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Prepared By: Hussein Mousa

Approved By: Chris Frederick

Report Highlights:

This report explains Saudi Arabia’s halal food requirements, including the applicable GSO standards, mandatory certification requirements, and compliance obligations for food imports, with particular emphasis on meat and poultry products. It also outlines the three-step process for recognizing U.S. Halal Certification Bodies through the Saudi Accreditation Center or the Gulf Accreditation Center, registration with SASO, and final accreditation by the SFDA's Halal Center, including applicable fees and ongoing compliance considerations.

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This report is divided into two main sections: (1) Halal Food and (2) Procedures for the Recognition of Halal Certification Bodies.

Section I. Definition of Halal Food

Halal food refers to food and beverages that are permissible for consumption under Islamic law (Shariah). The term *halal* is an Arabic word meaning "permissible" or "lawful." Halal food must comply with Islamic dietary requirements, including the ingredients used, the method of preparation, processing, storage, transportation, and handling. For regulatory purposes, a halal product is a product that is permissible under Islamic law and complies with the applicable Saudi or Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Standardization Organization (GSO) halal regulations and standards. In its food import requirements, SFDA defines halal food as food and drinks permitted under Islamic rules by eating, drinking, injecting, or inhaling and requires compliance with the two regulations: SFDA.FD/GSO 2055-1 and SFDA.FD/GSO 993. Halal requirements are an important component of Saudi Arabia's food import and regulatory system. The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) oversees food safety and regulatory compliance, while the Saudi Halal Center, an agency within SFDA, is responsible for administering the halal certification framework and recognizing halal certification bodies.

SFDA.FD/GSO 2055-1 is a technical GSO regulation enforced by SFDA and the GSO that sets the general requirements for halal food. It governs Islamic Sharia compliance across every part of the food chain, including preparation, handling, labeling, and transportation. In practical terms, imported food products should not contain prohibited ingredients or substances and must not become contaminated with prohibited materials during processing, handling, storage, or transportation where such requirements apply.

For products carrying a halal claim or halal logo, the importer/exporter must be able to provide evidence supporting the claim. SFDA's food-clearance guidance specifically states that when a halal logo or quality mark is used, evidence must be provided to verify the claim.

Under SFDA regulations, halal food refers to food and beverages that are permitted for consumption under Islamic rules and comply with the applicable Saudi/GCC halal standards, including SFDA.FD/GSO 2055-1 and SFDA.FD/GSO 993.

1. **SFDA.FD/GSO 2055-1 "Halal Food – Part 1: General Requirements"** sets the general requirements for halal food across the entire supply chain. It establishes strict compliance requirements for food production, handling, processing, storage, transportation, and the entire supply chain.

   Key Requirements

   - Scope: applies to all food and beverages that require mandatory halal labeling and products that carry voluntary halal labeling (including halal logos). In addition to animal products, it also includes composite foods containing animal-derived ingredients such as gelatin, collagen, animal fats, enzymes, and rennet.
   - Supply Chain: Applies to receiving, preparation, packaging, labeling, handling, and storage in the country of origin. Also includes transport and distribution while in transit.

- Sharia Compliance: Requires strict adherence to Islamic rules, prohibiting non-halal ingredients, pork and its derivatives, alcohol, and improper animal slaughter.

- Cross-Contamination Controls: Mandates segregation and facility protocols to prevent mixing halal and non-halal products.

- Documentation & Traceability: Demands documented ingredient lists, proof of supplier compliance, and comprehensive traceability records.

Halal compliance therefore extends beyond the ingredients used in a finished product. Depending on the product and certification requirement, it can involve the source of ingredients, processing, production facilities, handling, storage, transportation, and, for meat and poultry, the method of slaughter.

2. **SFDA.FD/GSO 993 "Animal Slaughtering According to Islamic Rules"** is an official technical regulation enforced by SFDA and GSO that outlines the mandatory requirements for animal slaughtering in accordance with Islamic rules (Sharia).

