

THE HALAL ELEMENT IN ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCT: AN OVERVIEW

Azie Zurianie Mat Zaid^{1*} Nadhirah Nordin¹ & Wan Mohd Khairul Firdaus Wan Khairuldin¹

¹ Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Study, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Gong Badak Campus, 21300 Kuala Nerus, Terengganu, Malaysia.

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*Author Email Address:
aziezurianie@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The intersection of halal and organic food represents a significant field of study within contemporary food science and religious practices. Both concepts are rooted in ethical, environmental, and health considerations but originate from distinct frameworks. Compliance with halal elements is crucial for enhancing product quality and safety, meeting the increasing health-conscious consumer demand, and strengthening consumer confidence in halal organic products. This study explores the compatibility and potential synergy between halal and organic food systems, highlighting key elements such as certification, farm management, production processes, and consumer perceptions. By critically analyzing existing literature, the study aims to bridge the gap in understanding and provide a foundation for future research in integrating these frameworks. This research employs an exploratory design, collecting data through documentation and field observation. Data obtained were analyzed using content analysis. Findings reveal that halal and organic certification processes are governed by separate authorities. The study anticipates future collaboration between certification bodies, producers, and researchers. The goal is to pave the way for an integrated halal-organic system that meets consumer demand and contributes to the sustainability of the global halal hub.

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing consumer demand for ethical and sustainable food has brought organic and halal products to the forefront of global markets. While the concept of halal has become increasingly significant in the modern food industry, particularly as consumers become more conscious of the ethical and religious considerations surrounding their food choices. Organic food, with its emphasis on natural and sustainable production methods, presents an intriguing intersection with the principles of halal. This research paper aims to explore the key elements of halal that are relevant to the organic food industry, providing a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between these two important domains.

Halal, a term derived from the Arabic language, denotes what is permissible or lawful according to Islamic law (*shariah*). While the concept of halal is often associated with the preparation and consumption of meat, its scope extends beyond that to encompass a wide range of food products, including processed items, dairy, and even non-food goods (Omar & Rahman, 2018). The growing demand for halal-certified products, driven by the expanding Muslim population and the rising consciousness of halal practices, has led to the development of a robust halal industry (Muhammad Hannan, 2023).

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

Translation: “O humanity! Eat from what is lawful and good on the earth and do not follow Satan’s footsteps. He is truly your sworn enemy.”

(Al-Baqarah 2:168)

Imam Ibn Kathir (2003) interprets the above verse as a command from Allah SWT to His servants to consume food that is lawful (*halal*) and good (*tayyib*). The term *halalan tayyiban* here refers to all food and drinks that are clean, good, pure, and beneficial to the body, while also being free from any harm after consumption. Therefore, seeking and consuming what is *halalan tayyiban* is not merely an option for Muslims but an obligation that must be fulfilled.

Organic food, on the other hand, is characterized by its emphasis on sustainable and eco-friendly production methods, avoiding synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and other artificial additives. Organic food refers to food products produced through organic farming and livestock methods. Sir Albert Howard, F.H. King, and Rudolf Steiner were the pioneers of the first organic farming and livestock practices in the world. Since their establishment, numerous studies have been conducted on the benefits of organic food for human health and the environment (Andersen et al., 2023).

Chrysargyris et al. (2017) stated that organic food is produced through agricultural and livestock practices adhering to myOrganic standards and GAP (Good Agricultural Practices). Organic farming and livestock production must follow natural processes, excluding genetically modified organisms (GMOs), synthetic fertilizers, chemical pesticides, hormones, and antibiotics. Organic food products must also undergo the entire organic production chain (Organic Food Production) before they can be labeled as organic (Bourn & Prescott, 2002). If a food product does not comply with the established organic production process, it cannot be considered an organic food product. Furthermore, organic farming and agriculture are among the most crucial components of ecological agriculture. This is because organic farming serves as a tool for environmental protection, contributing to the balance of the nation's ecosystem structure (Tong et al., 2022).

Organic Food Production is a complex and integrated system that starts at the farm (animal or plant) and extends through the entire food production chain (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2010). The aim of organic production is to integrate environmentally friendly practices, maintain high levels of biodiversity, conserve natural resources, uphold animal welfare standards, and use natural materials. For example, fertilizers and pesticides used

throughout the organic production process are free from synthetic chemicals and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) (Apaolaza, et al., 2018).

