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Halal: Filipino Muslim Experience and Trajectory



Darwin J. Absari and Camille Lucille A. Bello

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UPCIDS POLICY BRIEF 2022-15
**Operationalizing Halal Food and Beverage for
Philippine Tourism**
Nefertari Al-Raschid-Arsad¹
Introduction
The Philippines' creation of the Philippine Halal Report Development Board in 2016 established multiagency collaborations and stimulated concurrent actions towards halal development in the Philippines. The Department of Tourism (DOT), one of its member agencies, launched its Muslim-Friendly Tourism signature program in 2020. The tourism package is expected to be the face and show window of halal institutionalization in the Philippines. This policy brief is delimited to discussions on the operationalization of halal food and beverages in the Philippines, with prior discussions on aspects of halal development.
Halal Standards and Practice
Halal food and beverage operationalization has commonly been tagged as a farm-to-fork endeavor. Given this breadth, it is expected to be a comprehensive and multilevel enterprise. The scope and limitations of the enterprise would, however, depend on the ecosystem in which it is situated. The laws governing halal stem from the Shari'ah law of Muslims and fall within the compass of religious jurisdiction and practice. Only Muslims with extensive knowledge of Shari'ah exercise the authority to judge whether a food or beverage may be certified halal based
on explicit, documented evidence. In most Muslim countries, halal and haram (Arabic, wholesome) guidelines prevail over the food they locally produce. Such guidelines are also developed locally. With the expansion of international trade, the flow of goods among countries necessitated subtle changes. Dag and Ekbat-Gane (2015) offers that difference in halal standards hampered trade among Muslim countries. The variations they cite pertain to aspects of assessment, certification, laboratory testing, and standardization. This trade barrier was the impetus for the creation of the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) in August 2010, under the jurisdiction of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the intergovernmental organization of 57 Muslim countries. SMIIC was tasked to harmonize halal standards, attain uniformity in all related aspects, and provide initial technical assistance to OIC member states towards this end. Within the countries and regions where Muslims are the majority, harmonization in metrology, testing, and standards is assured. This is expectedly not the case in non-Muslim states.
Adams (2011, 127) notes that under its Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter (EU Directive 609/119/EEC, 22 December 1986), the Council of Europe "consigns ritual slaughter from mandatory stunning" if they are "slaughtered for religious purposes." The same is not the case across the Nordic

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PROGRAM ON ISLAMIC STUDIES
**WHY HALAL CERTIFICATION
IS IMPORTANT**
Marie Sol Hidalgo, Dempster Samarista, and Nefertari Arsad¹
WHAT IS HALAL CERTIFICATION?
Halal certification has become the primary assurance in today's marketplace that products and services are suitable for consumption or use by Muslims. With the global Muslim population growing rapidly and the high demand for halal products in affluent Muslim-majority countries, halal certification and its supporting infrastructure remains vital components in today's economy.
A survey of literature on definitions of halal certification was conducted to establish a clear, conceptual picture. The definitions were analyzed based on the nature, function, and necessary conditions for halal certification. (See Table 1)
Halal certification definitions are nuanced, referencing foundation, outcomes, and processes involved in certification. Halal certification is grounded in explicit scriptural principles stated in various chapters and
verses of the Qur'an, which are consistently cited in the literature on Halal. Technical definitions of Halal certification identify its key components: 1) an instrument to verify not only Halal status of a product but also its safety and cleanliness; 2) a procedure for investigating the food supply chain, which includes assessing the permissibility of ingredients, cleanliness, and hygiene; 3) an indicator that guarantees critical aspects such as rigorous examination, the credibility of certification examiners, and Shariah compliance of the supply chain. Overall, Halal and Tayyib (wholesome) are both associated with goodness, safety, hygiene, and suitability for consumption.

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Operationalizing Halal Food and Beverage for
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Why Halal Certification is Important

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HALAL: FILIPINO MUSLIM EXPERIENCE AND TRAJECTORY

Darwin J. Absari¹ and Camille Lucille A. Bello²

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ABSTRACT

The subject of halal and haram has been an important component in the lives of Filipino Muslims since the introduction of Islam in the late 12th century. With the inclusion of Mindanao and Sulu during the 1946 granting of Philippine Independence by the Americans, the Muslims became the largest religious minority in the Philippines, a country that was Christianized by the Spaniards from the mid-16th century to the 19th century. The continuing increase of the Muslim population in Christian-dominated areas coincided with the growth of the global halal industries in the late 1980s. Muslims' concern with halal food was gradually met by private companies who then needed halal certification from religious organizations to export their products to Islamic countries. Seeing its economic potential, the government also came up with various policies and programs to boost halal supply in the country. While these programs helped develop the halal industry, they also faced several challenges that affected the credibility of the halal products and management.

Studies on halal in the Philippines mainly focused on food, industries, and policies. This paper will look into how halal was operationalized in the past and present life of Filipino Muslims and their experiences vis-à-vis the growth of halal industries propelled by various government programs and policies. It further aims to contribute appropriate policies by examining how the current programs addressed the challenges of making the country competitive in the global halal market while maintaining halal's essential and significant meaning.

Keywords and Abbreviations: halal (lawful), haram (forbidden), IDCP (Islamic Da'wah Council of the Philippines, BARMM (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, NCMF (National Commission on Muslim Filipinos), DTI (Department of Trade and Industry), DA (Department of Agriculture), DOST (Department of Science and Technology), TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority), RA (Republic Act).

INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, the concepts of lawful and prohibited have been known to every nation. The Arabs were already concerned about what was lawful and prohibited, and the introduction of Islam came with a comprehensive yet clear view on the subject (al-Qaradawi 1999). In their general sense, the concepts of halal (لحال “lawful”) and haram (حرام “prohibited”) cover all aspects of human life from personal or private to interpersonal or public matters. Shameful deeds, committing sins, and associating “partners” with Allah are examples of what God has prohibited in Islam (Qur’an 7:33). On the other hand, lawful earnings and food consumption, which is the subject of this paper, are those that God encourages in Islam. The Qur’an explicitly says, “O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan” (2:168). Halal food for Muslims involves following dietary laws found in the Qur’an and sunna, as interpreted by Muslim scholars over the years. For instance, Islamic principles prohibit Muslims from consuming pork and pork-based products, as well as blood-based products, carnivorous animals, and animals that have not been slaughtered according to Islamic practices outlined in the Qur’an and hadith traditions (Regenstein, Chaudry, and Regenstein 2003). The Qur’an states, “Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, and swine; what is slaughtered in the name of any other than Allah; what is killed by strangling, beating, a fall, or by being gored to death; what is partly eaten by a predator unless you slaughter it; and what is sacrificed on altars” (5:3; *The Clear Quran*).

