



Harmonization of Halal Standards: Towards Mutual Recognition Between the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Body and the Malaysian Islamic Development Agency

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Abstract

Harmonization of halal standards is a strategic issue in strengthening trust and economic connectivity between Muslim-majority countries, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia. This study examines efforts toward mutual recognition between the Indonesian Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) and the Malaysian Islamic Development Agency (JAKIM) in administering halal certification. Differences in legal systems, accreditation mechanisms for halal inspection bodies, and technical standards for determining product halalness are key challenges in achieving this harmonization. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with analysis of bilateral regulations and policies, this study identifies that both institutions share the same principle of ensuring Muslim consumer protection through product halal assurance, but differ in implementation aspects, such as certification authority, audit processes, and fatwa issuance. Harmonization efforts can be achieved through the development of a common halal standards framework, mutual recognition of certification bodies, and enhanced technical cooperation and halal diplomacy at the ASEAN level. In addition to providing economic benefits through increased trade in halal products, harmonization also strengthens the positions of both countries as global halal reference centers. This research confirms that mutual recognition between BPJPH and JAKIM requires a shared understanding of sharia and technical aspects, supported by political commitment, transparency, and trust between the institutions. Thus, harmonization of halal standards serves not only as an economic instrument but also as a symbol of the integration of Islamic values into international trade governance.

Keywords: Harmonization, Halal Standards, BPJPH, JAKIM, Mutual Recognition

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INTRODUCTION

In an era of increasingly dynamic globalization and international economic integration, the issue of halal standards has become a major concern in various countries, particularly in regions with significant Muslim populations. Halal products not only reflect adherence to Islamic religious requirements but also serve as a symbol of quality assurance, safety, and ethics in the production and distribution of goods and services (Mohamed Syazwan Ab Talib, and Siti Norida Wahab 2021). As Muslim consumers' awareness of the importance of halal

certification increases, the need for globally recognized halal standards becomes increasingly urgent. In this context, harmonizing halal standards between Muslim-majority countries, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, has become a strategic agenda that not only has religious value but also has broad economic and social impacts (Agustina, Y., Pratikto, H., Churiyah, M., Dharma, BA, & Malang, UN 2019).

Indonesia, with the largest Muslim population in the world, has a significant responsibility to ensure that products circulating in the domestic market and those exported meet halal requirements in accordance with Islamic law (Fatonah, I., Trihartono, A., & Hara, A.E. 2023). The enactment of Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance (JPH) is an important milestone in the national halal certification system. The law mandates the establishment of the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) as an institution authorized to administer halal certification nationally. BPJPH plays a role in establishing policies, registering, certifying, and overseeing the implementation of halal product assurance in Indonesia by involving the Halal Inspection Institute (LPH) and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) as parties involved in the inspection process and the issuance of halal fatwas (Gunawan, S., Juwari, J., Aparamarta, H., Darmawan, R., & Rakhmawati, NA 2021).

Meanwhile, Malaysia has long been recognized as a pioneer in the international halal assurance system through the Malaysian Islamic Development Agency (JAKIM). JAKIM has long established a structured, integrated, and widely recognized halal certification system in various countries. JAKIM's halal certification has even become a global benchmark used by many halal certification bodies worldwide, including member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (Hijrah Abd Kadir, M., Zuraidah Raja Mohd Rasi, R., Sarah Omar, S., & Nuraini, S. 2021). Malaysia's success in managing halal certification stems from the integration of government policies with institutional strengthening, research, and development of an export-oriented halal industry.

However, although both countries have robust halal certification systems based on Sharia principles, differences in regulations, procedures, and authorized institutions often pose challenges to mutual recognition of halal certificates between Indonesia and Malaysia. For businesses, particularly those operating in the food, beverage, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, and logistics sectors, these differences in halal standards can create non-tariff barriers that hinder the smooth flow of trade and investment between the two countries. Therefore, efforts to harmonize halal standards are crucial to creating a system that is mutually recognized and trusted by both parties, thereby supporting the growth of the regional and global halal economy (Asa, RS, Azmi, AG, & Madieha, I. 2017).

Harmonization of halal standards is not merely a technical administrative issue; it also encompasses theological, political, economic, and social dimensions. While the harmonization process must maintain the purity of Islamic teachings in

determining a product's halal status, it must also accommodate the needs of the industrial sector, which demands legal certainty and process efficiency. Indonesia and Malaysia, as two countries with strategic positions in the Islamic world, have a significant opportunity to become pioneers in establishing an integrated halal standards system (Izam, MSE, & Abdullah, M.A. 2020). This collaboration can serve as a model for other countries in developing an inclusive and highly competitive global halal ecosystem.

One important aspect of this harmonization effort is a shared understanding of the concepts of halal and *thayyib*, as well as product testing and certification mechanisms. Although both are fundamentally based on the same Islamic law, in practice, there are variations in the interpretation and implementation of halal standards. For example, in terms of raw material sourcing, the slaughtering process, post-production handling, and halal supply chain oversight. These variations can be caused by differences in Islamic jurisprudence, national legal approaches, and adaptation to developments in modern industrial technology. Therefore, intensive dialogue and in-depth study are needed between BPJPH and JAKIM to find common ground in developing mutually acceptable standards without neglecting the underlying sharia principles (Azam, M. SE, & Abdullah, M. A. 2021).

