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## Halal certification stressed for Pakistan food industry

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By The News International

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### Halal food certification stressed for better sale

SPEAKERS at an international conference in the provincial metropolis stressed the importance of Halal food certification for boosting consumers' confidence in foods and improving their sale.

The conference titled "Halal Foods and Ingredient Concerns" was held at the Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research here on Monday. It was jointly organised by the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA) and the Pakistan Society of Food Scientists and Technologists while it was attended by a large number of food industry representatives.

Punjab Finance Minister Tanveer Ashraf Kaira, presiding over the conference, said the country had a huge market for Halal food, which could be exported, adding that the country's Halal food export was very low at the moment. He emphasised the importance of Halal certification for food, urging all the stakeholders, including industry, academia, and research organisations to address the issue.

Dr Munir Chaudhry of IFANCA briefly described the history of food certification, adding that his council would help Pakistan regarding certification of Halal foods. He said that every ingredient was important and must be certified as Halal, adding that Halal dietary laws were more than 1400 years old but not until very recently was there a concept of Halal certification. Dr Chaudhry said there was potential for the Halal market to grow as the world wide Muslim community consisted of 1.4 billion people and the global Halal trade was now estimated to be \$580 billions. He shed light on the pioneering role played by IFANCA in the development of Halal certification system internationally which provided Halal certification in more than 55 countries.

Dr Mian N Riaz from the **Texas A&M University's Food Protein Research and Development Centre**, said Halal products had become very important to consumers. "For Muslim consumers, trust in Halal food relates to the certainty about the process attributes," he said, adding that any uncertainty about this would lead to shattering of trust that consumers placed in companies.

This can have major financial consequences to the companies, he said, adding that consumer trust could be strengthened by obtaining Halal certification. However, this too should be a Halal label controlled by an official institution in order to prevent fraud, he emphasized.

"The genuine Halal logo is an authoritative, independent and reliable testimony to support Halal food claims," he said and added that having a Halal label would enhance the marketability of products in Muslim countries. He said the E-numbers were recently part of a controversy in Pakistan when some elements spread rumours about the Halal status of a multinational potato chips manufacturer.

He said E-numbers were systematic numerical designations for identifying food additives, adding that E-numbers by themselves were not indicators of the Halal status of many ingredients. A Halal Audit Overview, as developed by IFANCA, was a more foolproof

system of determining it, he said.

Hameed Lateef appraised the work of the Pakistan Standards Council towards developing Halal standards, including recommendations made to the OIC about stunning and mechanical slaughter of poultry in favour of slaughter by hand individually by Muslim butchers.

The conference, in the end, made several recommendations which included that the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) must approve a national Halal standard based on the standards currently available in other Muslim countries. The PSQCA and others must develop guidelines to monitor products imported by multinational and national companies and guidelines may be implemented at the import points, it said, adding that the public sector must create a list of approved Halal certifiers from other countries based on specific criteria and the Pakistan Society of Food Scientists and Technologists (PSFST) and others must position it as a Halal certifier through proper training about Halal certification guidelines.

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