The importance of halal and haram discourses is attached to the concept of purification, which in Islam constitutes half of faith. The Prophet once said, “Cleanliness is half of faith” (*Sahih Muslim*, hadith 223, 2:1). This is also connected to one’s worship. According to Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), a body nourished with haram will not enter paradise. In another hadith, he also said,

Allah the Almighty is Good and accepts only that which is good. And verily Allah has commanded the believers to do that which He has commanded the Messengers. So the Almighty has said: “O (you) Messengers! Eat of the tayyibat (good things), and perform righteous deeds.” [23:51] and the Almighty has said: “O you who believe! Eat of the lawful things that We have provided you.” [2:172]” Then he (peace be upon him) mentioned a man who, having journeyed far, is dishevelled and dusty, and who spreads out his hands to the sky

saying “O Lord! O Lord!” while his food is haram (unlawful), his drink is haram, his clothing is haram, and he has been nourished with haram, so how can [his supplication] be answered? (an-Nawawi, hadith 10)

Because of this, Muslims around the world, especially minorities residing in non-Muslim countries are so concerned about the food they eat.

For Muslims in the Philippines who were Islamized since the late 12th century, the concepts of *hak* and *harām natinggal* are more important than ensuring that food is free from haram ingredients like pork. *Hak* is derived from Arabic Haq (truth or right) refers to the rights or share of others while *harām natinggal* is something that is taken unlawfully like corruption, through deceit in business transactions, or anything that is derived from unlawful earnings. While pork eaten can be purified by what they call saltun, or drinking water from dissolved soil, the *hak* that has been eaten will become *harām natinggal*. Only by returning the *hak* or money to its rightful owner can this be purified (Tausug Spiritual Practitioners in Zamboanga City 2024; Tausug Traditional Religious Leaders in Jolo 2024).³

With a total of 6,981,710 as of 2020, Muslims in the Philippines are the largest religious minority group constituting 6.8 percent of the country’s total population. 90.9 percent or 4.49 million are residing in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) (Philippine Statistics Authority 2023).⁴ The issue of halal and haram for food consumption among Muslims in Mindanao, especially in the Sulu archipelago that sources food from Malaysia, was not of utmost concern in the past. This explains why despite being part of the Organic Act, halal programs have been entirely absent since the establishment of regional government through Republic Act (RA) No. 6734 or the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao in 1989. However, as the Muslim population started to grow in Christian-dominated areas, halal food became their concern. Furthermore, the desire of some private companies to export their products to Islamic

3 Small focus group discussions were conducted with Tausug spiritual and religious leaders based in Zamboanga and Sulu on 30 June and 31 July 2024 respectively.

4 2020 census data on religious affiliation were released through a press release of the Philippine Statistics Authority on 22 February 2023.

countries compelled them to secure halal certificates from a local religious organization. This paved the way for the growth of the halal industry in the country.

THE GROWTH AND CHALLENGES OF THE HALAL INDUSTRY IN THE PHILIPPINES

The growth of the halal industry in the Philippines started with the Islamic Da'wah Council of the Philippines (IDCP), a religious organization initiated by Attorney Abdul Rahman Linzag in 1981. IDCP immediately became an umbrella organization of various Muslim groups mostly in Metro Manila. Its first president was the late Ustadz Abdulrafy Sayyedy, a former dean of the Institute of Islamic Studies who obtained his degree in Islamic Law at al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt.

As IDCP became famous, especially in its propagation endeavor, it started receiving calls from private companies who wanted to secure halal certification for their products to be exported to Islamic countries. Initially IDCP gave these companies an en banc resolution after IDCP board members examined the products.

In 1987, IDCP started to include halal verification and accreditation on food and nonfood products. In 1995, IDCP formulated its halal certification policies. Since then, it has attracted more private companies to secure halal certification. Some big companies also started to employ Muslims. Christian employees who are involved in the companies' halal production are now exposed to this Islamic concept. Some ended up converting to Islam. This exposure contributed to the bridging of religious and cultural gaps among Muslim and Christian Filipinos.

The first challenge in this growth of the halal industry was when President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, through her Executive Secretary, issued Executive Order (EO) No. 46 in 2001. This was motivated by her attendance at an ASEAN economic summit where she was asked to make halal those Philippine products that were to be exported to Islamic countries. EO No. 46 created the Philippine Halal Certification Scheme and designated the Office of Muslim Affairs (OMA) to oversee the implementation and the exclusive authority to

issue halal certificates and perform other related regulatory activities (Office of the President 2001). Some employees of the OMA engaged in a bogus halal certification that slowly sidelined the IDCP. IDCP President Attorney Linzag filed a petition in the Supreme Court. Invoking the separation of Church and State, IDCP argued that halal certification is a matter of religious activities which the government should not interfere with. In 2003, the Supreme Court favored IDCP's petition and declared EO No. 46 null and void (*Islamic Da'wah Council of the Philippines v. Office of the Executive Secretary* 2003).

Halal's potential to boost economic growth motivated some policymakers to sponsor bills in Congress and the Senate. In 2007, Senator Ralph Recto was among the first legislators to advocate for the establishment of companies catering to halal food, recognizing the industry's rapid global growth. In a press release by the Senate of the Philippines, he emphasized the need to explore the country's potential as a key player in the halal industry, which had already been valued at \$150 billion at that time. His recommendation specifically called for the creation of a halal authority responsible for certifying food according to Islamic practices, as well as auditing, assessing, and accrediting agencies involved in halal imports. Additionally, he expressed support for Brunei's plan to build a halal food processing plant in Mindanao, northern Palawan, or Masbate. Beyond its economic benefits, the proposed bill would not only strengthen the halal food industry but would also create additional job opportunities for Filipino Muslims (Senate of the Philippines 2007).

In February 2010, the function of halal certification was given back to OMA when it was transformed into the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) through Republic Act (RA) No. 9997 signed by former President Arroyo. This law mandated the NCMF to "promote and develop the Philippine Halal Industry and accredit Halal certifying entities/bodies for the utmost benefit of Muslim Filipinos and in partnership or cooperation with appropriate agencies, individuals, both locally and internationally" (National Commission on Muslim Filipinos Act of 2009, §8, [h]).

