



## SHORT COMMUNICATION

### HALAL CERTIFICATION AND FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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#### ABSTRACT

This summarizes presentations at International Halal Conferences, which examines the challenges faced by halal certification bodies and food producers during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the meat export industry in New Zealand. The authors analyze the disruption of traditional certification and auditing practices due to lockdown restrictions and propose innovative solutions to maintain halal integrity. The study highlights the importance of technological integration, remote auditing systems, and standardized certification processes in ensuring the continuity of halal food supply chains during global crises. By exploring potential adaptations to certification methods, including remote surveillance and metabolomic verification techniques, the paper contributes to the ongoing discourse on resilience and transparency in halal food certification systems. The authors emphasize the need for collaborative efforts among stakeholders to develop robust, technology-driven solutions that can withstand future disruptions while maintaining consumer confidence in halal products.

**Keywords:** *Halal Industry, Food Security, COVID-19 Pandemic, Remote Auditing, Meat Export Industry*



## **Introduction**

The global halal food industry relies heavily on certification processes to ensure products meet Islamic dietary requirements. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns have disrupted traditional certification and auditing practices. This paper explores the impacts on halal certification, particularly in meat exporting countries like New Zealand, and proposes potential solutions.

## **Background**

The authors provide context on global food security and halal food trade flows, noting that many Muslim-majority countries rely on imports from non-Muslim countries for halal meat and poultry. They outline typical halal certification processes, including on-site audits and inspections by certifying bodies.

## **Challenge During Lockdown**

The paper discusses specific challenges arising from pandemic lockdowns. A primary issue is the inability of auditors to physically access production facilities, which compromises direct oversight. This leads to an increased reliance on plant management to follow procedures without external verification. Additionally, there is a lack of in-person verification by importing country authorities, further reducing oversight. These factors combined may potentially lead to relaxed attitudes toward procedures during auditor absence, posing risks to halal integrity.

## **Proposed Solutions**

The authors suggest several approaches to maintain halal integrity during lockdowns. One proposal is to train halal slaughtermen as auditors, leveraging their essential worker status to maintain on-site presence. Another suggestion is implementing remote video auditing and surveillance systems to allow for virtual inspections. Providing certification bodies with real-time communication access to slaughtermen could enable immediate clarification of procedures. The authors also recommend developing technologies for halal verification at the point of receipt in importing countries. Lastly, they propose exploring metabolomic techniques to verify the halal status of meat products, which could provide a scientific basis for authentication.



## Conclusion

While pandemic lockdowns pose significant challenges for halal certification, they also present opportunities to develop more robust and technologically integrated auditing systems. The authors call for continued innovation in halal verification methods and greater standardization of certification processes globally.

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