



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Certification of Halal Meat: Exploring the Management & Production Environment in Malaysia and Australia

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Apr 24, 2024	<p>The issue relating to meat smuggling from abroad and repackaging in Malaysia and labelled using halal logo has raised public concerns recently as regards to the public trust to halal imported meat. Australian exporter has gained greater access to Malaysia's rapid food production demand where Malaysia imports hundred of millions worth of sheep meat per year. Thus, the organizational framework and interconnected processes governing the halal meat industry within Australia is a crucial aspect to guarantee the importation of halal certified meat into Malaysia. The objective of the is to discover the management, mechanisms and challenges of the certification process of halal meat in Malaysia and Australia to provide a compilation of guidelines and insights on how halal meat is certified and monitored in both countries. This research employed qualitative method. The primary data was obtained from interviews of three selected informants and representatives of related halal agencies in Malaysia and Australia. The instruments used is semi structured interview question related to the determined research objectives. In addition, the data was also acquired through doctrinal study. The data collection was guided by structured variables that included visits to the slaughterhouses, processing facilities and retailers to verify adherence to halal standards. The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis to answer questions aroused in this study. The finding indicated that exportation of halal meat products must adhere to stringent certification processes provided by the authority. Halal mark identification applied by the Australian Government for halal meat is essential to securely monitor the exportation of the meat to the importing country. The findings present suggestions for the monitoring agency in formulating plans and policies to strengthen control over halal meat activities for importation. By addressing challenges such as diverse interpretations and ensuring strict adherence to halal practices, Malaysia and Australia continue to solidify their positions as trusted provider of halal meat in the global market.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The term of Halal has been found in Al Quran which is defined as lawful or permissible for usage based on Islamic law. Under the Islamic concept, halal governs a wide range of Muslim lifestyle. The rulings of halal aim at preserving the maqasid shariah components namely religion, live, mind, progeny and the wealth of a Muslim. In general, the concept of halal obliges the Muslim to abide by

the rulings in term of selecting food to be consumed and material to be used. To certain details, some scholars said that halal expands wider than food and goods where it may include the way a Muslim conducts activities, the words that the Muslim speaks, the fashion that a Muslim wears and so on. For this writing, the paper focused on the prohibition against the animal that forms one of the important conditions before a food can be certified halal. Meat is the edible flesh of poultry or other animals (sheep, calves, and bullocks). It is made up of bundles of fine tubes containing water, protein, minerals, and extractives (Anuar et al., 2018). In addition, the meat is considered halal when the animal are categorised as halal animal and been slaughtered according to Islamic law as required by al-Quran and prophetic sunnah. An individual may not perform the slaughtering act as one desires, without being restricted to rules and principles (Syaiikh Mufti Muhamad, 2009). Under Islamic principles, the primary aims of Islamic slaughtering is to preserve the rights of the slaughtered animal during the slaughtering process. The rights of animals during the slaughtering are to experience death less painfully and more quickly (Qardawi, 2003). The system for the production of halal meat covers the good farming and husbandry practice of animals, animal welfare prior to slaughter process, slaughtering process and its management after slaughtering based on principles of halalan toyyiban. Thus, a high standard of hygiene and sanitation is practised in the production of halal meat resulting in the demands of Muslim consumers as well as non-Muslim consumers for halal meat. Therefore, by adopting and implementation of the halal system in meat production may ease the industry in the process of obtaining halal certification and is considered as a precondition for entering the worldwide halal market. (Fazly et al., 2019)

According to Business Wire in his study entitled the 'Halal Food Market: Global Industry Trends, Share, Size, Growth, Opportunity, and Forecast 2022-2027' indicated that global halal food exports are predicted to reach USD3 trillion (RM13.3 trillion) by 2027, up from USD2 trillion in 2021. This expansion is being fuelled by the rising worldwide Muslim market, which will account for 24% of the world's population or 1.9 billion people, by 2022(MIDA, 2022). Meat, poultry and processed seafood are major halal food product groups as are processed fruits and vegetables, dairy products, cereal and grains, oil and fats and confectionery. Asia Pacific leads the way in terms of halal product demand followed by the Middle East, Africa, Europe, North America and Latin America.