Through RA No. 9997, the mandate of the NCMF expanded, establishing it as the leading authority on halal developments in the Philippines through its Bureau of Muslim Economic Affairs. Under Secretary Mehol Sadain, the NCMF passed Resolution No. 46, creating the Philippine Halal Promotion,

Development, and Accreditation Board (Halal Board), and establishing the criteria and guidelines for accrediting halal certification bodies/entities in the Philippines. The Halal Board has these functions:

1. Craft the Philippine Halal Promotion and Development Program;
2. Administer all programs, plans and projects of the Commission relative to promotion and development of Philippine Halal Industry;
3. Prepare the criteria, mechanism and guidelines for the accreditation of Halal Certifying entities/bodies;
4. Prepare the guidelines and system for the promotion and development of Philippine Halal Industry;
5. Prepare guidelines and methods to revalidate all Philippine Halal-certified companies and/or products;
6. Prepare a comprehensive Philippine National Halal Standard;
7. Accredite existing and potential Halal-certifying entities/bodies;
8. Coordinate and conduct continuing consultative meetings with Muslim scholars, religious leaders, Shari'ah experts and other stakeholders involved in Philippine Halal industry;
9. Oversee and monitor the strict compliance of Halal standard and certification scheme, guidelines and procedures;
10. Coordinate with the member agencies as identified under Memorandum Order No. 201, dated December 23, 2005, issued by the Office of the President of the Philippines to harmonize programs relative to promotion and development of Philippine Halal industry;
11. Establish local and international linkages for the promotion and development of the Philippine Halal industry;

12. Take the lead role in the Halal advocacy program and awareness campaign of Halal certification scheme;
13. Establish a medium term capability building program in coordination with other key players in Philippine Halal industry; and
14. Perform other functions as may be assigned by the Secretary. (National Council on Muslim Filipinos 2012)

From 2012 to 2013, the NCMF has accredited three halal certification bodies: Muslim Mindanao Halal Certification Board (MMHCB) in Cotabato City, Mindanao Halal Authority (MINHA) in General Santos City, and Halal International Chamber of Commerce and Industries of the Philippines, Inc. (HICCIP) in San Juan City, Metro Manila (Sadain 2022). IDCP application for accreditation was accordingly kept hidden by some employees of the NCMF (Sadain 2025).⁵

This initiative increased awareness among foreign Islamic regulatory agencies, such as Malaysia's Jabatan Kemajuan Islam and Singapore's Majelis Ugama Islam. However, these efforts were not sustained due to a transition in leadership. Some NCMF employees continued issuing bogus certifications, a practice during the OMA period. As such, NCMF employees recommended the passage of a law establishing a halal regulatory board.

With the recommendation of other NCMF employees who were disappointed with the office's anomalies, Senator Cynthia Villar filed Senate Bill (SB) 312 on 2 July 2013. The bill was also known as the "Philippine Halal Act," with the goal of institutionalizing a halal system for food, nonfood products, and services. It aims to ensure compliance with international standards of good and hygienic manufacturing practices while recognizing the growing Filipino Muslim population and respecting their rich traditions and way of life. Senator Villar's bill primarily focuses on establishing the Philippine Halal Accreditation and Regulatory Board, which would be responsible for formulating, drafting, managing, and implementing programs related to halal compliance for food,

5 Interview with Atty. Mehol K. Sadain, 8 January 2025, UP Diliman, Quezon City.

nonfood products, and services. Additionally, the bill seeks to raise awareness of the concept and principles of halal as followed by the Muslim community under shari'a law and to institutionalize a national halal standard aligned with globally accepted halal practices observed by Muslim societies. This standard would apply to slaughterhouses, hotels, restaurants, and other service establishments across the country.⁶

Simultaneously, her son, Representative Mark Villar, introduced House Bill No. 137 also known as the Philippine Halal Act of 2013 on 1 July 2013. The bill also establishes a Philippine Halal Accreditation and Regulatory Board tasked with ensuring that food and other products do not contain any components prohibited by shari'a law. It also institutionalized a national standard accepted by Muslim countries. This bill was created to respect Islamic traditions by providing a "system of halal certification free from doubt," ensuring the quality and fitness of products for certification.⁷

Previously, on 7 February 2013, Senator Ramon Revilla Jr. already filed Senate Bill 294, also known as the Halal Act of 2013. This bill aimed to establish general guidelines for the Philippine Halal System, create the Philippine Halal Executive Council, and eventually transition it into a regulatory board. In his explanatory note, Senator Revilla highlighted the bill's significance in recognizing the growing number of Filipinos who have embraced Islam. He emphasized that institutionalizing a halal certification and accreditation system for food, nonfood products, and services was a form of respect and recognition for the Muslim community. Beyond its cultural and religious importance, the bill also sought to promote halal products and services for export. It outlined general guidelines for the preparation, handling, storage, and verification of halal products, setting the basic requirements for certification and accreditation of halal abattoirs, outlets, and service establishments. Additionally, it proposed the creation of a Philippine Halal Executive Council, composed of representatives from various government institutions and Muslim agencies. This council would be responsible for

6 Villar, C. 6th Congress Senate Bill No. 312 Philippine Halal Act. Senate of the Philippines. 2 July 2013. https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/lis/bill_res.aspx?congress=16&q=SBN-312

7 Villar, M. Sixteenth Congress of the Republic of the Philippines First Regular Session. 1 July 2013. https://docs.congress.hrep.online/legisdocs/basic_16/HB00137.pdf

establishing the certification scheme for halal and nonfood products and services, as well as the accreditation system for establishments.⁸

Another Senate Bill No. 1130 filed by Senator Antonio “Sonny” F. Trillanes IV on 29 July 2013 also proposed the creation of the Philippine Halal Accreditation and Regulatory Board. Through this bill, the Philippine government seeks to ensure that its constituents have access to clean, pure, and healthy food by institutionalizing a halal system that complies with international standards of good manufacturing and hygienic practices. Like the bills introduced by previous senators, this legislation acknowledges the importance of respecting the rich traditions and way of life of Filipino Muslims. It also reinforces the establishment of a Philippine Halal Accreditation and Regulatory Board, fulfilling a similar role to that outlined in Senator Revilla’s bill. Beyond regulatory measures, the bill aims to raise awareness and promote cultural sensitivity by launching an information campaign on the fundamental aspects of Muslim society, particularly the significance of halal food as an adherence to shari’a law. Lastly, it advocates for the institutionalization of a national halal standard that aligns with globally recognized and widely accepted halal practices applied by Muslim countries.⁹

The late Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago filed Senate Bill No. 1885 on 24 October 2013, also known as the Halal Food Act, which aims to safeguard the welfare of Filipino Muslims by ensuring access to permissible food. The bill seeks to regulate the advertisement, packaging, labeling, display, sale, preparation, and serving of halal food in accordance with Islamic principles. The bill outlines advertising regulations, covering promotional activities across various platforms, including social media, television, and newspapers, to ensure accurate representation of halal products. Additionally, it specifies prohibited acts, such as making oral or written statements that directly or indirectly mislead consumers into believing that a non-halal food product is halal. To uphold these standards, the bill emphasizes the proper labeling, display, sale, and preparation of halal food in compliance with the Qur’an

8 Revilla, R. 16th Congress Senate Bill No. 294 Halal Act of 2013. 2 July 2023. https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/tis/bill_res.aspx?congress=16&q=SBN-294