Furthermore, cooperation in harmonizing halal standards also requires attention to institutional strengthening and accreditation systems. One challenge faced is the differences in accreditation mechanisms for halal inspection agencies and testing laboratories between the two countries. Malaysia, for example, has an integrated oversight system with Standard Malaysia (SM) and the Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM), which play a role in ensuring the quality of halal certification. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the accreditation system remains under the National Accreditation Committee (KAN) and requires close coordination with BPJPH and LPH to ensure consistent standards. Through cooperation and harmonization, the two countries can exchange experiences in strengthening a halal quality assurance system that is transparent, efficient, and credible to the international community.

On the other hand, harmonization also has a significant economic dimension. The halal industry has now become a rapidly growing sector with significant potential in global trade. According to various international reports, the global halal economy continues to increase annually, encompassing the food, cosmetics, pharmaceutical, tourism, Islamic finance, and other sectors (Dianwicakasih Ariefiara, Jubaedah Nawir, and Indri Arrafi Julianisa 2022). Indonesia and Malaysia, with their large Muslim populations and strategic locations in Southeast Asia, have significant potential to become global hubs of the halal industry (Halim, M. 'Afifi bin A., Mohd, KW binti, Salleh, MMM, Yalawae, A., Omar, TSMNS, Ahmad, A., Ahmad, AA binti, & Kashim, MIA bin M. 2014). However,

achieving this requires synergy in policies and the recognition of halal standards so that products from both countries can be mutually accepted without administrative or technical barriers. Harmonization between BPJPH and JAKIM is expected to expand market access, strengthen the competitiveness of halal products, and increase consumer confidence globally.

Furthermore, harmonizing halal standards is also part of international halal diplomacy, reflecting the commitment of both countries to championing Islamic values globally. This collaboration not only strengthens Indonesia and Malaysia's position as leaders in the halal industry but also demonstrates solidarity and unity among Muslims in building an ethical, sustainable, and equitable economic system (Ferry Khusnul Mubarak and Muhammad Khoirul Imam 2020). With mutual recognition of halal certification, it is hoped that a more inclusive and efficient halal ecosystem will be created, ultimately providing tangible benefits to the Muslim community at large (Ismael Muzamiru Nandala, and Tawfik Azrak 2024).

Thus, the harmonization of halal standards between the Indonesian Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) and the Malaysian Islamic Development Agency (JAKIM) is not merely an administrative effort, but a strategic step in building trust and cooperation between countries based on Islamic values. This process requires synergy between governments, religious institutions, the industrial sector, and the community to create a mutually recognized, competitive, and globally oriented halal system. In the context of ASEAN economic integration and the development of the global halal industry, mutual recognition between BPJPH and JAKIM can be a crucial foundation for the development of more harmonized and trusted international halal standards.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research method using a descriptive-analytical approach. The research aimed to analyze the harmonization of halal standards between the Indonesian Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) and the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM) in achieving mutual recognition of halal certification within the ASEAN region. The data sources consisted of primary data in the form of regulations, policies, and official documents related to halal certification systems in Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as secondary data obtained from scientific journals, books, and previous studies relevant to halal standard harmonization and international halal cooperation. Data collection was conducted through library research by examining various laws, halal standards, and academic literature concerning BPJPH and JAKIM. The data were analyzed descriptively by comparing regulatory systems, certification mechanisms, accreditation aspects, as well as the challenges and opportunities for cooperation between both institutions in establishing mutual recognition of halal certification. This approach was used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of

the dynamics of halal standard harmonization and its implications for strengthening the global halal industry.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Harmonization of Halal Standards in Malaysia and Indonesia

Harmonization of halal standards between Malaysia and Indonesia is a crucial issue for the development of the halal industry in Southeast Asia. Both countries have the world's largest Muslim populations and are at the center of attention for certification, regulation, and the development of the global halal economy. However, differences in systems, institutions, and approaches to halal standards often hinder cooperation in trade, investment, and the mutual recognition of halal certificates. Therefore, efforts to harmonize halal standards are a strategic step for both countries to strengthen their positions as leaders in the international halal industry (Lukman Santoso, and Abdul Rachman 2023).

Conceptually, harmonization of halal standards refers to the process of aligning the principles, criteria, and mechanisms of halal certification between two or more countries to achieve equality or mutual recognition. The primary goal of this harmonization is to create trust and uniformity in the application of halal laws and practices, so that products certified halal in one country can be accepted without hindrance in another (Musthofa, A., & Buhanudin, B. 2021). In the context of Malaysia and Indonesia, harmonization is particularly relevant because both countries have established halal certification systems, but fundamental differences in institutional aspects, legal basis, and methodology for issuing fatwas (Rohaeni, Y., & Sutawidjaya, AH 2020).

