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Turkey Established a Halal Accreditation Authority

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Report Highlights:

The Turkish government established a new Halal Accreditation Authority (HAK) on November 18, 2017. It will provide halal accreditation services to halal conformity assessment institutions and replaces the former body which was part of the broader Turk Accreditation Authority. The Turkish public remains skeptical about the value of additional Halal certification processes in Turkey. Halal certification is voluntary in Turkey.

Turkey Established a Halal Accreditation Authority

The Turkish government established a Halal Accreditation Authority (HAK) under law no. 7060, published in the Official Gazette on November 18, 2017. The HAK, with a staff of 50, is affiliated with the Ministry of Economy. The HAK is only body authorized to provide halal accreditation services. Halal certification is voluntary in Turkey.

Background

As a term, “Halal Food” has been gaining importance among food and foreign trade sectors in Turkey over the past last ten years. While “Halal” is an Arabic word that means lawful or permitted, “Halal Food” refers to food that has been prepared according to Islamic dietary law, as defined in the Koran, and is free from pork products, alcohol, and other certain ingredients. According to this dietary law, Muslim followers cannot consume the following:

- pork or pork byproducts
- animals that were dead prior to slaughtering
- animals not slaughtered properly or not slaughtered in the name of Allah
- blood and blood by products
- alcohol
- carnivorous animals
- birds of prey
- land animals without external ears

These prohibited foods and ingredients are called haram, which means “forbidden” in Arabic.

For more information about “Halal food”, please refer to [The General Guidelines for Use of The Term “Halal”](#) prepared by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Halal certification is similar to any type of food certification and audit system. Whether it be halal, gluten-free, kosher, or organic, food certification services help consumers to make informed decisions regarding food.

Certification and standards for Halal food are a prominent part of trade with Muslim countries, but no global standard exists. Halal certification is a document given by a trustworthy, competent, and impartial institution to a food manufacturer to confirm production compliance with halal standards, in accordance with an approved method.

According to the Turkish Ministry of Economy, establishment of the new Halal Accreditation Authority is necessary to meet the demand for halal products and documentation for the growing population of Muslims worldwide, which currently is estimated at 1.8 billion people. The Halal concept is primarily associated with food products, but it also addresses a wide range of sectors such as textiles, cosmetics, logistics, and services. The potential global trade volume of the sectors subject to halal certification is currently about US\$ 3.9 trillion. Total expenditure of Muslims around the world on halal products is estimated to be \$1.17 trillion. However, differing halal standards and documentation systems result in obstacles to trade. In an effort to address these problems, Turkey advocated for the establishment of the Standards and Metrology Institute of Islamic Countries (SMIIC), which has 36 members and was established in 2010. It is based in Istanbul under the umbrella of the Organization of Islamic

Cooperation. SMIIC works on developing a reliable certification system based on worldwide common halal product standards. Interstate accreditation should be carried out within the Institute. Although some progress has been made in the establishment of a common halal accreditation and certification system within the Institute, the accreditation system is not yet functional.

Turkey's New Halal Accreditation Authority Established

Within this scope, the Turkish Ministry of Economy prepared a draft law for the establishment of the Halal Accreditation Authority in late May 2017 and it was legalized under law no 7060 published in the Official Gazette on November 18, 2017. The purpose of this law is to regulate the methods of establishment, organization and authorization of the Halal Accreditation Authority (HAK). The law in the Turkish language can be found [here](#).

There are several associations providing halal certification and inspection to the private sector as a halal conformity assessment institution in Turkey such as [GIMDES](#), [HEDEM](#), and [HELALDER](#). Some of them also can provide halal certificates conforming to other countries' standards under the authorization of that country's halal accreditation authority. These associations will likely remain the certification providers under the new accreditation body in the future.

There are 63 hotels in Turkey that utilize a "halal concept". Halal conformity assessment institutions will inspect these hotels, ski centers, cruises, etc. in terms of halal services as well as foods. According to the Turkish [media](#), the first Halal Ski Resort in Turkey opened in Erciyes, in the Kayseri Province in December 2017. In a meeting organized by the Turkish Central Anatolia Development Agency, the new halal ski resort was introduced to tourism agents from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Background on Halal Regulations and Bodies in Turkey

From an economic aspect, the growth in exports to other Muslim countries and the increase in tourists coming to Turkey from those countries are the driving forces for strengthening Halal regulations in Turkey. For instance, Turkish wheat product exporters need certification for exports to some countries which demand a halal label on products imported from Turkey, even though Turkey does not require such certification for the domestic market. The Turkish Standards Institution (TSE), the sole authorized body for standardization in Turkey, started the organization Halal Food Certification in 2011 for development of Halal Standards in Turkey. This was initiated with the foundation of the Standards and Metrology Institute for the Islamic Countries (SMIIC), of which the Turkish Standards Institution is a founder.