9 Trillanes, A. <https://ldr.senate.gov.ph/bills/senate-bill-no-1130-16th-congress-republic>. 29 July 2013.

and shari'a law. It also prescribes penalties for violations, including a fine of ₱100,000 and imprisonment for the responsible officer of an establishment found guilty of knowingly selling or possessing food that does not meet halal standards.¹⁰

The senate bills mentioned above were consolidated in another Senate Bill No. 2831 entitled Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Act of 2015 sponsored by Senator Cynthia Villar and coauthored by Senators Ramon Revilla Jr., Antonio Trillanes IV, and Miriam Defensor-Santiago.¹¹ This was approved in the Senate in September 2015 and signed into law as Republic Act 10817 by President Benigno Aquino III on 16 May 2016. This RA is also known as An Act Instituting the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Program, Creating for the Purpose the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board, and for Other Purposes.¹²

Here is a summarized version of the highlighted portion:

Several bills called for the establishment of a halal accreditation and regulatory board in response to the need to respond to international standards and the needs of the growing Filipino Muslim population. During the 16th Congress (2013-16), bills were filed in the Senate and the House of Representatives. On 2 July 2013, Senator Ramon Bong Revilla Jr., filed Senate Bill (SB) No. 294, which aimed to create the guidelines for the Philippine Halal System and the Philippine Halal Executive Council. His bill called for the promotion of halal products and services for export, as well as setting guidelines for halal certification (Senate of the Philippines 2013a). On the same day, Senator Cynthia Villar filed SB No. 312, titled Philippine Halal Act. Her bill focused on creating the Philippine Halal Accreditation and Regulatory Board, which shall develop and implement programs on halal compliance in food, nonfood products, and services according to shari'a and shall cover slaughterhouses, hotels, restaurants, and other service establishments in the Philippines. Simultaneously,

10 Santiago, M. Sixteenth Congress of the Republic of the Philippines Senate 1885. 24 October 2013. <https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/lisdata/1812115366l.pdf>

11 <https://halalfocus.com/philippines-senate-passes-halal-export-development-and-promotion-act/>

12 https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2016/ra_10817_2016.html

Representative Mark Villar introduced House Bill No. 137, or the Philippine Halal Act of 2013. The bill was created to respect Islamic traditions by providing a “system of halal certification free from doubt,” ensuring the quality and fitness for certification (House of Representatives of the Philippines 2013). Senator Antonio Trillanes IV filed SB No. 1130 on 29 July 2013, highlighting the importance of a national halal standard and information campaigns on Muslim culture and the significance of halal food. The late Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago filed SB No. 1885 on 24 October 2013, which also covers advertisements and labeling of halal food, prohibiting misleading statements regarding halal food, and imposing a fine of P100,000 for violations of the law.

One of the key objectives of RA No. 10187 is to promote equity and justice among Filipino farmers and producers while increasing employment opportunities for domestic labor. Additionally, it ensures that the country adopts measures and standards to make halal exports more competitive and quality-assured, coupled with research and development to add value. More importantly, it aims to position the Philippines as an active player in regional and international markets.

RA 10817 also protects Muslim Filipino consumers from unscrupulous Halal products, processes, and services. As part of this policy, the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Program was established, comprising objectives, targets, strategies, and activities to support the continuous growth of the halal industry. The program helps Halal industries produce quality products and provide reliable processes and services, contributing to the increased export of halal products.

Furthermore, RA No. 10817 facilitated the creation of the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board (PHEDPB) under section 5. The board’s primary function is to ensure the achievement of the law’s objectives as the main policy-making body for halal export development and promotion. It sets the overall direction for implementing the Philippine Halal Export Development Program, which is attached to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The creation of PHEDPB transferred the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos’ (NCMF) mandate on halal-related functions and roles to the DTI,

which now serves as the Board's chair, with NCMF as vice-chair. With this mandate, the Board “redefined the trajectory of the Philippine Halal initiative from industry development and accreditation of Halal certifying agencies for the benefit of Muslim Filipinos to marketing and international trade promotion” (Arsad 2022).

The board also includes members from key agencies such as the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Health (DOH), Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) and two Muslim Filipino professionals from the academe, law, industry, or food science who have experience in halal development, to be appointed by the President and recommended by Muslim Filipino people's organizations and nongovernment organizations.

The Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 10817 provide that the development of Philippine National Standards for Halal shall be the mandate of the setting agencies such as the Department of Agriculture–Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFS), Department of Health–Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Department of Trade and Industry–Bureau of Philippine Standards (BPS). The DA–BAFS is responsible for fresh, primary, and postharvest agricultural and fishery products, including tools, machinery, equipment, and infrastructure. The DoH–FDA is for the processed and prepacked food, drugs, and cosmetics. Meanwhile, the DTI–BPS is for nonfood products aside from drugs and cosmetics. It is also stated in the said IRR that the NCMF shall be consulted in the formulation of the Philippine National Standards for technical knowledge in shari'a. The NCMF may also seek the legal opinion of a Fatwa Council.

RA 10817 is a testament to the Philippine government's strong commitment to developing and promoting halal industries. It accelerated various halal programs of the government. It laid the groundwork for institutional support, which underscored the government's dedication to establishing a competitive halal industry. Various initiatives have since been launched to promote halal-certified food production and halal tourism, leveraging the Philippines' significant Muslim population, increasing Muslim tourist arrivals, and expanding trade with Muslim-majority nations.

Among the government agencies in the Philippines, the DTI leads these efforts as mandated by RA 10817. In line with this mandate, the DTI established a Special Halal Task Force in 2023 to assist in trade and investment promotion, develop regional roadmaps, and implement capacity-building programs and regional development initiatives across the Philippines (Department of Trade and Industry 2023).

DTI's flagship campaign, Halal-Friendly Philippines, is a national initiative promoting the country as a premier Halal-friendly hub in the Asia-Pacific region. To support the national goal of strengthening the Philippine economy through increased Halal domestic consumption and exports, section 8 of RA 10817 mandates DTI, along with other key agencies—namely the NCMF, the DA, the DOH, the DOST, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), state universities and colleges (SUCs), higher education institutions (HEIs), certification bodies, the private sector, and Muslim organizations—to establish and implement institutional and human resource development programs for the growth of the halal industry.

These efforts include nationwide capacity-building initiatives, skills training for halal industry workers, the establishment of scholarship programs, the formulation and implementation of competency standards and training regulations for technical-vocational education, the upgrading of facilities, faculty and staff development, and the enhancement of on-the-job training programs in academic institutions (Radia 2024).