In Malaysia, the halal system is centrally managed by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). JAKIM has full authority to set halal standards, accredit foreign halal certification bodies, and issue nationally and internationally recognized halal logos. Malaysia adopts an integrative approach by combining sharia and scientific elements through the MS 1500:2019 Halal Food: Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage standard. This standard serves as the primary reference for halal assessment and has been harmonized with quality and food safety management systems such as ISO and HACCP. Malaysia's approach is pragmatic, with an emphasis on aspects of the halal management system that include rigorous auditing, training, and documentation (Islam, M. M., Ab Talib, MS, & Muhamad, N. 2023).

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the halal certification system was previously managed by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), but since the enactment of Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance (UU JPH), certification authority has been transferred to the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH). However, the issuance of halal fatwas remains the authority of the MUI through its Fatwa Commission. This system demonstrates the separation between administrative aspects (BPJPH) and religious aspects (MUI) (Hermawan, A. 2020).

Indonesia uses a positive law-based approach that makes halal certification mandatory for products circulating domestically. This differs from Malaysia, where halal certification is voluntary but has high commercial value.

These fundamental differences often pose challenges to harmonization. On the one hand, Malaysia emphasizes efficiency and global recognition through measurable technical standards, while Indonesia emphasizes sharia legitimacy and the state's responsibility to protect the community. Therefore, harmonization encompasses not only technical aspects but also ideological, administrative, and political ones. To reach common ground, both countries need to build a shared understanding of the basic principles of halal, rooted in Islamic law, while accommodating the differences in their respective social and regulatory contexts.

Initial steps toward harmonization have been taken through various bilateral and multilateral forums and collaborations. One important forum is the ASEAN Working Group on Halal Food (AWGHF), which serves as a coordination platform among ASEAN member countries to develop regional halal standards. Malaysia and Indonesia are both active in this forum and have played a role in the development of the ASEAN Halal Standard, which is expected to bridge the mutual recognition of halal certificates (Iranmanesh, M., Mirzaei, M., Hosseini, SMP, & Zailani, S. 2020). Furthermore, the two countries have also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) regarding cooperation in the field of halal product assurance, including data exchange, halal auditor training, and recognition of halal certification bodies (Karyani, E., Geraldina, I., Haque, MG, & Zahir, A. 2024).

However, harmonization cannot be achieved solely at the policy level. Technical synchronization is required at the operational level. For example, there needs to be agreement on criteria for halal raw materials, animal slaughter methods, supply chain monitoring, and halal audit systems. In some cases, differing interpretations of standards can create obstacles. For example, Malaysia tends to be more open to the use of chemical additives deemed scientifically clean, while Indonesia tends to be cautious and adheres to the strict principle of *ihtiyath* (precaution). Therefore, the harmonization approach should be oriented toward shared basic halal principles based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, rather than rigid uniformity in technical procedures.

Harmonization must also consider the dynamics of the global halal industry. Both Malaysia and Indonesia aspire to become global halal hubs. Malaysia is known as a pioneer in developing a Halal Ecosystem, encompassing halal logistics, halal tourism, and Islamic finance. Indonesia, with the world's largest Muslim population, is developing a vision of Indonesia as a Global Halal Producer by 2024, with a focus on mandatory certification, the development of the halal raw material industry, and strengthening the halal MSME ecosystem (Vivi Kristiana, B., Indrasari, A., & Ida Giyanti, et al. 2020). If both countries can harmonize their halal standards, ASEAN's position in the global halal value chain will be strengthened

and able to compete with countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Pakistan.

From an international legal perspective, harmonizing halal standards also opens up opportunities for mutual recognition. This means that halal certificates issued by recognized institutions in Malaysia will be accepted in Indonesia, and vice versa. This mutual recognition will facilitate trade flows, reduce dual certification costs, and accelerate the distribution of halal products between countries. However, to achieve this, a mutual accreditation mechanism is needed, namely mutual recognition of the competence of each halal certification institution (Wicaksana, A., & Rachman, T. 2018). In this context, JAKIM Malaysia and BPJPH Indonesia need to develop joint standard operating procedures (SOPs) and conduct regular cross-border audits and verifications.

Beyond institutional aspects, harmonizing halal standards also requires support from research and innovation. Both countries need to strengthen research collaboration in halal science, the development of analytical methods for non-halal materials, and the use of digital technology for halal traceability. Blockchain technology, for example, can be an effective tool for ensuring the transparency and integrity of an integrated halal supply chain across countries. The development of a joint Halal Digital Platform can also help industry players access information, registration, and halal certification across borders (Muhammad Hafeez Zakaria, Mohd Haniff Mohammad Yusoff, and Mohammad Nidzam Abdul Kadir 2022).

The socio-cultural aspect cannot be ignored either. Harmonization does not mean erasing the religious identities and authorities of each country, but rather building bridges of understanding. In this regard, religious scholars from both countries play a crucial role in establishing a common understanding of the principles of halal fiqh. Forums between religious scholars and academics can serve as a forum for discussing contemporary issues, such as biotechnology products, cell- cultured meat, or the use of enzymes in the food industry. The understanding of religious scholars provides a moral and spiritual foundation for the birth of a solid and acceptable harmonization among the people.

