers' needs have not been carefully studied. In the majority of cases only a few religious opinions have been included. Muslim consumers have not been properly involved and informed. Hanen Rezgui, President of ASIDCOM, has worked closely with actual Muslim consumers for more than 5 years in countries such as France, Tunisia, Kuwait, Malaysia, England

²³ "The Muslim Consumer as the Key Player in Halal" ASIDCOM, 12 April, 2012, http://www.asidcom.org/IMG/pdf/ASIDCOM_Report-french_muslim_consumers.pdf

²⁴ « Interview with Darhim Hashim : a single global standard is neither feasible nor necessary", ASIDCOM, October 2011, www.asidcom.org

²⁵ Gulf States Organisation, Kuwait, 2008. halal Food, Part (2): The Requirements for Accreditation of Issuing the HALAL Food Certification Centers.

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and Holland about the stunning issue. Almost all of the consumers assumed that this method of slaughtering animals is traditional with no pre- or post-slaughter interventions, while fully compliant with modern animal welfare requirements. Thus, it is urgent that all those who work on either a European or international halal harmonisation standard start to seriously involve Muslim consumers. They need to be a partner and key stakeholders in defining the halal standards.

- Each Muslim butcher shop works alone. There is no organisation working for and with them to improve the halal market.
- The municipal abattoirs are closing their doors and leaving this formerly public service function to private companies, who are not prepared to collaborate with religious communities so as to avoid pressure from the animal welfare lobby or extreme right-wing groups.
- Muslim consumers have not been involved in the halal market. ASIDCOM remains a unique independent Muslim consumer association.

Thus, a stronger local organisation overseeing the halal meat production supply chain seems to be an efficient solution. This needs to involve Muslim consumers and butchers along with the local authorities, the representatives of the religious community and the local abattoirs. The abattoirs may or may not be solely halal, but an all halal operation simplifies control. They could be of various sizes depending on local demand. The local authorities have a duty to ensure that in collaboration with the Muslim religious leadership the facilities meet animal welfare standards, religious requirements and that people working in these facilities are properly trained. But in the end, the Muslim consumers have the duty to work with their local Muslim consumers associations to assure themselves that the products they are purchasing genuinely meet their needs.

ASIDCOM is preparing a number of recommendations within the report of its last survey on the halal butcheries in the north of France. It recommends the halal meat sector to be an independent sector from the conventional meat sector. ASIDCOM will propose basic standards so that different stakeholders will have recourse to common industrial standards. Also, ASIDCOM will suggest that each stage of the halal sector should be represented by an association. Then all the stages should be represented together by a unique inter-professional organisation.

Conclusion

In June 2012, the French government agency for international business development Ubifrance said that the global halal market is estimated at 448 billion euros, and it is increasing at about 10% per year. Xerfi, the private economic research institute, said in a new study that there will be a 9% increase in sales of products for Muslims in the retail stores for the year 2013.²⁶ But the lack of trust in halal certification remains the main weakness for those promoting this sector of the international food-industry. In fact, the current organisation of halal control has not won over the Muslim consumers. They still prefer to buy their halal products at a Muslim halal shop or butcher, although they may be selling the same

products as the larger retail stores. More than the half of the Muslim consumers interviewed would not buy a halal product if they have doubts about the halal certification.

Muslim consumer organisations have in recent years worked to inform and make consumers aware of the challenges facing them in purchasing authentic halal products. But the major difficulty they have faced was the absence of reliable and available alternatives for consumers or traders who would like to respect the traditional Prophetic standards with respect to halal products. In fact in many places in Europe, halal meat prepared without any stunning is simply not available from either a Muslim or non-Muslim owned shop, especially for poultry meat.

Irrespective of the attempts to harmonise halal in a few European countries, permission to stun has been maintained within halal standards despite the fact that for consumers, these standards create an unacceptable situation. Thus, it is essential that religious slaughter of animals be seriously monitored to prepare for a more robust future for the halal industry in Europe. The entire halal sector is concerned with the religious slaughter of animals issue. This is for Muslim consumers a key criterion in their acceptance of any halal meat product. In the current European context, Muslim stakeholders must work together at the local level to strengthen the halal infrastructure. In fact, public authorities and religious representatives have to work together more seriously to better serve the food needs of local Muslim citizens. So far, both have failed to properly address these questions at the national or European levels because the task is much more complicated. But if everyone works locally to meet consumer needs, then the European halal industry will thrive and enter a new era of prosperity.

