10 Halal Production Requirements
For Fish and Seafood

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Fish and seafood refers to all non-plant life from natural bodies of water as well as human-made fish farms. Fish and seafood are reliable source of halal food, but there are a number of differing opinions on the halal or haram status of fish and seafood (Regenstein et al., 2003) The Quran states:

To hunt and to eat the fish of the sea is made lawful for you, a provision for you and for seafarers; but to hunt on land is forbidden you so long as ye are on the pilgrimage. Be mindful of your duty to Allah, unto Whom ye will be gathered.

Chapter V, Verse 96

And He it is Who hath constrained the sea to be of service that ye eat fresh meat from thence, and bring forth from thence ornaments which ye wear. And thou seest the ships ploughing it that ye (mankind) may seek of His bounty, and that haply ye may give thanks.

Chapter XVI, Verse 14

And two seas are not alike; this, fresh, sweet, good to drink, this (other) bitter, salt. And from them both ye eat fresh meat and derive the ornament that ye wear. And thou seest the ship cleaving them with its prow that ye may seek of His bounty, and that haply ye may give thanks.

Chapter XXXV, Verse 12
These verses state that it is lawful to fish for food. In fact, God has given the bounty of the seas to human beings so they may partake of it and benefit by what has been provided. In addition, a number of hadiths (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, PBUH) also address the subject of seafood (Al-Quaderi, 2002).

It is stated in a hadith that a group of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) companions were on a journey when they ran out of food on a journey. They came upon a huge sea creature, often referred to as a huge fish or whale, washed up on the shore. They debated whether it was permissible to eat from it because it was already dead, but finally decided that their need for food exempted them should there be any sin in it. After returning home and informing the Prophet (PBUH), they were told it was a blessing provided to them by God. Three points of jurisprudence were thereby established:

- It is permissible to eat whale even though it is not considered a true fish because it is a mammal. Similarly, animals that wholly live in water (not water and land) are permitted for food.
- There is no requirement to slaughter sea animals unlike the requirements for land animals, even if they are mammals. They do have to be killed humanely, generally by leaving them out of the water to let them die their natural death.
- Unlike land animals, it is permitted to eat dead sea animals. However, they must not show any visible signs of deterioration and spoilage.

Islamic scholars have studied the question of which seafood is permitted and which is prohibited to be eaten by Muslims. Some of the scholars believe that only live catches are halal. They believe that if the object is found dead, it comes under the restriction of prohibiting the consumption of dead land animals. The majority of scholars opine that seafood is exempt from this restriction, and use the tradition about the dead whale to justify their opinion (Regenstein et al., 2003).

As to the species of sea creatures that are permitted, all scholars have agreed that fish with scales are halal. Some believe that only fish with scales are halal and other creatures are not. This group believes that lobster, shrimp, octopus, eels, and so on, are not permitted. Some have opined that anything that can only live in water is halal, whereas creatures that can live in and out of the water are haram. The latter include turtles, frogs, and alligators (Ahmed, 2008). To help guide readers the following more detailed categorization may be helpful:

- **Category one**: Includes fish with fins and removable scales. All fish with scales have fins. This group includes most of the traditional fish species. This category is accepted by all Muslim consumers. List of such fish have been developed by the Jewish community, which uses this as the criteria for fish they accept.
- **Category two**: Includes fish or fishlike animals that may have fins but not removable scales. Some of these may breathe oxygen from the air rather
than water, even if they live in water all the time. Examples are catfish, shark, swordfish, sturgeon, eel, monkfish, cusk, and blowfish. This category is acceptable to the majority of Muslim consumers, but not all. Some may consider them makrooh (disliked or detested).

- **Category three**: Comprises several unrelated species, mobile or not, of various shapes and sizes, that cannot survive without being in water. These are generally either mollusks or crustaceans, including clams (these can live outside and may live in the sand during low tide), mussels (these also may be exposed during tidal changes), lobsters, shrimp, oysters, octopus, scallops, and squid. This group also includes marine mammals that live totally in the sea such as whales and dolphins. The majority of Muslim consumers eat them; however, others consider them either haram or makrooh. Shrimp seems to be in a special category: some only eat them but not the rest of category.