During the Forum on Halal organized by the UP Institute of Islamic Studies in collaboration with the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies–Islamic Studies Program, the Philippine Halal Industry Development Strategic Plan 2024–2028 was presented through a detailed roadmap. The plan outlines three major goals of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI): attract Halal investments amounting to ₱230 billion, generate 120,000 halal-related jobs, and foster the growth of halal businesses. Its ultimate vision is to position the Philippines as “the fastest-growing and most Halal-friendly hub in the Asia-Pacific region by becoming a collaborative, comprehensive, and competitive Halal gateway and destination.”

A key component of the plan is the development of roadmaps for strategic regions to strengthen micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through capacity-building programs and regional development initiatives. These efforts aim to establish halal growth corridors across the country:

- CALABARZON and MIMAROPA as the gateways for the Luzon Halal Corridor,
- Cebu City as the gateway for the Central Visayas Halal Corridor, and
- Davao Region, Cagayan de Oro, Iligan City, Zamboanga, Tawi-Tawi, and BARMM as gateways for the Mindanao Halal Corridor.

In 2024, DTI spearheaded several initiatives, including capacity-building activities, halal-friendly trade fairs, and Halal Regional Consultations and Planning sessions. These were held in key locations such as Quezon City, Zamboanga City, Davao City, General Santos City, Iligan, Cagayan de Oro, Cotabato, Sultan Naga Dimaporo, and Marawi (Radia 2024).

The DA, as a member of the Halal Board, works in collaboration with its fellow members, particularly the NCMF-DTI. In 2018, the DA officially launched the Halal Food Industry Development Program (DA-HFIDP), now a flagship initiative of the department. The program's mission is to increase the production and market access of Halal agri-fishery products, with a vision of positioning the Philippines as a globally competitive Halal agri-fishery sector (Baldosa 2018).

To achieve its goals, the DA operates within eight program components. These include promoting Halal through advocacy programs targeting various sectors of the value chain and establishing Halal-certified infrastructure such as feed mills, farms, and slaughterhouses. Capacity-building activities are conducted to enhance the skills of farmers' cooperatives and associations (FCAs) and other key players in the halal industry. The program also focuses on developing and enabling standards and regulations, fostering linkages and networking, and boosting halal livestock production through the establishment of multiplier farms, model farms, and livestock dispersal programs, while strengthening the regulatory framework.

Under this program, the DA has conducted numerous initiatives to raise awareness and promote halal practices. These include seminars, workshops, and information caravans on halal farming systems and certification processes, benefiting 340 farmers and agripreneurs. Additionally, the DA organized 20 training sessions on halal livestock production, which benefitted 795 farmers.

In terms of standardization, the DA has contributed significantly to the development of the Philippine National Standards (PNS) for halal. These include standards for halal agriculture and fisheries products (PNS 101), Halal slaughtering practices for ruminants (PNS 102), Halal slaughtering practices for poultry (PNS 103), halal feeds (PNS 139), halal goat production (PNS 259), and guidelines for DA-assisted halal farms. Furthermore, the DA is an active participant in the working group on halal food that crafted the final draft of the ASEAN Guidelines on Halal Food. This comprehensive approach underscores the DA's commitment to developing the halal industry in the Philippines, ensuring it aligns with both national priorities and international standards (Department of Agriculture 2024).

The Department of Science and Technology (DOST), as part of the Halal Export Development and Promotion Board, collaborates with member agencies while implementing its initiatives to support the halal industry. This commitment is detailed in Memorandum Circular 010, Series of 2016, which outlines the DOST Policy on Science and Technology Support for Halal Industry Development. The memorandum recognizes the DTI as the lead agency of the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board. Meanwhile, the DOST provides science and technology assistance, conducts training programs, and spearheads research and development (R&D) to enhance the industry's competitiveness. Additionally, DOST ensures the scientific integrity of halal claims, offers ISO-accredited and halal verification laboratories, issues laboratory test results for halal certification, and promotes the use of the Philippine halal logo.

Since 2018, DOST has implemented two major programs to support the development of the Philippine Halal economy: the DOST Halal Science and Technology (S&T) Program and the DOST Halal Research Ecosystem for Development and Innovation (ReDI) Program. The second phase of the DOST Halal S&T Program, known as the Halal REDI Program, was carried out by all

DOST regional offices and DOST-ITDI from 2022 to 2023. This program aimed to develop and deploy halal tourism training modules for establishments and enterprises, enhance the knowledge and skills of certified Halal trainers and auditors, establish Halal Assurance Systems for tourism establishments, assist MSMEs in halal certification applications, and create a halal-certified research and training demonstration facility.

The DOST Halal Program focuses on four key areas: knowledge transfer, research and development, Halal verification laboratory testing, and human resource development. Knowledge transfer includes halal training and consultancy services for Small Enterprises Technology Upgrading Program (SETUP) cooperators, showcasing innovative Halal products and services, and participating in local and international congresses for promotion. In research and development, DOST has developed 31 halal-compliant food prototypes and nonfood products, including cosmetics, toiletries, and spa skincare products. Other accomplishments include partnerships with private industries, trained personnel, published monographs, and the creation of a blockchain-based system for halal and tayebe cacao traceability, developed in collaboration with the University of Southeastern Philippines, Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS, and MS3 Agri-ventures Corporation.

Halal verification laboratory (HVL) testing is another critical area of focus. DOST has established four HVLs in DOST-CALABARZON, DOST-XI, MOST-BARM, and DOST-XII, two of which are ISO/IEC 17025:2017-accredited and aligned with International Halal Integrity Alliance standards. These laboratories perform advanced tests such as Porcine DNA detection, alcohol analysis, and gelatin analysis. In human resource development, DOST has developed training modules for food manufacturers and tourism establishments. This resulted in the training of 361 manufacturing firms and 574 tourism establishments, including hotels, restaurants, and carinderias. The agency also launched a certificate course in Halal Science, producing 33 graduates and boasting 55 certified Halal Lead Auditors.

Among its notable projects is the DOST-PWC Research and Innovation Center for Halal Science (RICHeS), established in collaboration with the Philippine Women's College of Davao. This facility supports research and training in halal product development, consumption behavior studies, and halal standards. Another significant project is the DOST-ITDI Halal Cosmetics R&D Laboratory

in Bicutan, Taguig, which specializes in prototyping Halal cosmetics and toiletries. During the 2019 Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, DOST trained 31 Halal-HACCP trainers and 44 industry personnel, conducted on-site food safety observations, and supported the halal certification of the Athlete's Village kitchens and dining areas.

To further strengthen the Halal industry, DOST facilitated the establishment of Regional Halal Committees in Regions I, X, and XI. These committees aim to boost Halal industry development, provide policy recommendations, and monitor halal initiatives for local and export markets. Through these comprehensive efforts, DOST continues to play a crucial role in enhancing the competitiveness, credibility, and global acceptance of the Philippine halal industry (Sales 2024).