This study is based on the importance of halal meat export to Muslim countries where Malaysia is a member. The outbreak of news on the halal meat cartels scandal in 2020 was an eye-opener to the Muslim society in this country. Recently, Bernama News has reported on confiscation of frozen chickens worth RM500,000 at the entry point in Bukit Kayu Hitam, Kedah (Bernama, 2021). The same issue of smuggling of frozen chicken and meat also occurred along Kelantan and Narathiwat border (Abdullah, 2020). These discoveries (News Straits Times, 2021; Ashman, 2021) have impeached the trustworthiness of the existing legal framework that governs the halal meat importation from other countries to Malaysia (Tashny, 2021; Shahidan, 2023). Following this, the responsible halal certification authority conducted an intensive investigation. The incident prompted this research that aims to contribute insights into selective exporting countries where Australia was positioned at the top of the rank. In Australia, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is responsible for the aspect of exportation of halal meat to other countries. This department is responsible for setting and enforcing regulations related to standard of safety and quality of food as well as export requirements. This discovery will be regarded as a new contribution in the halal food industry, thus requiring further and comprehensive research to be conducted in order to resolve the issue. This study signifies academician and researcher's new knowledge and literature relating to implementation and practice of halal certified meat in Australia as well. Industry players and Malaysia on the whole also benefited from this research in terms of practices and implementation as to align with the Halal Industry Master Plan 2030 and it also supports the 16 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of the Agenda 2030, 12th Malaysian Plan.

With that, the objective of this research is to discover the management, mechanisms as well challenges related to the certification process of halal meat in Malaysia and Australia to provide a compilation of guidelines and insights on how halal meat is certified and monitored in both countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The recent discovery proven that smuggling of imported frozen meat activities involving a local meat cartel where the frozen meat were repackaging and using the halal logo and selling it throughout Malaysia (Bernama, 2020, Akmal, H., 2020) has raised public concern. This has greatly impeached the credibility of the multi-authority agencies that control the importation of halal meat and the existing legal framework. The weaknesses of the current legal framework lie in the uncertainty of laws and the ongoing debate on jurisdiction to make laws on the regulation of halal between federal and state governments (Nor Adha, A.H, 2018, Zainalabidin, F. A., et.al, 2019; Abdul Aziz, N.,2017; Abdul Aziz, N., 2011). Requirements of halal slaughter have been reviewed extensively in the recent year (Fuseini et al. 2016; Jam et al., 2018). Muslim community commonly agreed that among the requirements that renders the meat halal for Muslims' Consumption is that the animal must be sourced from halal categories. Particularly, the animal must be declared as fit and well prior to the slaughtering process. Other requirements include the sufficient time for the loss of blood which leads to irreversible loss of brain function. Most of the research on halal food highlighted the weaknesses of monitoring and controlling halal food premises (Aziz, 2017; Yusof, 2017; Rokhshana, 2018). The usage of a false halal logo, the unauthorised variation of halal information that deceives the consumer, the non-compliance activities that breach halal requirements, the under-power task force, the inadequacy of JAKIM's task force and overlapping of jurisdiction are among the issues highlighted in the previous studies (Mohamed et al., 2020; Zakaria & Ismail, 2014; Shahidan, 2023).