Overall, the concept of harmonizing halal standards between Malaysia and Indonesia is not merely a technical administrative issue, but encompasses religious, economic, political, and cultural dimensions. This effort aims to create a mutually trustworthy, efficient halal system capable of providing broad economic benefits to Muslim communities in both countries. Challenges such as regulatory differences, institutional egos, and interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) need to be addressed through open dialogue, strategic cooperation, and a commitment to universal Islamic values.

With planned and sustainable harmonization, Malaysia and Indonesia can become key hubs of the global halal industry (Muhammad Bima, and Mohammad Nizarul Alim 2022). Strong collaboration on halal standards not only strengthens

the economy but also demonstrates the leadership of Muslims in creating a fair, transparent, and ethical trading system in accordance with Sharia. This harmonization will ultimately create an integrated regional halal ecosystem, increase the competitiveness of ASEAN halal products, and benefit Muslims worldwide (Christian Bux, et al 2022).

The Role of BPJPH and JAKIM in Halal Certification

Halal certification is a crucial aspect of the food, beverage, cosmetics, pharmaceutical, and various other consumer product industries, particularly in countries with large Muslim populations such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Halal certification not only serves as a sign that a product complies with Islamic law, but also as a guarantee of product quality and hygiene, boosting consumer confidence (Sariah, et al 2023). The two main institutions responsible for the halal certification process in these two countries are BPJPH (Halal Product Assurance Agency) in Indonesia and JAKIM (Islamic Development Agency of Malaysia) in Malaysia. While both share a similar goal of ensuring the halal status of products distributed to the public, they have different institutional structures, working mechanisms, and legal bases, depending on the legal and governmental contexts of their respective countries.

BPJPH is a government institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This institution was established based on Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance (UU JPH), which was later strengthened by implementing regulations such as Government Regulation Number 39 of 2021 and Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 26 of 2019. Before the establishment of BPJPH, halal certification in Indonesia was managed by LPPOM MUI (Institute for the Assessment of Food, Drugs and Cosmetics of the Indonesian Ulema Council), which is an institution under the Indonesian Ulema Council. With the enactment of the JPH Law, the responsibility for implementing halal product assurance was transferred from a civil society institution to a government institution, namely BPJPH, while still involving MUI in the process of determining product halalness (Zein, L 2020). This change marks a major step towards a nationally integrated halal certification system with strong legal legitimacy under state authority.

The primary task of BPJPH is to implement policies in the field of halal product assurance. This role covers various aspects, from issuing and revoking halal certificates, registering halal inspection institutions (LPH), collaborating with domestic and international institutions, to fostering business actors and supervising halal products. BPJPH functions as a regulator and coordinator, ensuring that the entire halal certification process runs according to sharia provisions and national law. In the halal certification mechanism in Indonesia, BPJPH is the main registration gateway. Business actors wishing to obtain halal certification must register with BPJPH, either manually or through an online

system. Once the registration is received, BPJPH assigns an accredited Halal Inspection Institution (LPH) to conduct product inspection and testing. This LPH usually consists of a laboratory or independent institution with certified halal auditors (Tasya Anzellyta, and Anis Fittria 2022).

The results of the LPH inspection are then submitted to the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) for a halal fatwa hearing. The MUI has the authority to issue a fatwa on whether a product is halal or not based on the results of the inspection and audit (Maisyarah Rahmi Hasan, and Munawar Rizki Jailani 2024). After the MUI issues a halal fatwa, the BPJPH issues an official halal certificate on behalf of the government. Thus, the system in Indonesia is collaborative, with the BPJPH holding administrative and legal authority, while the MUI plays a role in religious aspects and fatwa issuance. Furthermore, the BPJPH also plays a role in monitoring and enforcing the law against businesses that violate halal regulations, such as using the halal logo without permission or not renewing certification after it expires.

On the other hand, Malaysia has already built a strong and internationally recognized halal certification system through JAKIM. This institution is under the Office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, specifically under the Department of Islamic Religious Affairs. JAKIM has a broad mandate in Islamic religious affairs in Malaysia, including the management and supervision of halal certification. Since 1974, Malaysia has had a centrally managed halal certification system, and JAKIM officially took over this role in 1994. JAKIM became the sole authority in granting the Malaysian Halal Certification Sijil (SPHM), which is not only valid domestically but is also recognized internationally as one of the most credible halal certificates in the world (Rashid, N. A., & Bojei, J. 2020).

JAKIM's role includes establishing a national halal basis, conducting halal audits and inspections, approving and issuing halal logos, and recognizing foreign halal certification bodies. In Malaysia, the halal certification process is fully managed by JAKIM, with support from the State Islamic Religious Affairs Department (JAIN) for regional implementation. Industry players seeking halal certification must submit an application to JAKIM, then undergo a comprehensive audit covering raw materials, production processes, facility cleanliness, and management and halal assurance systems. After passing the audit and inspection, JAKIM issues an official halal certificate accompanied by the Malaysian Halal logo (Sariyah, S., Luth, T., Sukarmi, S., & Hamidah, S. 2023).