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) plays a pivotal role in advancing the halal industry in the Philippines. As part of TESDA General Director Secretary Suharto Mangudadatu's 10-point agenda, the agency aims to provide technical-vocational education and training (TVET) programs to create opportunities within the Halal business sector. TESDA (2023) has undertaken various initiatives, such as the Halal Industry Consultation and Stakeholders Forum and Halal Validation Meetings, to gather critical information about the halal industry, including its challenges and opportunities. These efforts have resulted in the development of recommendations for training regulation in areas such as slaughtering, standards, certification, and processing, as well as the inclusion of competency and standard development programs, particularly in farming and related skills.

To further support the halal industry, TESDA issued Memorandum Circular 058-2023, Series of 2023, titled "Implementing Guidelines on the Development of Competency Standards (CS) for Halal Awareness." This circular aims to address the need for Halal awareness in relevant qualifications and sectors by producing individuals who are knowledgeable about halal industry standards and practices. It also ensures that education and training providers deliver programs aligned with these competency standards, whether through inclusion in registered programs or as standalone microcredential programs. This initiative led to the publication of the *Competency Standards: Halal*

Awareness module under the Micro-CS Halal Awareness program (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority 2023).

TESDA has also initiated ongoing Halal program development, which includes stakeholder consultations, functional analysis workshops, and Competency Standards (CS) Development workshops. These efforts are structured into several program phases: Skills Mapping and Prioritization of Area-Based Requirements, Functional Analysis and Competency Standards Development, Competency-Based Curriculum Development, Institutional Assessment (IATS) Development, Regional Lead Trainers (RLT) Development Program Implementation, Program Registration and Recognition, and Pilot Project Implementation (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority 2024).

Through these comprehensive initiatives, TESDA contributes significantly to the growth of the halal industry by addressing workforce skills gaps, promoting awareness, and fostering compliance with halal standards. These efforts ensure the development of a skilled workforce capable of supporting the expansion and global competitiveness of the Philippine Halal sector.

The Department of Tourism (DOT) plays a key role in developing the Philippines' halal industry, aligning with the global halal economy's growth across sectors like modest fashion, media, recreation, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, food, travel, and Islamic finance. With the Muslim population worldwide reaching 1.8 billion and Muslim tourists projected to grow to 230 million by 2026, contributing \$300 billion to the economy, the DOT focuses on initiatives to attract this market (Thomson Reuters 2018).

DOT's efforts align with national mandates, including the Tourism Act of 2009 (RA 9593), which recognizes tourism as vital to the national economy; RA 9997, emphasizing respect for Muslim Filipino traditions; and RA 10817, promoting halal export development. Specifically, DOT implements the Philippines Halal Export Development and Promotion Program, aiming to boost halal product exports, expand nonfood halal industries, raise consumer awareness, and ensure fair trade practices.

The Philippines' inclusion in the top 10 non-OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) destinations highlights its growing halal market potential. DOT emphasizes Muslim-friendly tourism—a term used to avoid stricter

implications of “halal tourism”—to holistically develop and promote the country as a significant player in the global halal ecosystem (Abubakar 2021).

Operationally, DOT focuses on six tourism touchpoints: arrival, shopping, dining, accommodation, transport, and departure. Through Memorandum Circular 2020-010, the DOT established guidelines for Muslim-friendly accommodation, applicable to accredited establishments seeking recognition. This initiative, launched in December 2020, covers guest handling, halal food and beverages, room amenities, public spaces, and transport services to ensure an inclusive experience for Muslim tourists. Based on the recent data, DOT has already recorded a Muslim-friendly establishment. One of its latest accomplishments is the signing of a memorandum of agreement with Megaworld, a real estate company in the Philippines, to convert all its 13 properties to become Muslim-friendly (Department of Tourism 2024).

Despite losing its exclusive mandate on halal and serving as vice chair, NCMF continues to create various halal programs. Its flagship Halal Promotion and Accreditation Program aligns with RA No. 9997, mandating the NCMF to promote and develop the Philippine halal industry and accredit certifying bodies in collaboration with local and international partners (National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, n.d.).

Since its establishment, the NCMF has implemented key halal initiatives, including the creation of a Halal Division under its Bureau of Muslim Economic Affairs. This division is organized into three sections. The Accreditation Section focuses on halal education, training, and certification for NCMF personnel, as well as capacity-building programs for SMEs through roadshows, exhibits, and bazaars. The Research and Development Section conducts studies to improve halal technologies, maps halal establishments, and develops infrastructure such as slaughterhouses and testing labs. Lastly, the Promotion and Awareness Section produces IEC materials, organizes summits, and collaborates with embassies and stakeholders to promote halal awareness. These efforts collectively strengthen the halal ecosystem and align it with international standards (Solaiman 2024).

In July 2024, the NCMF, through its Bureau of Muslim Economic Affairs (BMEA), launched the first edition of its Halal module to strengthen the Halal Awareness Program and provide a trainer’s reference material for capacity-

building initiatives targeting Halal stakeholders, particularly manufacturers, producers, and consumers.

The module's launch is a product of the NCMF's ongoing Halal program, which began with the implementation of its Phase 1 activity, the *Halal Knowledge Training and Development Project*, in 2017. Their efforts continued into Phase 2, during which they undertook technical writing for the halal module compilation in November 2017, followed by a *Technical Writing Workshop and Critiquing* in November 2018. These phases led to the completion of four modules, which were validated by a panel of experts in 2019. As of this writing, the first module has been launched, while the remaining three are awaiting production.

The NCMF continues to expand its halal programs. One of its recent developments is the establishment of a halal division, which focuses on promoting halal products and services and accrediting Halal Certifying Bodies (HCBs). This division was made possible through the budget allocation and approval granted by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) in June 2024. With this new division in place, the NCMF continues to fulfill its mandate under RA No. 9997 and advance its mission of enhancing the socioeconomic welfare of Muslim Filipinos (Bureau of Muslim Economic Affairs 2025).

BARMM-INITIATED PROGRAMS ON HALAL

As a counterpart and in addition to national-level initiatives on halal, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) has continued to develop and implement programs to strengthen the halal industry, focusing on the regions under its jurisdiction. Several initiatives to promote the halal industry have been implemented during the previous Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). One is the adoption of the Regional and Provincial Halal Food Industry Plan, and the passage into law of the Muslim Mindanao Act No. 254, also known as ARMM Halal Labeling Act of 2009, which sought to promote, among others, halal products in Muslim Mindanao, prohibit misrepresentation and false claims in the preparation, distribution, and sale of halal products, provision of information and education to facilitate sound choice and ensuring proper exercise of rights

by the halal consumers, and provision of adequate remedies and means of redress for aggrieved halal consumers.