This statement is further supported by the European Commission (2014), which explains that organic farming and livestock production are holistic management systems designed for biodiversity and soil biology. These systems promote and enhance the health of agro-ecosystems surrounding farms. This aligns with the definition by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2021), which describes organic farming and livestock production as processes that minimize the use of chemical inputs (including fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, and feed additives). Instead, these processes rely as much as possible on natural resources, such as biofertilizers, crop residues, animal manure, organic waste, and mineral-rich rocks, to supply nutrients and protect crops (Willer et al., 2023).

The organic movement has gained significant traction in recent years, reflecting the growing consumer awareness of the health and environmental benefits of organic farming practices. Although originating from different traditions, both halal and organic frameworks emphasize purity, health, and ethical responsibility, making them potentially complementary. This paper examines the elements of halal within organic food, addressing certification, production, and consumer trust.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a qualitative approach, where the data refers to information or textual data that does not have a specific structure. The design used for this study is exploratory research to analyse the elements of halal in organic food. Data collection involves document analysis, examining documents such as books and journal articles on the concept of halal according to Islamic law. Data collection on the certification, farm management, production processes, and consumer perceptions in organic food is conducted through document analysis and field studies. This study also uses purposive sampling, as the selected informants are directly involved in the research, consisting of halal agency officer. The study involves textual data from related documents or interview transcripts conducted during the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The intersection of halal and organic food presents an intriguing area of study, as both concepts share a common thread of emphasizing purity, sustainability, and ethical considerations (Omar & Rahman, 2018) (Noor et al., 2023). One of the key elements of halal in the context of organic food is the avoidance of non-halal ingredients, such as pork-derived components or alcohol-based preservatives. Furthermore, the organic production methods, which eschew synthetic chemicals and prioritize natural processes, align well with the halal principle of consuming pure and wholesome foods.

Another important aspect is the emphasis on cleanliness and hygiene in both halal and organic practices. The halal concept not only concerns the religious permissibility of the food but also the overall quality and safety of the product, including the sanitation of the production

facilities and the handling procedures. Similarly, organic agriculture places a strong emphasis on maintaining the integrity of the ecosystem and minimizing environmental impact, which resonates with the halal principle of preserving the natural order (Gurr et al., 2017).

Halal Certification in Organic Food

According to Sikora, Tadeusz & Strada (2006), food safety assurance systems have been enacted into law in every country. These systems include Good Hygiene Practices (GHP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP). Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) are guidelines that outline the activities to be performed and the conditions to be met during the food manufacturing process to ensure that the produced food meets food safety standards. Similarly, Good Hygiene Practices (GHP) are guidelines for activities throughout the production of final food products to ensure they meet the characteristics of clean and safe food as per the Food Safety Assurance System. Both GMP and GHP serve as prerequisites for implementing the HACCP system. HACCP is the final assessment for products that have passed GMP and GHP certification.

Certification is a critical aspect of both halal and organic food systems, providing assurance to consumers regarding compliance with religious and ethical standards. Halal certification involves verifying that food products meet Islamic dietary laws, including the prohibition of haram (forbidden) items such as pork and alcohol, as well as adherence to specific slaughtering methods for animals. Similarly, organic certification ensures compliance with standards such as the exclusion of synthetic pesticides, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and antibiotics.

Integration of halal and organic certification poses challenges due to differing regulatory bodies and standards across countries. For instance, halal certification often involves religious authorities, whereas organic certification is typically governed by national or international agricultural organizations. Collaborative efforts, such as dual certification schemes, could streamline processes and cater to a growing demographic seeking both halal and organic assurances. Studies, such as those by Bonne and Verbeke (2008), suggest that dual certification can enhance consumer trust and marketability.

The absence of unified global standards for halal-organic certification creates challenges for producers and certifiers. Halal certification varies widely, with organizations in different countries interpreting Islamic jurisprudence to establish compliance criteria. Similarly, organic certification differs between governing bodies such as the USDA, EU Organic Certification, and other regional standards.

Efforts to align halal and organic standards could benefit from mutual recognition agreements and the creation of international guidelines. For instance, harmonizing requirements related to animal welfare, input usage, and auditing processes would reduce redundancies and streamline the certification process. The establishment of pilot projects, such as halal-organic farms, can serve as test cases for integrated standards and provide insights into best practices.