What's interesting about the Malaysian system is its centralized and nationally standardized approach, eliminating overlapping authority. JAKIM also has its own halal standard, MS 1500:2019 for food and beverages, as well as various other specific standards for cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and logistics. All of these standards were formulated jointly with the Department of Standards Malaysia, making the Malaysian halal system a model recognized by many

countries. Furthermore, JAKIM actively collaborates internationally to recognize and oversee halal certification bodies abroad. Only certification bodies recognized by JAKIM are accepted for imported products into Malaysia (Suhaimee, D. DS, Abdullah, MA, & Alias, S. 2019). To date, dozens of halal institutions from various countries have received recognition from JAKIM, including Indonesia, where LPPOM MUI is one of the recognized institutions.

In comparison, the halal certification systems in Indonesia, through BPJPH, and in Malaysia, through JAKIM, share a similar goal: to guarantee the halal status of products for Muslims, but differ in structure and mechanism (Akub, AFZ 2022). Indonesia positions BPJPH as a government agency with administrative functions, while halal certification remains the domain of Islamic scholars through the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). Malaysia, on the other hand, grants JAKIM full authority to manage all halal aspects, both administrative and religious, under the central government structure.

From an international relations perspective, BPJPH and JAKIM play a strategic role in strengthening global halal cooperation. Both have established a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to mutually recognize halal certification and facilitate the export and import of products between the two countries. This collaboration is crucial as both Indonesia and Malaysia aspire to become global halal hubs. BPJPH seeks to emulate the success of JAKIM's system in terms of standardization and international recognition, while JAKIM also learns from Indonesia about the widespread implementation of halal certification in the world's most populous Muslim country (Mohd Aliff et al 2015).

The challenge for BPJPH is to expand its network of Halal Inspection Agencies and expedite the certification process to ensure it doesn't burden businesses, especially micro and small enterprises. The Indonesian government has launched a free halal certification program (SEHATI) to help MSMEs obtain halal certification easily. Meanwhile, JAKIM faces challenges in maintaining the credibility of its certification amidst growing global demand for halal products. JAKIM continues to update its halal standards and audit system to ensure that products labeled Halal Malaysia continue to meet sharia requirements and maintain high quality (Muhammad Abdurrahman Shalahuddin, Khairul Fitroh, and Ruli Margianto 2024).

These two institutions, despite their different systems, are actually moving in the same direction: building an integrated, transparent, and trusted halal ecosystem. BPJPH strengthens the country's position in guaranteeing the halal status of domestic and imported products in Indonesia, while JAKIM maintains Malaysia's reputation as a global halal certification pioneer (Faiz Nur Faiqoh 2024). The synergy between BPJPH and JAKIM not only strengthens the halal sector's position in the ASEAN region but also opens up significant opportunities to

establish global halal standards that are universally recognized by both Muslim-majority and minority countries.

Thus, the roles of BPJPH and JAKIM in halal certification are crucial for Muslims and the global halal industry. Both symbolize that halal assurance is not solely a religious matter, but also part of a national economic and regulatory system oriented toward consumer protection, transparency, and industrial competitiveness (Budiman Mahmud Musthofa et al 2023). Through collaboration, policy innovation, and enhanced institutional credibility, BPJPH and JAKIM will continue to be at the forefront of maintaining the integrity and trust in halal products at the national and international levels.

Challenges and Efforts for Mutual Recognition of Halal Certification in Malaysia and Indonesia

The challenges and efforts to achieve mutual recognition of halal certification between Malaysia and Indonesia are both interesting and important issues in the context of economic cooperation, trade, and harmonization of standards among Muslim countries in Southeast Asia. Both countries have predominantly Muslim populations and have long been pioneers in the development of halal certification systems globally. However, despite sharing the same goal of ensuring the halal status of products consumed by Muslims, the process towards mutual recognition of halal certification between the two countries has not been smooth. This is due to differences in systems, authorities, regulatory approaches, and economic interests of each country (Yustianingsih, L. , Mufid, A., Maifiah, MHM , & Gunawan, S. 2024).

Indonesia, through the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, holds sole authority in administering halal certification since the enactment of Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance. Previously, halal certification in Indonesia was carried out by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), but after the law came into effect, the MUI has the role of an institution that issues halal fatwas, while BPJPH becomes the party that officially issues halal certificates. In Malaysia, the authorized institution for halal certification is the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) (Muhammad Raqib Mohd Sofian and Amer Qasem 2020). JAKIM has a strong reputation and international recognition in halal certification because its standards have been recognized in many countries and are considered comprehensive.