- **Category four**: Includes many of the animals generally falling under the definition of seafood. They live in and around water most of their life cycle, but are capable of living outside water because they can breathe air. These are generally not considered halal although some Islamic scholars are of the opinion that they are from the seas because they live in and around water. These include crabs, snails, turtles, alligators, and frogs.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR SLAUGHTERING OR KILLING FISH AND SEAFOOD**

Animals from the water are not required to be killed in any religiously specified manner as practiced for land animals. However, fish and seafood should be prepared in a manner that the animals do not suffer excessively. They should not be skinned or scaled while still alive, for example, as practiced by some Eastern countries (Wan Hassan and Awang, 2009).

The cultured aquatic animals should be fed healthy balanced diet, using clean ingredients. Because of the high cost of fish meal, some growers may use rendered animal meals (animal by-products, feather meal, and porcine blood meal) as the protein source in the feeds. Such ingredients may render these aquacultured fish as makrooh or haram (Qureshi, 2016).

Newer, hopefully more humane methods of killing fish are being developed. Percussive stunning either by hand or with appropriate equipment is the preferred method. Allowing animals to die in air or using a slush chilling bath, although traditionally used, have animal welfare concerns. The Muslim community supports efforts to improve the killing of fish and seafood.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PROCESSING FISH AND SEAFOOD**

General guidelines for processing fish and seafood consist of maintaining the identity of the product and not using any prohibited ingredients during processing. The guidelines also include not using equipment that has been used for haram products.
FURTHER PROCESSED PRODUCTS

Further processed seafood products must not contain any haram or doubtful ingredients. Several nutritional supplements are also made from fish and shellfish, such as fish oils high in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids; chondroitin sulfate and glucosamine for joint support; fish gelatin/collagen/isinglass for use in pharmaceuticals and in cosmetics; and fish glue. These products must be from acceptable raw materials based on the Muslim consumer’s requirements but also require that all processing equipment, ingredients, and packaging materials be halal.

FIGURE 10.1 Halal control points for processing of surimi made from pollock.
FOOD INGREDIENTS AND FLAVORS

Extracted flavors and other ingredients from fish and seafood are used in non-seafood products. These again must be consistent with the Muslim consumer’s requirements. When exporting, it is advisable to learn the market requirements in a particular country.

IMITATION SEAFOOD PRODUCTS

Imitation seafood products are generally made using surimi. Surimi is usually made from category 1 fish although category 2 fish may also be used. They are flavored with natural and artificial flavors and texturized using different stabilizing agents. Thus, the flavors in particular may be from category 3 or 4, which have more limited acceptance in the Muslim community. There are some such products that do not use any category 2, 3, or 4 ingredients for those Muslims who only accept category 1.

GENERAL HALAL CONTROL POINTS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF SEAFOOD PRODUCTS

Figure 10.1 shows halal control points for processing of surimi made from pollock.

HCP1 SORTING BY CATEGORY

The initial catch must be sorted so that all products kept together are in one category.

HCP2 INGREDIENTS AND PACKAGING

All ingredients and packaging must be checked that they are halal. Preferably with a well-recognized halal certificate.

HCP3 EQUIPMENT

All equipment used for seafood processing must be clean and free of any haram ingredients. Thus, product in any category should ideally be prepared on equipment that had none of the higher categories, for example, equipment for category 1 production must be thoroughly cleaned if category 2, 3, or 4 animals were processed. Figure 10.2 shows halal control points for processing of fish balls. Figure 10.3 shows halal control points for processing of fish fingers. Figure 10.4 shows halal control points for processing of fish sausages. Figure 10.5 shows halal control points for processing of smoked fish and Figure 10.6 shows halal control points for processing of fish oil.
FIGURE 10.2  Halal control points for processing of fish balls.
Halal Production Requirements

FIGURE 10.3 Halal control points for processing of fish fingers.
FIGURE 10.4  Halal control points for processing of fish sausages.
Halal Production Requirements

Fresh Bulls Eye Fish

Dressing the Fish

Washing

Mincing to Reduce the Size

Grinding to Mix with Other Ingredients

Stuffing Sausage Paste into Sausage Casing

Cooling with Chilled Water for 15 mins

Boiling to Remove Wrinkles and Create a Smooth Surface

Fish Sausage

FIGURE 10.5 Halal control points for processing of smoked fish.
Raw Material → HCP-1

Dressing

Washing

Splitting

Salting and Draining

Rinsing in Fresh Water

Air Drying Under Fan

Loading into Smoker → HCP-2

Smoked Product

FIGURE 10.6 Halal control points for processing of fish oil.

REFERENCES


