

Halal Food's Growing Market – Worth \$547 Billion

(Abrar Ahmed, Karachi)

The global Halal market value for trade in Halal foods is estimated at US\$547 billion a year. This large market has created interest from food producing countries worldwide. In this respect, Malaysia has the edge in being recognized internationally as a progressive Muslim country, where it has the potential of becoming a major producer of Halal food products. To realize this potential, apart from the commitment and support by the Government, the food-based Halal industries are shown to be focusing their efforts in producing and exporting Halal food products.

The increasing awareness of Muslim consumers on their religious obligations is creating greater demand for halal food and other consumer goods. There are approximately 1.6 billion Muslims out of the 6.5 billion world population. With the Halal food market currently accounting for as much as 12% of global trade in agri-food products, major growth will generate growth opportunities throughout the agri-food industry.

It is not just the growing number of Muslim consumers that has made halal a big business. It is the global nature of the food industry itself. Around 80 per cent of the halal food industry is in the hands of non-Muslims for what matters to the Muslim buyers is not the religion of the manufacturer but the quality and efficacy of the product.

Being a Muslim country, Pakistan is in an advantageous position to secure a significant share in the Halal market if steps are taken in the right direction. But incidentally, it has no presence as yet in the halal economy which essentially caters to the faith-related needs of Muslim consumers.

The Brazilians have been big halal producers for years. In several countries, the quality of halal products and halal standards are very high due to which not only Muslims but non-Muslims as well look for halal certified items. In New Zealand, all 8,500 prisoners in the country's prison system eat halal-certified meat, although Muslim prisoners are 82 only.

On July 27, the first-ever halal expo and congress was held in Karachi which was a major initiative to familiarize businessmen with the halal concept. It was held with the cooperation of a Malaysian organization called International Halal Integrity (IHI) Alliance which also agreed to support Pakistani initiatives to promote this industry and hold training workshops for this purpose.

Malaysia is the great hub of halal industry in the world and has set up institutions to determine efficacy of halal, deal with the issues of its standards and certification. It is a leading exporter of pure Islamic products to Muslim countries, China and western countries where there is large presence of Muslim population.

Halal accounts for 17 per cent of the global food market, according to the World Halal Forum based in Malaysia. The halal segment is growing faster than any other in the food market. Sale of goods that meets Islamic standards is expected to reach \$641 billion in 2010. The European halal food market is set to reach \$67 billion in 2010.

(Figures & fact obtained from "The Halal Journal" - the leading international media brand in the Halal market, published from Malaysia)