Fundamental differences between the two countries arise from institutional and legal systems. JAKIM in Malaysia is a government agency that acts as a regulator, supervisor, and issuer of halal certificates (Hulwati Hulwati, et al 2025). In Indonesia, however, these functions are divided between BPJPH (Indonesian Halal Product Authority) as regulator and administrator, the Halal Inspection Agency (LPH) as auditing agency, and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) as halal

fatwa issuer. This tripartite model in Indonesia often results in a more lengthy and bureaucratic halal certification process than the single system implemented in Malaysia. This situation poses an obstacle to mutual recognition, as differences in mechanisms are considered to affect the level of trust in certification results from each country.

Furthermore, another challenge lies in the differences in technical standards and basic principles used in halal certification assessments. Malaysia uses a standard based on MS1500:2019 (Halal Food – General Requirements), which covers all aspects from raw material sourcing and production processes, storage, and distribution (Nurulhuda Noordin et al 2020). Meanwhile, Indonesia has the Indonesian National Standard (SNI) for halal products, developed based on BPJPH guidelines and MUI fatwas. While the substance of the two standards is essentially similar, there are differences in technical details such as slaughtering methods, supply chain monitoring, and cross-contamination management. These subtle differences can significantly impact the compatibility and acceptability of certification results between the two systems.

From an economic perspective, halal certification is a strategic instrument influencing product competitiveness in the global market. Malaysia has long been known as one of the world's halal centers with an integrated *Halal Industry Master Plan strategy* and strong government support. Products with the JAKIM halal label are often more easily accepted in international markets such as the Middle East, Europe, and North America (Supriyadi, et al 2024). Indonesia, on the other hand, has great potential with the world's largest Muslim population and *Indonesia's program as the World Halal Industry Center*. However, the challenge of halal certification recognition with Malaysia is significant because both countries are major trading partners in the ASEAN region. Many products from Malaysia enter the Indonesian market and vice versa, so differences in halal certification recognition can create trade barriers.

Within the context of regional agreements, efforts toward mutual recognition have long been underway. ASEAN itself has been pushing for harmonization of halal standards through *the ASEAN Working Group on Halal Food (AWGHF)*. However, to date, there has been no fully implemented mutual recognition system among ASEAN countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia. The main obstacle is the differences in domestic authorities and regulations in each country, which are difficult to standardize. For Indonesia, recognition of foreign halal certification requires the certification body to be accredited by BPJPH. This means that halal certification from JAKIM is not automatically recognized in Indonesia unless it undergoes formal assessment and collaboration mechanisms. Similarly, Malaysia also applies a precautionary principle in accepting foreign halal certification to maintain the credibility of its established halal system.

Efforts toward mutual recognition have actually been made through several memorandums of understanding and bilateral meetings between BPJPH and JAKIM. The two institutions have held several technical discussions to align perceptions and establish a mutual recognition agreement. The governments of both countries are also striving to strengthen cooperation in halal research, laboratory standardization, and halal auditor training. One concrete form of cooperation is the exchange of information on halal standards and joint audits in several industrial sectors. However, the process towards a full agreement is lengthy due to the regulatory sovereignty and trust in each country's halal assessment system.

In addition to technical and legal factors, there are also non-technical challenges such as political aspects and institutional egos. Both Indonesia and Malaysia want to maintain their strategic positions as leaders in the global halal industry. Malaysia, with its *Halal Hub* and *World Halal Conference*, aims to remain a reference center for international halal standards (Nuryakin, Mohd.Shamsuri Md Saad, and Maghfira Rizky Maulani 2023). Meanwhile, Indonesia aspires to become a major player with a large Muslim consumer base and strong national regulatory support. These economic interests and national image often make negotiations for mutual recognition sensitive. Each country wants to ensure that mutual recognition does not undermine the credibility of its institutions or weaken its bargaining position in the global market.

However, amid these challenges, the opportunity to achieve mutual recognition remains open. Both countries share a strong common ground: the desire to protect Muslim consumers and sustainably develop the halal industry. Mutual recognition would offer numerous benefits, including facilitating the flow of halal product trade between the two countries, reducing the costs of dual certification, and enhancing the competitiveness of ASEAN products in the global market. Furthermore, this collaboration could serve as a model for other countries in the region to build integrated and mutually trusted halal certification systems (White, G. R. T., & Samuel, A. 2016).

For mutual recognition to materialize, strategic steps and mutual trust between the authorized institutions are required. First, harmonization of halal standards is necessary through a joint forum involving BPJPH, JAKIM, MUI, and other relevant institutions. This harmonization does not mean standardizing the entire system, but rather agreeing on the same basic principles regarding product halalness. Second, strengthening the capacity of halal certification bodies and auditors in both countries is necessary to ensure consistent and professional inspection quality. Third, a gradual, evaluation-based *mutual recognition agreement mechanism needs to be established*, for example, starting with recognition in specific sectors such as processed foods or cosmetics. Fourth, transparency and exchange of halal certification data are also crucial so that both

parties can mutually verify the validity of products circulating in their markets (Tohe, A., Kholisin, K., Dariyadi, MW, & Omar, N. 2021).