Australia is a country with vast agricultural resources. Australia's economic growth has been greatly impacted by the production of food produced from the agriculture industry (Zulfakar et al., 2019). As the biggest meat exporter in the world, the Australian government is interested in cooperating with the Muslim population in Australia regarding halal business and they are highly concerned about the implementation of halal. The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), a branch of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is the official government agency involved in Australia's meat and dairy industries (Nazni, 2023). According to AQIS Meat Notice 08/09, all establishments wishing to produce halal meat for export must address each of the following items within their Approved Arrangement (AA) where they need to nominate the responsible company officials, identify the animal species for which halal approval is sought, the facilities needed for the halal meat production and handling of the Approved Islamic Organisation (AIO) that intends to participate in their AA and the scope of halal production process. While in Malaysia, after an inspection has been conducted at the entrance door, approval will be granted by the Ministry of Health (MOH) Malaysia officials. The inspection will be done to check the goods imported is tallied with what is registered in the Food Safety Information Malaysia (FoSIM). A permission is needed for imported meat or food derived from animals. In order to accomplish this, the Malaysian government has established policies for meat imports and exports that guarantee the meat's halal certification. Meat entering Malaysia must first receive halal verification from the exporting nation's authorities. For meat that is imported or exported, the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) mandates that JAKIM (Department of Islamic Development Malaysia) and DVS conduct an obligatory inspection (Department of Veterinary Services, 2021). The Animal Act 1953 (Revised 2013), which outlines the protocol for animal importation, applies to this case. Before the product can be imported, these terms must be agreed upon and complied with by the exporting and importing countries (Md Ariffin et al., 2023). In addition, according to Sahari et al. (2022), MAQIS serves to offer quarantine services for goods that are imported and exported at the points of entry.

Fatimah Mohamad Arshad (2021) highlights that the modes of operation of meat cartel in Malaysia. The meat cartel activities was reported on December 2020 from the slaughter point either from exporting country or local warehouses where the fake halal certificates were identified been used for the meat until it reaches consumers. On top of that the cartel activities also involved the acquisition, storing and processing of the non certified meat. Other than that, the activities extended to non-certified frozen meat's smuggling, manipulation and bringing into the country the non certified meat through approved import permits. Previous literature concerning to halal meat focused on halal meat fraud where the deceitful trading that is claimed to be halal occurred in number of arrangements. The illegally slaughtered animals with poor animal welfare and unwholesome meat for human consumption were marketed (Fuseini et al, 2017; Kanval et al., 2024). Besides, fake in labelling of non-halal meat as halal, contamination of halal meat and illegal meat trade were identified (Fuseini et al., 2017; McElwee, Smith, & Lever, 2017). In previous studies also indicated that the challenges of Malaysia halal food industries faced includes coordination and jurisdiction between multiple agencies (Soraji, Awang, & Mohd Yusoff, 2016; Rashid et al., 2023). Those identified problems were considered as common challenges that faced by countries that implementing and adopting the multi-agency approach in their national food control system. Additionally, the lack of coherence that leads to over-regulation or time gaps in adequate regulatory activity was also identified as problem faced by the country (FAO & WHO, 2003). The multi-agency approach give impact to the increase of complexity for total management control and may lead to transparency issue and the unrestricted flow of information between the multiple agencies (Al-busaidi & Jukes, 2015; Alomirah et al., 2010). Based on the previous researches, issue on the control of halal meat import shows that there is less research conducted in depth on this area. The arising issue related on the aspect of legal framework on halal meat control becomes a factor that this research is important to be implemented. Thus, this study is expected to give significant and positive impact for empowering the halal meat control in Malaysia through unifying its legal framework in assuring sustainability of halal industry in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative method based on doctrinal and empirical work. Qualitative method is an important mechanism in this research to answer the questions raised and to achieve the aims of this study that is to explore the management, mechanisms and challenges of the certification process of halal meat. The primary data was collected via a semi structured interview which was conducted via online and face-to-face with selected informants who are experts and authorized in managing the accredited halal certification body/agency. The informants were purposely selected based on their expertise especially on the focus area of the research. The criteria of selection among others are their specific position in the organization and being directly involved in the management of the halal meat process. The informants' extensive knowledge and experience in the halal meat certification process in Australia was an important skill needed for the study particularly in the aspect of involvement in the certification process or monitoring the compliance of halal certification in the meat industry. The selection of the informant were carefully been conducted after fulfilled the determined classifications aligns with the well-defined aims of the research. Three informants were interviewed and were coded as informant P1, P2 and P3. The coding system was utilized purposely to uphold the information's secrecy as declared in the authorization letter. Finally, it was used to simplify the identification of the codes for the whole data collected. The data collection was made using 5 codes namely export certification, the certification bodies, halal slaughter, halal labeling and traceability and auditing and inspection. These codes are analysed based on content and thematic analysis of the data acquired from doctrinal and fieldwork to map the framework of the Australian Halal Meat Governance Environment in Australia and Malaysia. Data from both sections were then systematically integrated to provide depth and comprehensive findings. The recorded data then were transcribed in verbatim and was analyzed using thematic analysis. In addition, secondary data were

collected from library resources, including journal articles whether in the form of hardcopy or online from the previous studies, books and online database. The collected data were analyzed thoroughly using content analysis following the theme set in order to achieved the objectives of this study.