Core Rules of SFDA.FD/GSO 993

- Slaughter Methods: The animal must be alive at the time of slaughter, and the throat and major blood vessels must be cut using a clean, sharp blade to induce rapid bleeding and death.

- Slaughterer Qualifications: The person performing the slaughter must be properly trained and of Muslim, Christian, or Jewish faith.

- Prohibition of Stunning: SFDA prohibits poultry stunning practices due to concerns that stunning may cause a bird's death before manual or mechanical slaughter. Local poultry farms and foreign companies exporting poultry products to Saudi Arabia must comply with the applicable requirements governing the poultry stunning ban to access the Saudi market.

3. **Products Subject to Mandatory Halal Certification**

SFDA states that halal slaughter certification is mandatory for shipments of meat, poultry, and their products entering the Kingdom. The certificate must be issued by a halal certification body recognized/designated through the Saudi Halal Center. This requirement is particularly important for U.S. exporters of:

- Beef and beef products
- Lamb and sheep meat
- Goat meat
- Poultry
- Processed meat products
- Processed poultry products

- Other products derived from animals (e.g., gelatin, rennet and animal enzymes, edible animal offal, fats and tallow)

Exporters should verify the specific certification requirement applicable to each product before shipment because requirements can vary according to product classification and the ingredients or animal-derived materials used.

4. Halal Certification and Shipment Certificates

Saudi Arabia distinguishes between a general halal certificate and a shipment/consignment certificate:

A Halal Certificate confirms that the specified product, service, establishment, or system complies with halal requirements. SFDA states that this certificate has a validity period of three years.

A Halal Consignment/Shipment Certificate is issued by a halal certification body recognized by the Saudi Halal Center and accompanies each shipment of products that require halal certification.
For meat and poultry, SFDA specifically refers to a halal slaughter certificate accompanying the shipment.

Therefore, exporters should not assume that holding a general halal certificate automatically eliminates the need for shipment-specific documentation.

5. Facility and Production Requirements

Halal compliance can extend to the establishment where products are produced. The Saudi Halal Center describes a certification process that includes submission of an application and supporting documents, an assessment of the applicant's eligibility, payment of applicable fees, and an audit of the facility. The audit is intended to verify compliance with applicable halal standards and requirements. Consequently, companies seeking halal certification may need to demonstrate appropriate controls over:

1. Raw materials and ingredients;
2. Animal-derived ingredients;
3. Production processes;
4. Equipment and utensils;
5. Cleaning and sanitation procedures;
6. Storage and handling;
7. Prevention of cross-contamination;
8. Traceability; and
9. Documentation supporting halal claims.

The exact requirements depend on the product and the applicable Saudi halal standard.

6. Facility Audits and Inspections

Foreign animal and poultry slaughterhouses and processing facilities seeking approval to export poultry products to Saudi Arabia must comply with the SFDA’s establishment approval and registration

requirements. Depending on the approval process and the circumstances, the SFDA may require an on-site or remote inspection before granting approval. Approved facilities may also be subject to subsequent inspections or random on-site audits to verify continued compliance with applicable Saudi food safety and regulatory requirements. Facilities seeking to be added to or amend their status on the approved establishment list must follow the applicable submission and review procedures through competent authority in the exporting country.

7. Ingredients and Processed Foods

For processed foods, Saudi Arabia does not require all processed foods to be halal certified. However, if a processed food is labeled and marketed as halal, it must not contain ingredients that render the product haram. Attention should be given to ingredients and processing aids derived from animals or other potentially non-halal sources. Examples can include:

- Gelatin;
- Animal fats;
- Meat extracts;
- Enzymes;
- Emulsifiers;
- Certain flavorings;
- Certain processing aids; and
- Other animal-derived ingredients.

Halal Labeling Requirements: The SFDA does not generally require processed food products to carry a halal label unless they contain ingredients of animal origin that are subject to halal requirements. If a halal claim or label is used, it must be supported by a valid halal certificate issued by a halal certification body recognized or licensed by the SFDA's Halal Center.

8. Meat and Poultry

Meat and poultry represent the most significant category from a mandatory halal certification perspective. For imported meat and poultry, halal requirements generally cover both the animal and slaughter process and the subsequent handling of the product.