Ultimately, the effort to achieve mutual recognition of halal certification between Indonesia and Malaysia is a long process that requires commitment, intensive communication, and a spirit of mutual respect. The challenges faced are not only technical, but also related to trust, regulations, and national interests. However, with the realization that halal cooperation benefits not only the two countries but also the advancement of the global halal industry, the path to mutual recognition will be increasingly clear. If Indonesia and Malaysia succeed in realizing this agreement, it will not only strengthen their respective positions as global halal leaders but also serve as concrete evidence that synergy between Muslim countries can be achieved through a professional, transparent system based on shared sharia principles (Maisyarah Rahmi Hasan, and Mohd Syahiran Abd Latif 2024).

Regulatory and Accreditation Aspects of Halal Certification in Malaysia and Indonesia

Halal certification is a crucial instrument for ensuring the halal status of products distributed to the public, particularly in Muslim-majority countries like Malaysia and Indonesia. These two countries have different regulatory systems and accreditation bodies for managing and overseeing halal certification (Maisyarah Rahmi Hasan, Bambang Iswanto, and Nadhifa Aulia 2021). While the primary goal is the same: to ensure that products consumed and used by Muslims are free from haram (forbidden) and najis (impure) elements, the mechanisms, legal framework, and institutional governance have their own characteristics, influenced by the social, political, and legal contexts of each country.

In Malaysia, the halal certification system is recognized as one of the most advanced and integrated in the world. The Malaysian government views halal issues not only as a religious aspect but also as a strategic economic sector in global trade. The primary authority responsible for managing halal certification is the Malaysian Islamic Development Agency (JAKIM) (Norazilawati Md Dahlal 2015). This agency, under the Prime Minister's Office, has full authority to set standards, conduct audits, and issue halal certificates. At the state level, JAKIM's functions are assisted by the State Islamic Religious Affairs Agency (JAIN), which plays a role in implementation and oversight in its respective regions (Yusaini H Mohamed et al.,).

The main regulations that form the basis for implementing halal certification in Malaysia include the Trade Descriptions Act 2011, specifically under the Trade (Halal Recognition and Marking) Regulations 2011. The regulation explains that the use of halal labels or logos can only be carried out by businesses that have received approval from the authorities, namely JAKIM or JAIN. Violations of this rule can be subject to legal sanctions in the form of high

fines or imprisonment. In addition, Malaysian halal standards are also formulated in the form of internationally recognized technical documents, such as MS 1500:2019 - Halal Food: Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage - General Guidelines (Third Revision). This standard serves as a reference in the halal food production process from raw materials, processing, storage, to distribution (Jabatan Progress Islam Malaysia: Bahagian Hab Halal, 2014).

In terms of accreditation, Malaysia has a highly structured system. JAKIM is not only responsible for conducting certification domestically but also accrediting foreign halal certification bodies seeking to certify products for the Malaysian market. To date, dozens of halal certification bodies from various countries have been recognized by JAKIM through the Halal Certification Body Recognition (HCBR) mechanism. This accreditation process includes an assessment of the standards used by the bodies, the reliability of the audit process, and compliance with Islamic law and Malaysian standards. This approach makes Malaysia a global reference center for halal assurance systems, while also increasing international consumer confidence in products bearing the Malaysian halal logo.

Beyond religious and legal aspects, Malaysia's halal system is also integrated with national economic policy. The Malaysian government promotes the concept of the Halal Industry Master Plan, which positions the halal industry as a crucial pillar of national economic development and exports. With support from various institutions such as the Halal Development Corporation (HDC), Malaysia focuses not only on product certification but also on developing a halal ecosystem encompassing logistics, finance, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and halal tourism. This comprehensive approach makes Malaysia a pioneer in making halal a competitive economic tool, rather than merely a religious obligation.

Unlike Malaysia, Indonesia's halal certification system has undergone dynamic development, particularly over the past decade. Previously, halal certification authority rested with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), which, through its Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Assessment Institute (LPPOM MUI), was responsible for conducting audits and issuing halal certificates. However, since the enactment of Law Number 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance (UU JPH), halal certification authority has officially been transferred to the government through the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) (Poppy Arsil et al 2018).

The Halal Product Certification Law (JPH) marks a significant paradigm shift in halal certification governance in Indonesia. This regulation stipulates that every product distributed and traded in Indonesia must be halal certified, unless otherwise stated. These products include food, beverages, medicines, cosmetics, chemical and biological products, and consumer goods. Under this new system, the Halal Product Certification Agency (BPJPH) is responsible for the registration process, issuing halal certificates, and disseminating national halal policies.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) retains a central role in issuing fatwas (religious edicts) on halal products, as the religious authority to determine whether halal or haram remains vested in the ulama (Maisyarah Rahmi Hasan 2019).