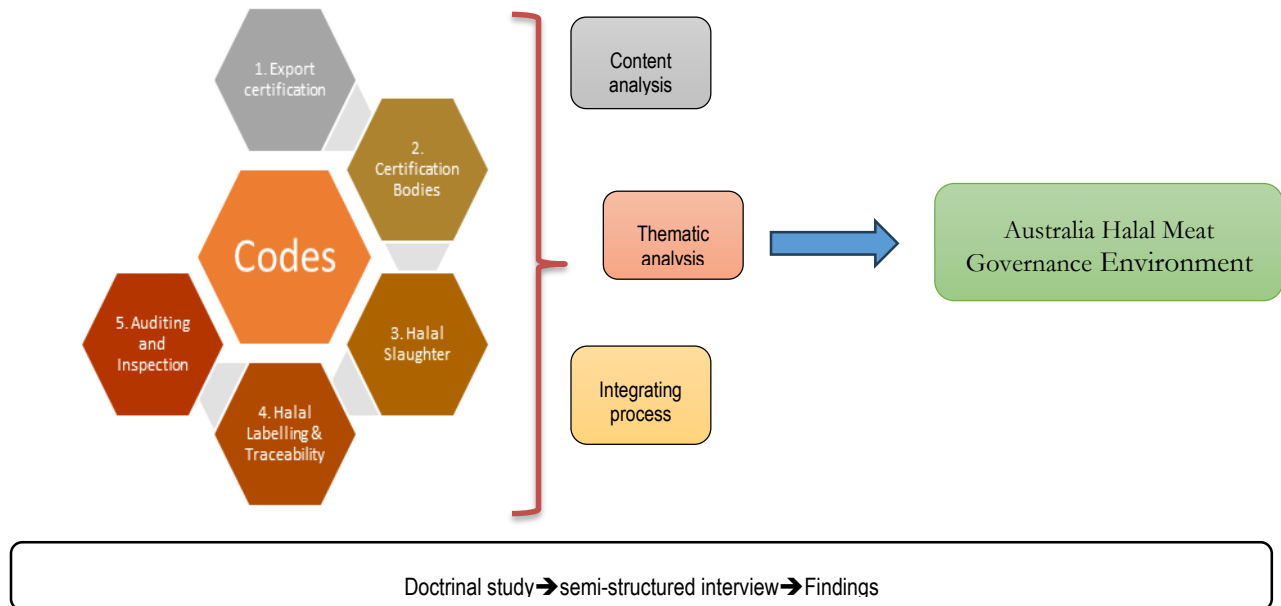


Figure 1: Diagram for the Research activities

FINDINGS

Export certification

Australian meat exporters seeking to export halal meat products must adhere to stringent certification processes. The Australian government issues export certificates that attest to the halal status of the meat products. These certificates provide assurance to importing countries that the products meet the required halal standards. The Official Halal Mark, which is securely monitored and applied by the Australian Government is used to identify all Australian halal red meat and offal intended for export. It can take the form of a stamp on the meat, a tag fastened to the carcass or a label on the carton. The utilization of the Official Halal Mark allows for the identification of an export-registered facility engaged in the production of Halal meat and meat products. This is accomplished by incorporating the establishment's registration number within the mark itself. AQIS Meat Notice 2009 / 08 – Guidelines for the Preparation, Identification, Storage and Certification for Export of Halal Red Meat and Red Meat Products provide guidelines to all establishments for the halal slaughter of livestock and preparation, identification, processing, storage, segregation and certification of halal red meat and red meat products (hereafter referred to as halal meat) for export to all importing countries. Australia exports halal meat to various countries and the importing countries may have additional requirements (Interview with ICCV). This requirement can be found in the Manual of Overseas Country Requirements. Additional requirements need to be addressed in the establishment's Approved Arrangements (AA). The Meat Transfer Certificate (MTC) covering halal meat being transferred between registered export establishments shall have the endorsement "Halal Meat" (section 5.4, AQIS Meat Notice 2009 / 08).