Exporters should therefore ensure that:

- The slaughter establishment is eligible to export to Saudi Arabia;
- The slaughter process complies with applicable halal requirements;
- The halal certification body is recognized by the Saudi Halal Center;
- The appropriate halal slaughter documentation is issued; and
- The required certificate accompanies the shipment.

SFDA expressly states that halal slaughter certification is mandatory for incoming shipments of meat, poultry, and their products.

9. Diary and Other Consumer-Oriented Products

Saudi Arabia does not have a requirement that all dairy products must be certified as halal. However, like processed products, dairy products that carry halal logos or are marketed as halal must meet Saudi Arabia's halal requirements and be able to produce evidence to support these claims. For example, a dairy product may not necessarily be subject to the same shipment-level certificate requirement as imported beef or poultry. However, ingredients of animal origin and any halal claim on the product may still require appropriate supporting documentation. For example, cheese containing animal-derived rennet may require halal certification to demonstrate compliance with Saudi halal requirements. The requirement depends on the source of the rennet and the applicable Saudi regulations; microbial or plant-derived rennet may be subject to different requirements. Exporters should therefore evaluate halal requirements on a product-by-product basis, rather than assuming that all food products are subject to identical halal certification procedures.

10. Implications for U.S. Exporters

U.S. companies exporting food products to Saudi Arabia should consider the following steps before shipment:

1. Determine whether the product requires halal certification.
2. Review the product's ingredients, particularly animal-derived ingredients and processing aids.
3. Determine whether a halal claim or logo is being made on the product or packaging.
4. Use a halal certification body recognized by the Saudi Halal Center when certification is required.
5. Obtain the appropriate halal certificate or shipment certificate.
6. For meat and poultry, obtain the required halal slaughter certificate for each shipment.
7. Maintain documentation supporting the halal status of ingredients and production processes.
8. Ensure that the halal documentation is consistent with the product, exporter, establishment, and shipment information.
9. Verify the current Saudi requirements before shipment, because SFDA requirements and recognized certification bodies can be updated.

Section II. Procedures for the Recognition of Halal Certification Bodies (HCBs)

What are HCBs? They are organizations responsible for assessing, verifying, and certifying that food products, ingredients, manufacturing processes, and related activities comply with applicable halal requirements based on Islamic law (Shariah) and relevant halal standards.

These bodies evaluate whether products and production processes meet halal requirements by reviewing ingredients, inspecting production facilities, assessing processing and handling procedures, and verifying that appropriate measures are in place to prevent contamination with non-halal substances. HCBs also issue halal certificates to eligible businesses and products that meet the applicable requirements. Depending on the relevant regulatory framework, they may need to obtain accreditation or recognition from a competent authority to have their certificates accepted in specific countries or markets.

Only recognized U.S. HCBs are authorized to issue halal certificates for products exported to Saudi Arabia. There is a three-part process for U.S. HCBs to be properly recognized. First, they must be accredited by either the Saudi Accreditation Center or the Gulf Accreditation Center. Second, they must register with SASO. Lastly, they must also register with the Saudi Halal Center. After this final step, the Saudi Halal Center will list the registered HCB at this link. As of the date of this report, the following four U.S. companies are accredited to issue halal certificates for shipments originating in the United States:

1. **Halal Transactions Inc**

   11636 West Center Rd 11636 West Center Rd, Omaha, USA

2. **Regulatory Affairs and Conformity Services (RACS LLC)**

   5625 Cypress Creek Parkway, Suite 210, Houston , Texas

3. **Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America**

   2004 Miner St, Des Plaines, IL

4. **American Halal Foundation**

   Cross Creek Blvd, Tampa , Florida

U.S. exporters should confirm that the HCB it plans on using is listed on the website.