To further strengthen the halal industry in the region, the Department of Science and Technology–ARMM signed a memorandum of agreement with two halal certifiers accredited by the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF); Muslim Mindanao Halal Certification Board Inc. and Halal International Chamber of Commerce and Industries of the Philippines, Inc. The MOA, which was signed during the first Halal Congress and the 2015 National Science and Technology Week, aimed to strengthen collaboration with halal-certifying bodies and explore opportunities for halal products and services in the region (Bureau of Public Information 2015).

The 2018 Bangsamoro Organic Law (RA No. 11054), which superseded RA No. 6734, contains a similar provision for a halal program:

The Bangsamoro Government shall have the power to accredit halal-certifying bodies in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. It shall promote awareness through the development and implementation of a halal campaign program. The Parliament shall enact laws to further strengthen its policy and programs on halal development. (Organic Law of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao 2018, art. 13, §30).

In 2023, a major milestone for BARMM occurred when the Philippines and Malaysia officially agreed to collaborate on the development and joint promotion of the halal industry in the region. This was the result of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s visit to Malaysia to discuss strategic partnerships through bilateral efforts. One of the key areas identified for development was the vast potential of the Halal industry.

Considering Malaysia's position as one of the world's leading halal economies and the 10th largest trading partner of the Philippines, Malaysia's commitment is crucial. This commitment was reaffirmed within the context of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Brunei Darussalam–Indonesia–Malaysia–Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA). Created by the mentioned countries in 1994, BIMP-EAGA aims “to shift economic activities from resource extraction to higher levels of processing

and value-added production, focusing on industries that adopt clean and green technologies” (BIMP-EAGA 2025).

In line with its mandate “to operate, administer, and develop economic zones in the region” (BEZA 2025), the BARMM Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) has intensified its efforts to expand economic infrastructure, with a particular emphasis on the establishment of halal hubs. A pivotal step in this endeavor was the organization of capacity-building initiatives, including the Halal Hub Development Training for Accelerated Economic Development and Ecozone Development, conducted on 9 January 2023. This program, co-organized by the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) and the JNJ Halal Center, aimed to enhance institutional and stakeholder readiness for halal hub development in BARMM.

BEZA asserts that the establishment of halal hubs will catalyze economic growth, reinforcing BARMM’s strategic position within the global halal industry. The agency emphasizes the region’s geographical advantage as a critical node within the BIMP-EAGA. Furthermore, BARMM’s proximity to key urban centers in Mindanao underscores its potential as a major contributor to the Philippines’ Halal industry.

The contributions of MOST and JNJ were instrumental in advancing this agenda, as the training provided covered essential concepts pertaining to halal and food industries, alongside strategies for facilitating the export of halal products to Malaysia.

In May 2024, BEZA further strengthened its international engagement through a courtesy visit and participation in the Halal Hub and Investment Forum in Malaysia. These engagements provided a platform for discussing prospective collaborations in the development of a halal industrial hub in BARMM. This initiative was designed not only to position BARMM as a prominent Halal industry player but also to attract international investments, particularly from Malaysia, a globally recognized leader in halal trade (BEZA 2024).

One of its recent initiatives is the establishment of the Bangsamoro Government’s strategic framework for a sustainable and competitive halal industry. The framework, known as the Bangsamoro Halal Industry Development Plan (BHIP), covers the years 2024 to 2028. According to an article

published by the Bangsamoro Government, this framework is aligned with the BIMP-EAGA, which focuses on agro-industry and fisheries. The BHIP was officially launched on 30 October 2024 through a stakeholders' consultation attended by BARMM government offices; organizations; businesses; and the private sector in the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. The framework encompasses development initiatives for high-priority sectors such as food, finance, tourism and travel, pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, food supplements, modest fashion, cosmetics, media, and entertainment.

The BIMP-EAGA framework includes efforts related to agribusiness, an area that BARMM's Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR) has actively pursued since its institutionalization. Guided by its mandate "to empower farming and fishing communities by ensuring equitable access to quality services and optimum economic benefits" (MAFAR 2024), the ministry operates through three flagship programs: Basic Integration for Harmonized Intervention (BInHI), Integrated and Sustainable Development for Aquaculture/Capture (ISDA), and Land Distribution and Development for the Upliftment of Poor ARBs (LUPA).

MAFAR also plays a pivotal role in BARMM's six-year Halal Development Plan, given its mandate to oversee agricultural products. To align with and contribute to BARMM's development goals, MAFAR institutionalized the MAFAR-Halal Program and Development. This program has been implementing various activities to promote and advocate for Halāl practices within the region since 2021 (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform 2021). These initiatives aim to enhance farmers' knowledge and awareness of halal concepts, the halal program in BARMM, halal certification processes, and the halal food registry.

Now in its third year, MAFAR recently hosted the 3rd Bangsamoro Agri-Fishery Halal Congress in December 2024. The congress brought together representatives from MAFAR, local government units (LGUs), academic institutions, the Bangsamoro Regional and Provincial Agricultural and Fisheries Councils (BRAFC/PAFC), Halal boards, and certification bodies, as well as national and international delegates. The event provided a platform to address ongoing issues and challenges affecting the Halal food industry in the region, to highlight its potential to foster sustainable economic growth, and

to underscore its vital role in supporting local agri-fishery sectors (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform, 2024).

BARMM has also strengthened its halal programs with the contributions of the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST). MOST (n.d.) is mandated “to set direction and leadership in science, research, inventions, technology education, and their development, and to ensure the full and effective participation of all sectors in the planning, programming, coordination, and implementation of science and technology research.” MOST operates through five main programs and services: Research and Development Services, Technical Management and Operation Services, and Nationally-Funded Programs. Under its Research and Development Services, MOST established the Bangsamoro Standards and Halal Testing Laboratories (BSHTL). The BSHTL is a multidisciplinary group of laboratories offering testing and calibration services to meet the needs of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), academic institutions, and other stakeholders. It also recognizes, establishes, and implements a Quality Management System (QMS) in accordance with international standards. The BSHTL comprises four laboratories, one of which is the Halal Verification Laboratory. This laboratory specializes in porcine DNA analysis, contributing significantly to the advancement of halal assurance and compliance within the region.

Apart from this, under its nationally funded Programs, MOST also implements the Development and Deployment of Training Modules on Halal Tourism. This is a project funded by DOST that “aims to develop and deploy training modules on Halal Tourism and seeks to determine the present status and knowledge gap among various stakeholders of the Halal tourism industry.”

The BARMM’s Ministry of Trade, Investments, and Tourism (MTIT) is mandated to implement laws, programs, and projects related to trade, investments, and tourism in the region. It envisions a Bangsamoro that benefits from inclusive and resilient economic development driven by sustainable trade, investments, and tourism. With this mandate, MTIT plays a crucial role in promoting and strengthening the halal industry and BARMM’s initiatives on halal development (MTIT, n.d.).

