

Hoodwinked by Halaal!

The manner in which "halaal" is implemented in SA is exploitative, dishonest, and an outright scam. It is a cleverly cloaked pyramid scheme and I can prove it! It fleeces the consumer who is forced to buy halaal because he doesn't have a choice, and 98.5% of the time he is not even a Muslim. I wish to extend a challenge to the halaal certification bodies, the food manufacturers, and the major supermarkets to disprove this statement. And if swallowing the halaal hoax is not hard enough, we may soon be taking halaal intravenously and also wearing halaal. Cuba and Malaysia are presently working on producing a halaal vaccine for meningitis, which will undoubtedly be exported to SA.

South Africans are hoodwinked daily by the ingenious halaal hoax. You ask, "How am I being ripped off?" Well, like other South Africans, every time you buy a halaal product, you unknowingly pay a surcharge that goes into the bank account of a halaal certification body. The halaal surcharge accumulates into millions of rands every year. Khairy Jamalludin, chairman of the World Halaal Forum says globally, the halaal industry is estimated at \$580 billion per year. The people that run the certification bodies have become fat-cats with your hard-earned money. Since more than 80% of items on supermarket shelves are halaal, almost every consumer is an unwitting victim of this evil practice (survey of 20 basic food items conducted at national stores). Have you noticed that almost anything you buy these days, from meat products to toothpicks, is halaal. Non-halaal alternatives are becoming non-existent. Halaal products usually bear a moon and star symbol or something similar together with "SANHA", or "MJC", or "NIHT", or "ICSA". The abbreviations stand for the names of the halaal certification bodies in SA. The fact that there are 4 bodies instead of one is evidence that the halaal hoax is lucrative. Please read on.

How does the scheme operate? Companies are pressurised by the halaal bodies to pay tens of thousands of Rands for a piece of paper that says they are halaal certified. Rainbow Chicken, for example, pays over R320 000.00 a year for only its KZN operation. Unilever pays over R65 000.00 for its Durban plants (there are signed agreements and computer printouts). These huge amounts are not a problem for the companies because they simply include them in the cost of the product and it is passed on to the end consumer, viz. you and I. That means everytime you fill your trolley, unbeknown to you, a significant portion of your bill consists of the halaal surcharges. Companies say they pay these large halaal certification fees in order to penetrate the Muslim market. This is hogwash since the total Muslim population in SA is only slightly over half a million, the majority of whom are women and children that are not economically active. So who do you think is paying off the hefty halaal tab? Mostly the other 47.5 million non-muslim South Africans.

What is halaal? Who are these bodies? What are the Islamic authorities saying about all of this? What happens to all this money and what is the government doing about this? How do other religions view this practice?

Halaal is a Sharia Law requirement of Islam. Koranic law requires that animals for consumption are made to face the Ka'aba (a shrine in Mecca where there is a black stone) and slaughtered in the name of Allah, the god of the Islam. Non-meat products must be free from pork or alcohol. The irony is that pork-eating, wine-drinking non-muslims (called "kaffirs" in the Koran) handle the carcasses at the abattoirs and you will find pork and halaal side by side in all the major supermarkets like Pic 'n Pay, Checkers, etc., and, the fact is, very few Muslims actually shop at these stores. They usually support Muslim-owned stores even if the price is higher or the quality inferior. The height of hypocrisy is that over 98% of shoppers at the major food stores that stock mostly halaal are non-muslims that are forced to pay the halaal surcharge because of a lack of non-halaal alternatives. **Many poor South Africans that live below the breadline have no choice but to pay the halaal surcharge.**

The halaal certification bodies are privately run organisations even though they may be registered as NPOs. Amongst the directors of these organisations are ex-politicians that have been barred

from holding public office and another that had been charged for paedophilia. There is bitter rivalry amongst the halaal bodies because each wants a bigger piece of the pie. They are not mandated by the Muslim population and generally do not have the support of the Islamic theological authorities (ulamas). In fact, many of the ulamas have distanced themselves from the certification bodies, stating that their practices are grossly unscrupulous and they have called on the Ummah (Muslims) to boycott products that have been certified by these charlatans. Why are these authorities not exposing this evil to the general public? They will not speak to the broader public because it is humiliating and they may also be seen to be disloyal. But the truth must come out!

The revenue from halaal is used to pay fat salaries to the directors of the halaal bodies, to create employment for Muslims only, to propagate Islam, to advance Islamic political causes both locally and abroad (there is documented evidence to support these allegations). Ninety-eight percent of unwary South Africans are forced, through lack of alternatives, to financially support this religious requirement of Islam which Muslims themselves are called upon, by their some of their spiritual leaders, to boycott. The government's lame view is that halaal "does not harm the consumer". The Department of Trade and Industry misses the point completely that there is a surcharge involved and therefore halaal certification is a financial business that must be regulated - it is **NOT** just a religious matter!

Nominal Christians do not really have a problem with halaal from a religious perspective. Others say, however, there are clear and consistent warnings in the Bible not to eat animals that have been offered to any other god. They say that Allah is not the God of the Bible since Allah has no Son through whose substitutionary death and resurrection a person's sins can be forgiven, thereby allowing him to be reconciled to God. Hindus do not have a religious problem with halaal since, they say, all gods are one. Many are offended, however, by the economic exploitation. Jews have a similar practice to Muslims, which they call "kosher" but they will not eat each other's foods. Kosher is, however, practiced on a much smaller scale and it does not restrict consumer choices or affect prices significantly. Muslims have the right, in terms of the SA constitution, to practice their religion and to eat halaal if they so wish. The constitution does not, however, allow any religion to impose its laws on others, as in the case of halaal (Muslims are, after all, a very small minority, yet every household in SA consumes halaal).

No matter what your religious persuasion, you are a victim of the halaal scam. The per unit surcharge for halaal may be small but it adds up to millions of rands that adversely affects consumer prices and, subsequently, your pocket.

What You Can Do:

1. Awareness is the first step. Most people don't know they are being exploited. Tell others about this scam. Pass this email on to friends and family.
2. Purchase non-halaal products and support stores that supply non-halaal products. (This will be difficult because most products are halaal).
3. Write a letter to the Editor of your local newspaper and expose how consumers are being exploited through the halaal scam.
4. SAFM (104 -107 FM) will broadcast an hour-long panel discussion on halaal on Thursday, 06 March at 8:00am. Please phone in and express your outrage at this form of religious and economic exploitation. Your support is crucial to the success of this campaign. Tel: 0891 104 207.

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CCC is a fully-constituted, national consumer advocacy body campaigning to bring to an end the manner in which halaal is implemented in SA.