1. **Accreditation by the Saudi Accreditation Center (SAC) or Gulf Accreditation Center (GAC**): is a formal recognition by either SAC or GAC that an organization is competent to perform specified testing, inspection, calibration, or certification activities in accordance with applicable halal regulations /standards. SAC is the Saudi national body responsible for accrediting conformity assessment bodies, such as testing and calibration laboratories, inspection bodies, and certification bodies, to verify their competence and compliance with relevant standards while GAC is the regional accreditation body serving GCC countries that accredits conformity assessment bodies to ensure their competence and compliance with internationally recognized standards.

2. **The first step is for the HCB to obtain accreditation from either SAC or GAC, confirming its competence to perform the relevant conformity assessment activities in accordance with applicable standards.**

- **Saudi Accreditation Center (SAC): or**
- **Gulf Accreditation Center (GAC)**:

This accreditation establishes that the HCB has technical competence and appropriate management systems to perform halal conformity-assessment and certification activities. The HCB should obtain accreditation for the specific scope of halal certification activities it intends to conduct. The scope may include particular products, production activities, animal species, slaughter operations, or other

applicable categories. For example, an HCB specializing in meat and poultry should ensure that its accreditation scope appropriately covers the relevant slaughter and certification activities.

3. **Registration with the Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization (SASO)**

After obtaining accreditation from SAC or GAC, the HCB must register with SASO. SASO is responsible for Saudi Arabia's standards and conformity-assessment framework. Online registration with SASO represents the second stage in the recognition process for halal certification bodies. A list of SASO-approved bodies can be found here: SASO-approved HCBs. The applying HCB should ensure that the information submitted to SASO is consistent with the accreditation obtained from SAC or GAC, including:

- Legal identity of the certification body;
- Accreditation status;
- Accreditation scope;
- Certification activities;
- Relevant standards and technical requirements; and
- Contact and organizational information.

4. **Registration with the Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) Halal Center**

The final stage is registration with SFDA Halal Center. The Saudi Halal Center is an SFDA initiative responsible for developing and administering halal certification services. The Center provides halal certification services to establishments and food-related service providers. Its certification process includes the submission of an application, document review, eligibility assessment, facility auditing, and a final certification decision. The Center also provides information on recognized halal certification bodies, which is particularly important for foreign exporters.

For an overseas halal certification body to be recognized, the Saudi Halal Center evaluates the organization and its compliance with applicable Saudi halal requirements. The recognition and approval of halal certification bodies are governed by several important Saudi and Gulf regulations and technical standards, including the following:

- **GSO 2055-2 "Halal Products, Part 2: General Requirements for Halal Certification Bodies"**

This governs the organizations that *issue* Halal certificates, built largely on ISO/IEC 17065 (product certification) and ISO/IEC 17021 / ISO/TS 22003 (management-system/food-safety certification) frameworks.

- **GSO 2055-3 "Halal Products, Part 3: General Requirements for Halal Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Halal Certification Bodies"**

Note: The HCB's SFDA registration should correspond to its approved certification scope.

Completion of all three stages is required before an HCB can certify products destined for Saudi Arabia. The sequence is also important: the HCB should first obtain SAC/GAC accreditation, followed by registration with SASO, and then complete the accreditation and registration process with the SFDA Halal Center. Only after completing all three stages can the HCB certify products for export to Saudi Arabia. The list of currently approved halal certification bodies is here.

5. **SFDA Halal Center Charges:**

Please note that the fees below are specifically related to the services provided by the Saudi Halal Center. They do not represent the overall fees or charges imposed by the SFDA in relation to imported food products.

Please note that all amounts are in Saudi Riyals (SAR):

Service	**Validity for**	**Price in Saudi Riyal (SAR)**	**USD**
Conformity Body Certification	3 years (for one category)	SAR 16,000 + 5,000 for each additional category	$4,266.67 + $1,333.33 for each additional category
External Establishments Certificate	A year	SAR3,750	$1,000
Internal Establishments Certificate	A year	SAR7,000	$1,866.67
Internal Halal Logo Certificate (Optional)	N/A	SAR6,000	$1,600
Shipment Certification	N/A	SAR 1,000 for each Shipment (27 Ton) Max per Shipment Certificate	$2,66.67

Attachments:

No Attachments.