Animal Welfare and Ethical Farming Considerations

The organic farming process encompasses various procedures outlined in the myOrganic policy and implementation guidelines established by the Department of Agriculture Malaysia. Many farmers across the country have registered under this scheme. Additionally, the department has developed a policy document and guidelines that specify the requirements and steps farmers must adhere to in order to develop and manage organic farms.

According to the policy and guidelines of this scheme, the organic farming process includes farm management, seed selection, fertilization, pest control, harvesting, handling, labeling, and marketing. Moreover, the guidelines also cover areas such as storage, worker safety, waste management, and the preservation of soil, water, and the environment (Department of Agriculture Malaysia, 2023).

While, animal welfare is a cornerstone of both halal and organic standards, albeit approached from different perspectives. Halal practices mandate humane treatment of animals, emphasizing minimal suffering during slaughter through methods such as swift severance of the jugular vein while invoking the name of Allah. Similarly, organic standards promote animal welfare by requiring access to pasture, prohibiting growth hormones, and ensuring natural living conditions.

Research by Farouk et al. (2014) highlights overlap in ethical treatment under halal and organic systems, suggesting that combining these principles could provide a robust framework for humane food production. However, challenges arise in reconciling differences, such as the use of stunning, which is permissible in some halal certifications but often prohibited in organic slaughter.

The production processes of halal and organic food emphasize purity and sustainability. Halal guidelines dictate that food should be free from contamination by haram substances during production, storage, and transportation. Organic farming, meanwhile, prioritizes ecological balance, soil health, and the use of natural inputs. Combining these approaches could yield food products that are both religiously permissible and environmentally sustainable. Research indicates potential synergies in adopting integrated halal-organic production systems. For instance, studies by Nasir and Pereira (2008) emphasize the growing demand for environmentally conscious halal products, particularly among younger Muslim consumers. Challenges include higher production costs and the complexity of meeting dual compliance standards.

Consumer Perceptions and Market Trends

Consumer perceptions play a pivotal role in the acceptance and success of halal-organic food products. Surveys and market studies indicate a growing preference for products that align with ethical, health, and religious values. According to Rezai et al. (2012), Muslim consumers often perceive organic food as inherently closer to halal due to its natural and unadulterated qualities.

However, misconceptions persist, necessitating clear labelling and consumer education.

Market trends reveal considerable growth potential for halal-organic products, especially in areas with large Muslim populations like Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Additionally, the growing interest in ethical consumerism among non-Muslim communities further expands the market for these products, provided they are promoted strategically.

Producing halal-organic food also involves higher costs due to stringent compliance requirements, dual certification, and premium inputs. However, these products also command higher prices in the marketplace, reflecting their perceived value. Studies by Tieman and Ghazali (2014) indicate that consumers are willing to pay a premium for dual-certified products, particularly in affluent markets.

Policy interventions, such as subsidies for sustainable farming and tax incentives for halal-organic producers, can offset costs and encourage adoption. Additionally, developing economies with significant Muslim populations could benefit from targeted investments in halal-organic agriculture to boost exports and create new jobs.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research paper suggest that the principles of halal and organic food are closely aligned, presenting an opportunity for producers and consumers to embrace the synergies between these two domains. The avoidance of non-halal ingredients, the emphasis on cleanliness and hygiene, and the commitment to sustainable production methods are all key elements that intersect between halal and organic food. Effectively incorporating halal principles into the organic food industry can lead to several benefits. Firstly, it can expand the consumer base for organic products, as the halal-conscious segment of the population, which includes both Muslims and non-Muslims, may be more inclined to purchase organic food that aligns with their religious and ethical values. Secondly, the integration of halal principles can enhance the overall quality and safety standards of organic food production, ensuring that the products meet the rigorous requirements of both halal and organic certification. The elements of halal in organic food reflect a shared commitment to ethical, health-conscious, and sustainable practices. While challenges remain, particularly in certification and standardization, the potential for synergy between these paradigms is significant. Collaborative efforts among certifying bodies, producers, and researchers can pave the way for integrated halal-organic systems that meet consumer demands and contribute to global food sustainability. Future research should focus on standardization, consumer behaviour, and the economic viability of such systems to unlock their full potential.

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