Malaysia

Halal certification bodies

JAKIM and Halal Development Corporation Berhad (HDC) have been entrusted with leading the administration of the halal industry in Malaysia since they have a head start in developing a well-structured halal regulatory and ecosystem. (MIDA,2023) The two organisations carry out this mission by utilising a large pool of educated expertise to provide practical solutions while strengthening systems and infrastructure in order to apply and conform to Malaysia's Halal Industry Master Plan 2030. Malaysia has a holistic halal ecosystem, facilitated through the establishment of the Malaysian Halal Industry Development Council. It plays a central role in advancing the country's halal industry. Key focuses include aligning halal policies and standards, providing industry education, conducting research and development, global marketing, halal certification and empowering halal entrepreneurs. Through international collaboration and strategic initiatives, the aim is to position Malaysia as a global leader in the halal economy, making a significant contribution to the country's socio-economic development. This involves active engagement with all stakeholders, including agencies and industries in Malaysia.

The decision to grant halal certification for the importation of meat and meat-based products into Malaysia from foreign slaughterhouses was made during the Cabinet Meeting on October 14, 2011, as documented in the Cabinet Meeting file (File of the Cabinet Meeting, n.d.). All such products must possess halal certification from recognized Foreign Halal Certification Bodies and the respective plants must undergo inspection and approval by JAKIM and the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) in adherence to The Malaysian Protocol for Halal Meat and Poultry Productions and MS 1500:2009. The import and export procedures for animal products including meat and meat-based products, as well as biological materials and animal feeds are governed by the Animals Act 1953 (Revised 2006) and the Animal Feed Act 2009. JPVM outlines the halal verification requirements which must be fulfilled by the recognized Foreign Halal Certification Body before submitting applications (Abdullah et al, 2019).

The application process involves joint inspections conducted by JPVM and JAKIM, as outlined in the Import Regulation for the Importation of Meat and Meat Products. During these inspections, JPVM officers focus on health and safety aspects while JAKIM officers, acting as Sharia auditors, assess Sharia compliance based on The Malaysian Protocol for Halal Meat and Poultry Productions 2011 and Malaysian Standard 1500:2009 (The Malaysian Protocol for the Halal Meat and Poultry Productions, n.d.).The approval of slaughterhouses is determined by the decision-making body, Jawatankuasa Teknikal Pengiktirafan Abatoir/Loji Pemprosesan Luar Negara (JTPALLN), which is managed by JPVM (Abdullah et al, 2019).

Halal certification in Australia is typically carried out by recognized and accredited halal certification agencies. These agencies assess and certify that the meat products comply with standard of halal food. The certification process includes evaluating the entire production chain from animal rearing and slaughtering to processing and packaging (Interview with ICCV/Observation). Each Approved Islamic Organisation is required to establish a system related to slaughterman where all slaughtermen registered must fulfill requirements acceptable under the religious grounds. This involves imposing a code of conduct outlining the religious roles, duties and observances expected of a practicing Muslim and conducting regular reviews of all slaughtermen. The Australian Government Authorised Halal Program (AGAHP) mandates that export firms only work with licensed Muslim slaughtermen who are actively involved in Islam. Muslim butchers are required to hold a permit with a photo ID and be certified to perform halal slaughter (AQIS Meat Notice 2009 / 08).

