

# CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



World Health  
Organization

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Agenda Item 8

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## JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME

### CODEX COMMITTEE ON FOOD LABELLING

Forty-third Session

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, 9 – 13 May 2016

(Comments from Turkey)

### PROPOSAL TO REVISE THE GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF THE TERM “HALAL” (CAC/GL 24-1997)

#### **Background:**

As it is known, at the 36th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the importance of halal food was recognized and the Commission requested the Member proposing new work (Egypt) to re-scope the project document in order to identify gaps with existing relevant Codex texts, and seek advice of CCFL and CCFICS to assist the CCEXEC and Commission to take a decision.

Egypt took this forward and has prepared a proposal for new work aiming to revise the General Guidelines for Use of the Term “Halal” (CAC/GL 24-1997).

Finally, the delegation of Egypt presented the proposal to revise the General Guidelines for Use of the Term Halal (CAC/GL 24-1997) to CCFL42 (2014), but due to the time constraints, the CCFL42 agreed to defer the discussion on the proposal to revise the General Guidelines for Use of the Term “Halal” (CAC/GL 24-1997) to the next session (CCFL43 in 2016).

Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme CODEX Committee On Food Labeling (CCFL43) that will be held on 9 – 13 May 2016 in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada should refer the 8th Codex Coordinating Committee for Near East Meeting (June 01-05, 2015, Rome/Italy) as “Based on the above discussion, the Committee agreed to recommend that work on halal food should be limited to the revision of the Guidelines for the Use of the Term Halal in CCFL for the time being with full participation from Member countries taking into account the standards and related texts developed at the level of Islamic countries e.g. OIC/SMIIC as reference documents” (See: REPORT OF THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE FAO/WHO COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE NEAR EAST, FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy 1 – 5 June 2015. Proposal for a standard for Halal food)

**Turkey would like to thank to Egypt for revising the General Guidelines for use of the term “Halal”. But in accordance with the general and specific comments of Turkey as below, if the distinguish Committee consider the issue again, it would be more precise to find a better solution both international trade and prevention of Islamic sense.**

#### **General Comments:**

Halal certification is a sector that involves 1.8 billion Muslims living around the world. The Islamic concept of halal, covers not only foodstuff but also other sectors such as textiles, cosmetics, services including halal logistics, finance and tourism. Accordingly, the need to see a reliable halal mark on goods in the global halal market is growing day by day. However, in the world, there is a lack of integrity in terms of standards and certification for halal products. As a result, there are increasing doubts and uncertainties about products' permissibility in Islamic sense. Eventually, numerous standards, certifications and logos lead to technical barriers to trade in halal trade.

At this point, it is obvious that, halal standards and certification is definitely and mainly a matter of Islamic belief. As a solution a strong and unique perspective which involves all Muslim geography and Islamic sensitivities is essential in the process of adopting common halal standards.

From this perspective, "The Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries" (SMIIC), as an affiliated institution to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), was established in 2010 in order to remove technical barriers to trade and provide a basis to develop technical cooperation especially in the areas of standardization, conformity assessment and accreditation among its Members. At present, SMIIC has 32 Members and this number is expected to grow considerably.

SMIIC has already completed the necessary standardization work for the basis of this global halal certification scheme, via three crucial documents:

1-OIC/SMIIC 1:2011, "General Guidelines on Halal Food" (with the references of CODEX, ISO 22000, ISO 22005)

2-OIC/SMIIC 2:2011, "Guidelines for Bodies Providing Halal Certification" (with the references of ISO/IEC 17020, ISO/IEC 17021, ISO/IEC 17025, ISO/TS 22003)

3-OIC/SMIIC 3:2011, "Guidelines for the Halal Accreditation Body Accrediting Halal Certification Bodies" (with the references of ISO/IEC 17011)

It is important to note that SMIIC standards are based on Islamic rules and principles as well as the standards of global standardization organizations. As described above, OIC/SMIIC standards already refer to ISO/IEC and Codex standards and they are in line with international standards. Furthermore, SMIIC is now about to finalize the establishment of accreditation mechanism enabling a trustworthy certification system that is based on intergovernmental accreditation so that halal products can move freely on global scale based on OIC/SMIIC standards and related reference documents.

In fact, a significant way forward to activate a global system based on common standards under SMIIC has been achieved. In the light of these points, the attempts towards setting common halal standards and conformity assessment procedures under OIC and SMIIC must not be disregarded. Therefore, duplicative work and individual approaches to halal standards under different platforms such as ISO, CEN and CODEX Alimentarius Commission should be avoided.

As is well known, the recently submitted proposal of "Technical Committee on Halal" at the ISO platform was rejected at the voting session on 21 January 2016. Besides, previously, halal standard issue also came to the agenda of the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) (CEN/TC 425) and the technical committee was disbanded, although the scope was limited with 'halal food' (CEN/CA meeting, 23 November 2015). In this respect, these results were stemmed from the fact that Members in the relevant platforms agreed that Halal standard is a complex coexistence of religious and technical aspects and Halal in itself is a term used in Islamic jurisprudence which may cause hindering of progress of work at the platforms. It should also be underlined that, SMIIC already addresses to standardization, conformity assessment and accreditation aspects of Halal both in terms of religious and technical perspectives. It is apparent that, attempts of CEN and ISO failed due to the fact that Islamic fiqh issues may create challenges while deciding on the critical issues in the technical process.

### **Specific Comments:**

As all member countries, Turkey fully recognizes and supports the Codex Alimentarius international food standards, guidelines and codes of practice which aims at contributing to the safety, quality and fairness of this international food trade. However, Turkey believes that, institutionally, OIC and SMIIC would be the right entity in terms of any possible standardization activity for halal.

Finally, we would like to draw once more your attention to the risk of enlarging the scope of the present General Guidelines for Use of the Term "Halal" standard in the platform of Codex Alimentarius. Any new or different halal standards under Codex Alimentarius Commission may pose inconsistencies with OIC/SMIIC standards and religious practices. Such an action may also be a loss of time while creating confusion amongst economic operators and consumers and would be harmful to the facilitation of international trade.

In this framework, with the aim of overcoming this important issue, Turkey kindly asks from all countries participating to relevant court of Codex Alimentarius Commission to take Turkey's concern into account as well as their support to prevent duplicate of work in standardization.