²⁶ http://www.saphirnews.com/halal-les-ventes-s-annoncent-bien-pour-l-annee-2013_a15412.html?pr eaction=nl&id=20500171&id nl=121549&

Case Study 2: The United States of America

Halal boosts USA economy and exports

The awareness of halal in America was non-existent just a couple of decades ago. Today, major media outlets cover halal issues regularly. Conferences on halal as an economic opportunity are occurring all over the world. There are innumerable blogs, YouTube videos and Facebook pages about halal. New and diverse businesses catering to the halal consumer are on the rise.

The awareness of halal has contributed to the global commoditisation of food. It has impacted food formulations in ways that would have been unimaginable in the 1960s in America. To make a unique food product that you purchase at the grocery store, food ingredients are often sourced from varied nations, assembled in another country, packaged in still another and often sold internationally. The awareness of halal has meant that multinationals in the food business have tried to ensure that their ingredients and end products are fit for consumption by halal consumers. Western companies such as Pepsi, Coke, Nestle and ConAgra offer halal products globally in order to gain access to several markets.

The case for halal certification: the halal food market, jobs and the USA

The way food and diet is perceived is changing on a daily basis. Whether it is ingenuity involving edible packaging and clean food processing or the harnessing of medicinal properties of traditional foods such as lentils and Greek yogurt, industrial food technologists are committed to innovation in food.

With nine billion people to feed by mid-century, these innovations are not only important, they are necessary. Adept at creating imitation products, food technologists create both natural Greek Yogurt and Greek Yogurt made with Ingredion® starch – both equally nutritious, both aimed at pleasing the palate.

Food scientists and technologists are responsible for formulating foods that are safe, flavourful and meet nutritional needs. This is especially significant when it comes to feeding millions where food shortage is common. Given the reality of food shortages, one person's "junk food" is another's life line. From an Islamic perspective, food is never junk. The Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA) produce certification to ensure that all the ingredients and processes are in keeping with Islamic dietary laws.

The halal food market in the USA is one of the fastest growing consumer markets in the country. American Muslim consumer spending on food items and related services was estimated at USD15 billion in 2011. In the 1970's, there were no more than 10 stores that sold halal meat in the entire United States. Today, according to

data compiled from Zabihah.com and the White Pages, there are 2,388 halal meat stores and 6,984 restaurants that serve halal consumers, each of them cumulatively responsible for tens of thousands of American jobs.

Many mainstream restaurants are now including halal choices on their menu. Almost all US states (with the exception of Wyoming) and territories have a halal store or restaurant. Their numbers are growing and having a cascading effect. In major cities, Italian, Mexican, Thai, and other cuisines, which have hitherto been beyond reach for the Muslim population, are being prepared according to halal prescriptions. One reason for this is an increase in US born Muslims who want to experiment with new and diverse tastes while adhering to the Islamic guidelines. The diversifying of culinary tastes amongst the general American population will further drive up the sales in the ethnic restaurant segment of the halal market.

Besides the food service business, millions of jobs in the US are also associated with the beef, poultry, lamb, dairy, nutritional foods and nutritional supplement industries. All of these have seen a sharp rise in business as US halal exports to Malaysia, Indonesia and the Middle East continue to grow. For instance, currently, up to 95% of manufacturers of dry dairy ingredients produce halal products for export.

The goat meat industry is witnessing high prices, the highest in its recorded history. A University of Illinois Extension survey shows that the Muslim communities of North America are the largest proportion of faith groups that consume goat meat. Average consumption varies from 10-20 pounds every couple of weeks. Halal goat meat consumption rises substantially during Ramadan and that can be attributed to the spike in community gatherings to break the fast. Secondly, each year, every financially-able Muslim is expected to sacrifice an animal on the occasion of Eid ul Adha.

The growth rate of this market is estimated to be between 10-15 percent annually and it is predicted that it will cross the USD20 billion mark by 2015. This is fuelled by a variety of factors including the population growth rate which is expected to be around 5 percent annually between 2010-2020. According to a recent Pew report, the US Muslim population was at 2.6 million in 2010. By 2030, projections show it will be 6.2 million.

This Muslim population is also characterized by its high percentage of youth as compared to the general population. US Muslims between 18 - 44 years of age comprise 73 percent of the population whereas 44 percent of the general population falls within that age bracket. We also see a dynamic, educated Muslim women populace. 42% of US Muslim women have a college or post-graduate degree as compared to 29% of women who hold that distinction in the US population at large.