The Turk Accreditation Authority (TURKAK) is a national accreditation body which provides accreditation services in every sector in Turkey. TURKAK is a member of European Accreditation and has a Multilateral Agreement (EA MLA) whereby the signatories recognize and accept the equivalence of the accreditation systems operated by the signing members. They used to provide accreditation to halal conformity assessment institutions as well, but according to a condition set by the Standards and Metrology Institute for the Islamic Countries, halal conformity assessment institutions must be Muslim. Because this requirement is not in line with the EU harmonization process and European Accreditation rules, the Ministry of Economy has argued that TURKAK cannot provide halal accreditation transactions. To avoid any problems, the government of Turkey established a new

independent body to serve as the halal accreditation authority.

Duties and Authorities of the Institution

The Ministry associated with the new Halal Accreditation Authority is the Ministry of Economy. According to the Law on the establishment, the duties and authorization of the Halal Accreditation Agency are as follows:

- 1- Providing halal accreditation services to halal conformity assessment institutions established in Turkey and abroad, determining the criteria and measures related to halal accreditation and implementing them.
- 2- Within the scope of functions, representing Turkey in international and regional accreditation unions and organizations, becoming a member of them, participating in management or serving as the center of these organizations, signing bilateral or multilateral mutual recognition agreements, getting in contact and cooperating with institutions and organizations related to halal accreditation in countries which do not have accreditation bodies and accreditation bodies.
- 3- Performing all kinds of scientific and technical studies on halal accreditation. Carrying out activities that increase the importance of halal accreditation; in this context, providing education, providing research and publications or organizing national and international congresses, seminars and similar meetings.
- 4- In order to run the institution operations; purchasing services; acquiring, selling, renting and overseeing construction of properties.
- 5- Fulfilling other duties given by the law

According to the law, the institution has three bodies: Board of Directors, Advisory Board and General Secretary. The decision body, which is the Board of Directors, consists of five members which are assigned by the Prime Minister. This includes two governmental representatives, the chairperson, and two private sector representatives selected from the Advisory Board.

According to the law, the Advisory Board consists of one representative from each of the following government and private sector organizations, with a term of office for each member of three years. Each organization selects their own representative to be on the board:

Ministry of Science Industry and Technology,
Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock,
Ministry of Customs and Trade,
Ministry of Interior,
Ministry of Development,
Ministry of Culture and Tourism,
Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Education,
Ministry of Health,
Ministry of Transportation, Maritime and Communication,
Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIYANET),
Undersecretariat of Treasury,
Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency,
Capital Markets Board of Turkey,
Small and Medium Industry Development Organization,

Turkish Accreditation Authority,
Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency,
Turkish Standards Institution,
Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey,
Council of Higher Education,
Turkish Exporters Assembly,
Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey,
Foreign Economic Relations Board,
Participation Banks Association of Turkey,
Turkish Capital Market Association,
Confederation of Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen,
Union of Agricultural Chambers,
Association of Turkish Travel Agencies,
Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association,
Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association,
Hotel Association of Turkey,
The Association of Turkish Milk, Meat, Food Industrialists and Manufacturers Association,
Poultry Meat Producers and Breeders Association,
National Grain Council,
National Cotton Council,
National Red Meal Council,
National Milk Council,
National Citrus Council,
National Pulses Council,
National Olive and Olive oil Council,
National Hazelnut Council,
National Tea Council,
Consumer Association

Duties required by the services of the Authority are performed by the Secretary General and its departments. The HAK may open offices in other countries to carry out its services. Overseas offices can be opened by a cabinet decree with a ministerial proposal. There are currently not any overseas offices.

Conflicting Opinions in the Turkish Public

This change is largely an administrative change as to which institution will be the official accreditation body for halal. The same associations/organizations will likely serve as inspectors, but what is unclear is how it may be implemented in the future and how it could impact trade and domestic food prices.

This halal certification focus is driven partially by Turkey's turn toward the Middle East and Muslim African countries as new trading partners where additional Halal certification is needed. New Middle Eastern tourists also look for Halal labeling while they are in Turkey. Another driver is Turkey's growing conservative religious population domestically. They see a Halal label as a specialty product, and also there are reports that some of them are skeptical of goods produced by multinational companies in Turkey and are concerned that they may not be strictly observing Halal.

After the news of the establishment of the HAK, public debates began regarding the possible effects of a Halal-centered approach. Besides positive comments on the new body as an opportunity to lead the international Halal market, there are some concerns about its impact on the Turkish domestic market, such as being a sign of disappearing secularism and that it will further exacerbate the rise in food prices. Currently high food prices and food inflation are priority issues of the Turkish government and an important concern of the population. Despite the justification given by the government that the halal certification will focus on exported goods and goods for the tourism sector, some critics argue that this law and certification process is just another way to generate revenue for the government. In the media, there is discussion that once there is nationwide commercial advertising of Halal goods from bread to toothpaste, companies may be afraid to not have Halal products and will then all be forced to pay for halal certification. Also, taxpayers fear they will have to foot the bill to support the new body, whether they use Halal-certified food or not.