Halal certification in Indonesia is implemented through a collaborative mechanism between the Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH), the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and the Halal Inspection Institution (LPH). The LPH is an independent institution tasked with conducting halal audits of products and production systems. This institution must be accredited by BPJPH and recognized by the MUI. After the audit is conducted and the results are declared to meet halal standards, the MUI will issue a halal fatwa (religious decree), and the BPJPH will then issue an official halal certificate. This system is further regulated in Government Regulation Number 39 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Halal Product Assurance, which details certification procedures, costs, validity periods, and oversight mechanisms (Zarul Arifin and Maisyarah Rahmi Hasan 2023).

In terms of accreditation and standards, Indonesia adheres to national standards set by the National Standardization Agency (BSN), namely the Halal Assurance System (SJH) and SNI 99001:2021 concerning halal management systems. These standards serve as guidelines for businesses in managing production processes in accordance with halal principles. Furthermore, the government is strengthening its institutional framework through the establishment of the National Accreditation Committee (KAN), which is tasked with accrediting audit institutions and laboratories involved in halal inspections. Therefore, Indonesia's halal certification system is oriented towards integrating legal certainty, religious oversight, and enhancing the competitiveness of the national halal industry (Johari Ab Latiff 2020).

Compared to Malaysia, Indonesia faces greater challenges due to its vast industrial scale and the diversity of its business actors, ranging from large-scale industries to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Therefore, the government is implementing a phased approach to mandatory halal certification. For example, the initial phase applies to food and beverage products, followed by other products in subsequent periods. This phased approach is expected to provide time for businesses to adapt and encourage the growth of the domestic halal industry.

From a regulatory and accreditation perspective, the Malaysian system is more centralized and well-established, with a single primary institution (JAKIM) overseeing the entire certification and accreditation chain (Sazelin Arif and Safiah Sidek 2015). The Indonesian system, on the other hand, is collaborative and more complex, involving several institutions with distinct functions. The Malaysian system's advantages lie in the speed and consistency of the certification process

and the widespread international acceptance of the JAKIM halal logo (Nuratifah, A. S, Sharifudin, MS and Marian, A. L. 2019). The Indonesian system, on the other hand, stands out for its religious legitimacy, as it directly involves religious scholars in every halal fatwa decision.

Both countries also share a common goal of strengthening the halal sector as a strategic economic sector. Malaysia has been a pioneer in leveraging this potential through an integrated halal industry policy, while Indonesia is currently moving in a similar direction through the establishment of the National Committee for Sharia Economics and Finance (KNEKS), tasked with developing a sharia economic ecosystem, including the halal industry. Globally, both Malaysia and Indonesia are pioneers in international halal diplomacy and are expected to collaborate to strengthen the position of Muslims in global trade.

Overall, the regulatory and accreditation aspects of halal certification in Malaysia and Indonesia demonstrate how both countries strive to balance religious values with economic and trade interests. Malaysia stands out for its efficient, centralized, and globally oriented system, while Indonesia offers a model based on collaboration, the legitimacy of religious scholars, and the empowerment of local businesses. Both models have strategic value in building Muslim consumer trust and strengthening the country's position as a global hub for the halal industry.

Thus, it can be concluded that although the halal certification systems in Malaysia and Indonesia have differences in regulatory structures and accreditation mechanisms, both share the same goal : to ensure legal certainty, maintain Muslim consumer confidence, and encourage sustainable halal economic growth (Mohd Al-Ikhsan Ghazali and Siti Salwa Md. Sawari 2015). Collaboration between the two countries in developing halal standards, mutual recognition of certification, and joint promotion in the global market will be a strategic step to strengthen Southeast Asia's role as a global halal industry hub in the future.

CONCLUSION

The harmonization of halal standards between the Indonesian Halal Product Assurance Agency (BPJPH) and the Malaysian Islamic Development Agency (JAKIM) is a strategic step toward achieving mutual recognition of halal certification in the ASEAN region. This effort is oriented not only toward uniform procedures but also toward increasing trust, efficiency, and competitiveness of halal products in the global market. Although the two institutions have different legal bases, systems, and approaches, the spirit of achieving equality and mutual recognition demonstrates a strong commitment to strengthening the position of Muslims as the majority consumer in the region. The harmonization process includes the alignment of standards, audit mechanisms, and accreditation systems so that both countries can recognize each other's halal certificates without the need for re-certification. This provides significant benefits for businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which have previously

faced cost and time constraints in meeting cross-border certification requirements. Furthermore, this collaboration can serve as a model for halal integration that can be implemented at the ASEAN level, strengthening the region's position as a global hub for the halal industry.

However, successful harmonization requires political commitment, technical coordination, and ongoing communication between institutions. Issues such as differences in Islamic jurisprudence (fikh), national regulations, and product oversight mechanisms must be addressed through dialogue and an inclusive approach. Transparency, professionalism, and the use of digital technology in halal verification are also crucial factors in building mutual trust. Overall, the harmonization between BPJPH and JAKIM is not simply a unification of standards, but rather a strategic collaboration to strengthen the global halal ecosystem. With continued synergy, the two institutions can become pioneers in creating a trusted, efficient, and internationally recognized halal certification system, while simultaneously promoting the economic progress of the Muslim community based on sharia values.

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