The Muslim population growth and its related purchasing

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power combined with the growing recognition of halal as a safe, hygienic, and humane choice by those beyond the Muslim market, will further increase the size of the halal market.

Halal's continuing visibility and awareness will create consistent customer demand. Over the next few years, we will witness the transformation of halal consumer voices into powerful sources of influence.

When marketing muscle joins hands with halal certification

IFANCA halal certified Saffron Road has been aggressively marketing its brand and expanding its distribution to include several mainstream supermarket chains plus countless independent natural food retailers, and projects. It will be sold in over 6,000 retail stores by year end.

In the fourth quarter of 2011, Saffron Road scored a major win by gaining national distribution in over 900 stores of Kroger, which is the largest US grocery store chain with over USD77 billion in annual sales. On the heels of this spectacular success, Saffron Road also secured 1,200 stores in the formidable Publix Supermarket chain. Publix is the largest chain in Florida, where it dominates consumer grocery purchases, and is ranked #7 nationally with over USD24 billion in sales.

An expanded retail presence in 2012 could potentially add up to 20 additional retail and supermarket chains, placing Saffron Road on par with many well established natural food brands.

Besides its halal certification and intrinsic appeal to Muslims, much of Saffron Road's success can be attributed to its novel marketing approach. Their strategy focused on reaching Muslim consumers by entering forums of discussion between Muslims on halal foods, meal preparation and getting ready for Ramadan. This focused heavily on reaching Muslims online, as there are thousands of conversations happening at any given time about halal foods. Saffron Road leveraged its highly-engaged social media community and key brand ambassadors to ask what type of content about halal foods they would like to see during Ramadan and where they go online for meal inspiration, tips and ideas. To encourage consumers to go into local stores to purchase Saffron Road products, the company visited multiple Muslim communities across the US West Coast with their Club Halal tour. They also partnered with Muslim community leaders to help communicate their message to Muslim communities in Denver, Boulder, San Diego, Phoenix and San Francisco.

Halal certification – There's more to it than 'meats' the eye

It may seem ironic that at the same time that snacking in America has seen a spike, so have healthy eating habits and food choices. Manufacturers are rapidly recognising

the versatility and nutritional quality of lentils. Crackers, hummus, energy bars and snacks made with lentil flour now grace shelves across North America. One such innovation is Enjoy Life's "Plentils", a halal certified snack chip made with a lentil-potato mixture.

Enjoy Life Foods is the number one brand in the allergy-friendly foods category. Set up in 2001, it recently received the official non-GMO project verification on 24 of its top food products, with additional products still under review. This benchmark places Enjoy Life Foods at the top of the gluten-free/allergy-friendly food chain, as no other "free from" company in the natural foods category has more verified non-GMO products. GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are plants or animals created through the gene splicing techniques of biotechnology. It is estimated that GMOs are now present in more than 80 percent of packaged products in the average US or Canadian supermarket. Products are also kosher and halal certified. The company ensures that it is re-certified on an annual basis, giving consumers confidence that it is not renegeing from its commitment to ensuring products are consistently halal.

Halal: the revenue, retention and recruitment revolution on US campuses

Currently, thousands of Muslim students attend US colleges, yet only a handful of college and university dining services offer Halal-friendly meal plans. Campuses such as the University of Chicago have responded to their Muslim students requests. A testament to the growing recognition of halal on campus, on April 25, 2012 Drew University, New Jersey hosted its fourth annual Kosher-Halal Cook off . The brainchild of Professor Jonathan Golden, the event is intended to be an ice-breaker between Jewish and Muslim students on campus. As many as 75 students attended, with a third each representing Muslims, Jews and Christians.

On the cutting edge in certifying ingredients

Today, a majority of products that are halal certified in the USA are ingredient solutions. IFANCA's services are rooted in a thorough understanding of food chemistry and food science and religious know-how. That expertise is vital in certifying products for companies like Ingredient, formerly Corn Products International, and once known as Corn Products Refining Co. It recently announced the results of a new independent clinical trial published in the September 2012 issue of the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism. The study showed that the consumption of IFANCA halal certified HI-MAIZE resistant starch improves certain aspects of fatty acid metabolism within adipose (fat) tissue in study participants. These findings are significant because research has shown that impairment in fatty acid metabolism within fat cells cause excess fat storage in muscles, liver and the pancreas, which

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directly causes insulin resistance, a major biomarker for prediabetes. The findings also help explain how fat metabolism contributes to the development of prediabetes. Prediabetes is defined by the American Diabetes Association as blood glucose levels that are higher than normal but not yet high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. The US Centers for Disease Control has estimated that nearly 80 million American adults have prediabetes.