Halal slaughter

Islamic dietary laws require specific slaughter methods for animals. The rules and principles can be categorized into two main types: fundamental rules and ancillary rules. Failure to adhere to the fundamental rules results in the animal being rendered prohibited, while non-compliance with ancillary rules leads to the person involved in the slaughter process committing a sinful act. In the latter category, an animal is considered halal only if it complies with the fundamental rules of slaughter (Abdul Aziz, 2017). The fundamental rulings include the mandatory invoking of the name of Allah, using a sharp knife to cut the animal's throat and allowing the blood to drain out. Islamic slaughtering is also known as *Zabbah* which means the slaying of animals. Majority of Muslim scholars in the agreement that to meet the shariah requirement for the slaughtering process, three conditions shall be fulfilled. Firstly, the slaughtering methods shall use specific tools that are able to cut the animal vein and the position of the animals during slaughter. As for the second condition, the invocation must be made by the name of Allah and finally as to the criteria of the place of the slaughterer (Abdul Aziz, 2017).

Applying these Shariah principles to the halal meat industry is important to assure the protection of the Muslim consumer. Other than the selection of permissible animals, the slaughtering process must be performed by trained shariah personnel and this is a critical component of halal meat production. It must also be emphasised that certified halal meat not only assures that the slaughtering has complied with the Islamic slaughtering rulings but it also certifies that the meat is safe for consumption and hygiene. Thus, a halal meat producer must have a system that guarantees compliance to Islamic slaughtering rules, the meat is safe for consumption and it is clean. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has reinforced the authority of the Food Act of 1983, alongside regulations like the Food Regulations of 1985 and the Food Hygiene Regulations of 2009. These measures are implemented to safeguard consumers by ensuring that all food provided is free from hazardous substances, thereby guaranteeing its safety for consumption during preparation and consumption.

The Malaysia Halal meat control system is a comprehensive framework established to ensure that all aspects of meat production, processing and distribution adhere to Islamic dietary laws. Overseen primarily by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), this system involves stringent regulations, certification processes and monitoring mechanisms to guarantee the Halal status of meat products. In 2005, JAKIM released the Malaysian Halal Certification Procedure Manual (MPPHM), which underwent revisions in 2014 and further improvements in 2019 and 2020. This manual grants JAKIM, the authority to serve as the Halal certification body (Daud et al., 2023). The halal meat and poultry production is guided by the Malaysian Protocol for Halal Meat and Poultry Productions 2011 (MS 1500:2009 (E & M), halal Food - Production, Preparation, Handling And Storage - General guidelines (Second revision) to be read together with Animals Act 1953. In comparison, Australia's stringent food safety and traceability systems along with regulations are overseen by both the Australian Government and Approved Islamic Organizations throughout the production of Halal meat and its derivatives to ensure the maintenance of high food safety standards and the authenticity of Halal practices. This practice applies in their halal meat industry too. All Australian meat processing establishments exporting to Islamic markets must conform to the Australian Government Authorised Halal Program (AGAFP) Manual, jointly administered by Islamic Societies and the Australian Government. The export-oriented production of Halal red meat and offal in Australia mandates that all facilities adhere to a foundational production criterion outlined in accordance with the Australian Standard for the Production and Conveyance of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption. Moreover, meat establishments holding export accreditation must also observe the Export Control Act 2020 and its subsidiary regulations, namely the Export

Control (Meat and Meat Products) Rules 2021, alongside pertinent notifications pertaining to meat processing.

Labelling and traceability

Halal labeling assures consumers that products comply with Islamic principles, allowing them to make informed choices aligned with their religious beliefs. It helps build trust and confidence among consumers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, regarding the authenticity and integrity of products. It assures consumers that stringent Halal standards have been followed throughout the production process, from sourcing ingredients to manufacturing and packaging. Despite having a stringent halal labeling requirement, Malaysia's image was tarnished by a halal meat cartel scandal in 2017. In that year, the Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection Services (MAQIS) seized four containers suspected of carrying a mixture of hog and mutton products that were identified to have been sold in the Malaysian market. The cartel persisted for forty years due to ineffective enforcement by relevant agencies and Halal governance bodies (Yaacob et al., 2016). This criminal case sparked public outrage and calls for justice against those accountable for supplying counterfeit Halal meat to Malaysians. The Food Regulation 1985, notably Clause 11 (c), dealt with labeling. It was mandatory to mention on the label whether the product contained beef, pork or derivatives of these meats and fats. This level is sufficient to prevent Halal food adulteration in Malaysian marketplaces (Ruzulan, 2021). Food handlers are required to segregate food processing from swine-origin and the equipment under Clauses 36 (2) and (3) of the Food Hygiene Regulation 2009. Similarly, MS1500:2019 states that transporting Halal meat in the same vehicle as non-Halal meat is prohibited.