One of its key initiatives is the formulation of a six-year Halal Development Plan, which aims to boost the region’s economy. The MTIT Bangsamoro Halal

Board (BHB) developed this plan, which runs from 2024 to 2029. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO) partnered with MTIT in crafting this comprehensive strategy. According to an article published on the MTIT website, the plan serves as a comprehensive guide to establishing a competitive halal industry in BARMM. It also aims to produce halal products and services that comply with market standards and cater to both local and global markets. To ensure compliance with international halal standards, MTIT has aligned the plan with the BIMP-EAGA member countries (Usop 2023).

In a more recent development, the BHB has officially approved requirements for accrediting halal certification bodies and certifying halal products and services. The approved guidelines aim to ensure that halal certification bodies operate in a competent, consistent, and impartial manner. These standards will enhance the recognition of accredited bodies, facilitate wider acceptance of their certifications within BARMM, and strengthen the region's position in international halal trade (MTIT, n.d.).¹³

However, as these policies and programs both at the national and regional levels resulted in the strengthening and expanding halal industries in the country, challenges persist in their actual implementations.

CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

Alongside various programs and policies aimed at developing the halal industry in the Philippines, several studies have examined its challenges and proposed ways to strengthen it. Salvador O. Domona's (2009) research on *The Authenticity and Socio-Economic Relevance of Halal Certification in the Philippines*, found that most of the halal certifying agencies in the Philippines were not yet sophisticated in terms of facilities and materials used in the conduct and determination of the haram content of the products compared to other countries like Malaysia. He also pointed out that most of the manufacturers who produce halal products in the Philippines are non-Muslims, which is a great challenge for the certifiers (Domona 2009). In this

13 <https://mtit.bangsamoro.gov.ph/>

connection, a laboratory run by an independent third party is needed to test the already certified halal products. Until now, there are still certified halal products found to contain pork ingredients, such as halal-certified tilapia feed sold in BARMM areas after it was tested in the laboratory of the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) (Patarasa 2024).¹⁴ While there are already halal auditors being deployed to halal-producing companies by the certifying groups, Dr. Nefertari Arsad (2022), in her policy brief *Operationalizing Halal Food and Beverage for Philippine Tourism*, proposed the creation of an internal halal assurance committee and the employment of Muslim personnel within Muslim-friendly establishments, as this would contribute to their halal sustainability management.

“The Impacts of Halal Certification Policies in the Philippines: A Literature Review” by Analyn G. Abdulraof (2024) highlighted the fragmentation and lack of standardization among certifying bodies. She also found out that producers and consumers have limited knowledge and awareness of halal, while skilled workers and experts on halal are not sufficient. Hence, uniform certification requirements and processes should be made, and a broader education campaign on halal be carried out targeting both Muslims and non-Muslims.

IDCP President Linzag observed that while the halal industry continues to grow, many Muslims still dine in non-halal restaurants and consume non-certified halal products, posing a challenge to efforts to strengthen the halal campaign. This highlights the crucial role of religious leaders in reinforcing the importance of consuming halal as a religious obligation. Additionally, promoting halal is not only a religious duty but also a modest contribution by Muslims toward healthier and cleaner food options for all Filipinos. The common misconception that halal is solely for Muslims needs to be corrected. Raising awareness on this matter will also support the sustainability of halal-certified businesses and help prevent cases like the one shared by Attorney Linzag, where a chicken company lost its halal certification after its branches were found selling pork alongside their grilled chicken (Linzag 2025).¹⁵

14 Interview with Pendatun Patarasa, Director General of Fishery Services of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform (MAFAR). 27 December 2024 at BARMM Complex Cotabato City.

15 Atty. Abdul Rahman Linzag, President of IDCP. 4 February 2025 at his office in Binondo, Manila.

While various national government agencies are pursuing their own programs in response to RA No. 10817, collaboration among them is not regularly established compared to BARMM, where offices involved in halal initiatives work together to develop a more comprehensive program. During the Halal Forum organized by the UP Institute of Islamic Studies in partnership with the UP CIDS, the formation of a Technical Working Group (TWG) comprising representatives from all government agencies involved in halal was proposed, with UP IIS serving as a data hub for halal programs. This coordination should also involve halal consumer groups, and other stakeholders to produce a more cohesive and effective Philippine halal ecosystem as proposed by Atty. Sadain in his paper “The Legal and Institutional Ecosystem of Halal in the Philippines.”

Also, the RA 10817, as Sadain (2022) examined, contains weaknesses. It primarily focuses on the commercial and marketing aspects of the Philippine halal industry and neglects spiritual integrity. The law, as he noted, lacks provisions ensuring Muslim leadership in regulatory processes, creating opportunities for non-Muslims to produce halal products and operate halal activities. It also does not have “quasijudicial powers and is not empowered to issue a subpoena or cite erring parties in contempt” (Sadain 2022), thus even the unaccredited certifying group that gave halal certification to a certain meat product with pork ingredient was found when it was exported to the United Arab Emirates and was not penalized. Ideally, only accredited certifying bodies should be allowed to issue halal certification. However, the constitutional principle of separation of church and state becomes the main hindrance. This was underscored by the case filed by Attorney Linzag against the EO discussed above that resulted in the revocation of the Office on Muslim Affairs’ (OMA) authority over halal regulation. Attorney Sadain emphasized the need for administrative bodies capable of efficiently adjudicating conflicts and disputes, ensuring swift and thorough resolution without requiring court litigation, which is worth considering.

To ensure the preservation of halal’s spiritual integrity while developing its potential in the global market, the accreditation of certifying bodies should be reinstated under the NCMF, given its pool of Muslim experts. The NCMF should then endorse accredited certifiers to the Philippine Accreditation Bureau (PAB) for final approval confirmation. This is also to streamline the process and reduce costs for certifying groups. Since the establishment of

the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Board (PHEDPB), only PAB has accredited two certifiers, while most of the existing local halal certifiers struggle with the high cost of accreditation.

For this system to be effective, the NCMF's halal program must undergo significant reforms. A dedicated halal bureau should be established within the NCMF, staffed by credible and qualified personnel to ensure a transparent and efficient accreditation process. If these reforms prove insufficient, the creation of a separate Philippine Halal Authority (PHA) focused solely on halal regulation should be established.

There is still much to be done if the Philippines is to ensure competitiveness of its halal products in the international market. The existing law can still be improved by basing it on the halal principles that are enunciated in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The implementation of halal standards and procedures should draw inspiration from the best practices of halal exporting countries, especially the non-Muslim ones, like Thailand and Brazil. If these recommendations are implemented, a flourishing halal industry can serve as the Filipino Muslim contribution to the growth of Philippine economy and the promotion of healthy and clean food for all Filipinos.

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