All study participants were considered sedentary, and during the study they maintained their normal daily activity levels. The study participants, who consumed 40 grams of dietary fiber/day from HI-MAIZE resistant starch as a supplement to their diet for 8 weeks, experienced a 16% reduction in fasting insulin levels and 4% lower fasting glucose compared to the control that contained no resistant starch. In addition, study participants experienced a 65% increase in glucose uptake into muscles after eating and insulin sensitivity in the muscles rose 21% as measured by the euglycemic-hyperinsulinemic clamp method.

HI-MAIZE resistant starch is made from a proprietary high amylose corn hybrid by Ingredion Incorporated. It contains approximately 40% slowly digestible (glycemic) starch and 60% resistant starch (insoluble fiber that resists digestion in the small intestine and reaches the large intestine). In the last 20 years, more than 350 published studies – including more than 90 human clinical trials – have demonstrated a range of health related benefits from the consumption of HI-MAIZE resistant starch, including assisting blood sugar and energy management, weight management and satiety in healthy individuals. It can be added to foods such as breads, baked goods and snacks by partly replacing flour or to smoothies, yogurt or oatmeal in a simple blending process.

Halal certified nutritionals and pharmaceuticals

Besides foods, the latest halal trends include the certification of vaccines and even ports. Saudi Arabia has made meningitis vaccinations mandatory for pilgrims, since 2002. The ruling was intended to minimise the risk of outbreaks at a mega-gathering such as the Hajj, where almost three million people flock annually. The Islamic injunction that medicines, including vaccines, containing porcine ingredients are permissible if there are no alternatives, is often dismissed by many Muslims. Two important vaccines, GARDASIL and PREVANOR are now halal certified and free of porcine materials. Initiatives like these assure the halal consumer that food is contamination free, halal and wholesome.

Islam permits the consumption of religiously questionable ingredients as a medicine for life-threatening diseases where no other cure is available. However, consumers may not want to knowingly consume multivitamins and other supplements that have ingredients that are doubtful, according to the

rules of their faith. For instance, halal consumers hesitate when it comes to gelatin capsules, nutraceuticals and the pharmaceuticals industry has not quite warmed up to halal consumers. Gelatin and other questionable ingredients continue to be present in many products. Halal certification is therefore important in alleviating consumer fears. Ensuring that products are halal also ensures research into alternative ways of producing medicine, and creates a sub-sector that is innovative and religiocentric.

Halal certified packaging materials and machinery

IFANCA halal certified Monosol, a market-leading manufacturer of water-soluble polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) films, has been in the news lately as edible packaging is increasingly on manufacturers' radars. MonoSol manufactures water-soluble films that are used in household brands around the world. The company's flagship product, MonoDose film, is a dissolvable film essential to unit-dose detergent products. As the film dissolves, it releases the product that performs cleaning actions in automatic dishwashers and laundry equipment. MonoDose films are free from non-permissible or questionable ingredients. Their films are certified halal and thereby suitable for use by halal-sensitive consumers.

Halal and animal welfare in the USA

Halal consumers are demanding authenticity, halal products and a better back-to-nature approach. Islamic principles ensure animal care and mercy to animals. Islamic slaughter practices involve making a swift, deep incision with a sharp knife on the neck, cutting the jugular veins and carotid arteries of both sides together with the trachea and oesophagus but leaving the spinal cord intact, resulting in the thorough removal of blood from the carcass. According to Dr. Joe Regenstein, Technical Advisor and Professor of Food Science at Cornell University, kosher and halal slaughter methods are more humane than the ones currently used throughout the industrialised world. He hopes that someday science would prove these to be the best methods in animal care and welfare.

However, there are challenges including a lack of a global standard; lack of mutual recognition by certifying bodies; lack of transparency by certifiers as well as reluctance among the industry to place halal logos on their certified product labels.

Halal advocacy

Much of the modern food industry has been developed without the Muslim consumer in mind.

Today, a new breed of professionals – Muslim dieticians and nutritionists – are furthering the cause of halal. Working for government, hospitals and nursing homes, they are the newest advocates for American Muslim consumers.

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A Member Interest Group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MIDAN) aims to reduce disparities in healthcare services received by Muslim patients by providing a forum in which food and nutrition professionals can network and develop professionally. MIDAN also strives to increase diversity within the dietetics profession by promoting the field as a career choice within the Muslim community and by providing mentorship for students and new dietitians.