Proper labelling and traceability of halal meat products are essential for transparency and consumer confidence. Exported products must be clearly labelled as halal and the halal certification details should be traceable to verify the authenticity of the certification. Different importing countries may have their regulations and requirements for halal meat imports. Australian exporters must be aware of the specific regulations of their target markets and ensure compliance with those requirements (Interview with ICCV). The Australian Livestock Processing Industry Animal Welfare Certification System (AAWCS) is in place to guide the integrity of welfare practices and to ensure animals are humanely treated. All Australian Halal red meat and offal for export are identified with the Official Halal Mark which is securely controlled and applied by the Australian Government. This mark is only placed on products produced under the Approved Arrangement and when all Halal requirements have been met. In some situations, Halal authenticity guarantees a traceable link from the initial slaughter location to the subsequently approved export facility.

Auditing and inspection

As Malaysia imports a significant amount of halal meat from abroad, the government sets strict auditing and inspections of foreign-certified halal meat plants. The criteria entail that abattoirs and processing plants must be accredited by both the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) and JAKIM. Additionally, meat and meat-based products must carry Halal certification from the approved foreign Halal certification body recognized by JAKIM. Furthermore, a health certificate from the authorized veterinary agency of the exporting country is required and approval for imported meat and meat-based products must be obtained from the Department of Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection Services (MAQIS) before allowing entry into the Malaysian market. Companies seeking Halal certification must first submit an application to the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) or an Approved Islamic Organization (AIO). Before the actual audit inspection, a pre-audit assessment may be conducted to evaluate the company's readiness for the inspection. This assessment helps identify any potential areas of non-compliance that need to be addressed before

the audit. The Halal audit inspection involves an on-site visit to the company's premises by auditors from JAKIM or the AIO. During the inspection, auditors assess various aspects of the company's operations including facility cleanliness, segregation of Halal and non-Halal products, sourcing of ingredients, production processes and staff training. This application includes relevant information about the company's operations and products.

Criticism has been directed at the auditing process conducted by JAKIM, citing inconsistencies from one case to another. This critique stems from instances where certain companies obtained Halal certification despite hygiene issues while others were rejected for similar reasons. The perceived lack of consistency is attributed to the non-comprehensive nature of the Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification (Third Revision) 2014. While this manual outlines general requirements for the audit process, it fails to provide specific guidelines on how audits should be conducted (Abdul Aziz, 2017). Consequently, there have been suggestions for the development of a dedicated manual specifically addressing Halal auditing procedures that bring upon the revised Manual Procedure for Malaysia Halal Certification 2020.

The Australian Government conducts audits of Approved Islamic Organisations regularly to ensure all requirements are met. Australian government agencies conduct audits and inspections of meat processing facilities to ensure compliance with halal standards and export regulations. These inspections may be conducted by both Australian authorities and authorities from the importing country. Facilities must be inspected by AGAHP and approved as suitable for Halal production and/or slaughter. A representative of the Australian Government and an approved Islamic organisation conduct each inspection. Additionally, Australian establishments must have the required Approved Arrangement in place, approved by the Australian Government, to identify and maintain the integrity and segregation of Halal meat and offal during all phases of production, storage and transport in order to be eligible to export Halal meat. These systems are routinely audited by the Internal Quality Assurance staff of the meat industry, Approved Islamic Organisations, the Australian Government and authorities from importing countries. It is part of a AIOs AA that they assess an establishment's conformance with these halal procedures on a regular basis (section 7.3, AQIS Meat Notice 2009 / 08)

DISCUSSION

It can be said that both Malaysia and Australia have comprehensive regulations and guidelines governing the halal meat industry. Australia, although being a non-Muslim majority country holds a significant share in halal meat export to various countries around the world including Malaysia. As for Malaysia, the shortage of halal meat supply domestically requires a high dependency on the import of halal meat. Malaysia has a stringent legal framework and guidelines governing the production of halal local meat and the importation of Halal meat from other countries to protect Muslim consumers in Malaysia (Daud et. al, 2023; Shahidana et.al, 2023). The primary concern facing Halal food regulation in Malaysia is its governance, which falls under the purview of multiple government agencies, each with its own distinct set of Halal-related regulations. Apart from the Trade Descriptions Act (TDA) of 2011 and the Food Act of 1983, laws such as the Consumer Protection Act of 1999 and the Animal Rules of 1962 (Shahidana, 2023; Abdul Aziz, 2017) are also relevant to Halal matters. Furthermore, due to the extensive scope of Halal jurisdiction (Soraji et al., 2017), there is significant overlap in enforcement efforts, impacting the effective implementation of Halal laws in Malaysia.

As JAKIM took on the pivotal role of overseeing Muslim affairs in Malaysia and implemented Orders under the Trade Description Act 2011, its authority and jurisdiction expanded, empowering it to effectively manage Halal certification programs (Abdul Aziz, 2016). Meat producers and processors must obtain Halal certification from authorized bodies such as JAKIM or state Islamic religious

councils. This certification verifies compliance with Halal requirements at every stage of production. Malaysia has established clear standards and guidelines for Halal meat production, covering aspects such as animal slaughter, handling, hygiene and labeling (Zulfakar et al, 2014). These standards ensure consistency and uniformity across the industry. Government agencies conduct regular inspections and audits to ensure that Halal meat producers and processors comply with regulations. Non-compliance can result in penalties or revocation of Halal certification.

Halal meat in Australia intended for export which has been slaughtered following Halal requirements, is accompanied by an official Halal meat certificate. This certificate is validated through the joint signatures of an Australian Government-authorized officer and a delegate from an Approved Islamic Organization. The government official's signature on the Halal red meat certificate confirms compliance with regulatory requirements including meticulous identification and separation of the Halal product to maintain its integrity. Similarly, the approval from the Approved Islamic Organization acts as verification that the Halal product has been produced in accordance with the relevant religious guidelines. This process permits the official Halal certificate to be generated manually or electronically through Australia's secure export documentation system (EXDOC). Australian facilities exporting Halal-certified red meat must be supervised by an Approved Islamic Organization. As outlined in the Export Control (Meat and Meat Products) Rules 2021 and relevant meat notices, these organizations must have an Approved Arrangement with the Australian Government to provide Halal services to the Australian red meat export industry. The Islamic Organisation is required to abide by the obligations outlined in these regulations, which include training and supervising Muslim slaughter, evaluating and auditing the Halal aspects of the meat establishment, monitoring establishment Halal compliance, reporting non-conformances to the Australian Government, signing and endorsing halal certificates once all halal requirements within the Approved Arrangement have been satisfied and more.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study offers insights into the organisational framework and interconnected processes governing the halal meat industry within Australia. These revelations could offer valuable insights to halal regulators in Malaysia and other countries that engage in the import of Australian halal meat. Nonetheless, it's important to note that these findings may not be definitive due to challenges associated with maintaining confidentiality and addressing conflicts of interest during data collection. This, in turn, represents a limitation of the study. The involvement of a respondent from an Australian halal certification body, in the capacity of a representative from the importing country, was constrained by confidentiality concerns. Future research endeavors should delve into the realm of halal meat transportation oversight and monitoring, spanning the entire spectrum from export to import. Such investigations could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the global halal meat supply chain.

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PAPER CONTRIBUTION TO RELATED FIELD OF STUDY

The study offers insights into the organizational framework and interconnected processes governing the halal meat industry within Australia. These revelations could offer valuable insights to halal regulators in Malaysia and other countries that engage in the import of Australian halal meat

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