



# Flash News

Print Edition

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## COUNSEL FOR CONSUMERS

By the Grace of Almighty Allah Ta'ala our National Consumer Helpline continues to fill a vital role in keeping the Ummah informed on Halaal/Haram issues. Established some 13 years ago the interactive service is used extensively by housewives, learners, students, the food industry, traders and even other Halaal certifiers. It handles a huge volume of queries daily with 26,206 queries recorded for 2013.

The queries range from the routine type on the status of products which make up the majority, more complex queries that requires research, hot topical issues which sees a short burst of very intensive activity on a specific issue and then there are some which borders on the ridiculous. We hope to share some of these and our responses with you from time to time.

We list below an aggregation of three of them from our files.

**Question 1. Is it not ridiculous to have half a dozen different halaal bodies. In the Plaza in Johannesburg, a pie shop has certificates from SANHA and from the National halaal independent trust. In Durban we see the Chimney restaurant that is certified by the Jamiatul Ulama of KZN and the National halaal independent trust, then we have unknown people calling themselves Shura council who issue certificates to Burger King. Why do you need people to have two certificates?**

It would be presumptuous and patronizing for us to deny the right of any persons to associate with whom they wish. Just as there are many organisations in the same field of endeavour in welfare, education, social and economic fields that serve their constituents, why begrudge those who apply the same principle on Halaal and wish to follow those in whom they have confidence in. ([Click here to view related reading matter on how to select your certifying body](#)).

Whilst SANHA's very existence and mission from the onset has been the cherished dream of a single united Halaal body to serve the Ummah, it accepts that with differences of opinion on schools of thought, culture and history, Muslims are entitled to their choices which also includes the free market principle of establishing a Halaal body of their own. Hence, the existence of different bodies in this country to serve their needs. We accept this diversity and will continue making efforts towards unification of standards.

On the question of dual certification we generally do not encourage this. However, we once again reiterate our recognition and acceptance of the businessman's right to acquire additional certification and other merchandising marks. Various factors in ensuring that products have a competitive edge to increase their market share are relied upon by entrepreneurs. These include patented technologies, unique features, better pricing, packaging and/or

service and enhancements that add value. Amongst these tried and tested practices is endorsements by organisations and services such as a medical body, an industry guild or association, quality standards e.g. ISO, Bureau of Standards, Good Food Society, Proudly South African, Heart Foundation, Vegetarian society, the Hindu Shuddah, Jewish Kosher and the Halaal certification marks.

It stands to reason that these enhancements are for that competitive edge. No businessman will intentionally take on additional costs to have such an enhancement if there was no demand or that will render his product or service uncompetitive. Therefore, the process is a self-regulating one in that customers vote with their feet and will take their business elsewhere if it does not satisfy their own criteria of price, presentation, performance, religious assurance etc. as their decision is on the overall value and not simply for the enhancements alone.

**Question 2. Why can't we be like the Jews? They have only one body and one Kosher mark on the products that are in the stores. They don't spend their time and resources competing with each other?**

Why should we even contemplate to be like the Jews when the Noble Quran says in Chapter 33 Ahzab Verse 21 *“Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar...”*

Comparisons on a single Jewish body serving their community is disingenuous and an unfair. The population demographics of the Republic shows that Jews in South Africa number less than 70 000 today. Almost one hundred percent are descendants of European Jews with a common language, strong cultural bonds and living in very close knit communities.

Therefore, this homogenous group can be adequately catered for by one kosher body. Incidentally in Israel there are 23 certifying agencies including a State controlled one who have deep divisions between them.

Contrast this with the position of South African Muslims who number anywhere from a million to 1.5 million people of diverse national origins and socio economic categories. They range from descendants of the early Muslims in the Cape brought from South East Asia, Indians from India, Africans from East Africa including Zanzibar and from the 1990's a huge influx of Muslims from North, South and Central Africa, all with their individual cultures and languages. This diverse grouping embraces several schools of thought and have their own preferences on administration of their affairs and whom they wish to associate with. It is impossible for one all-encompassing body to serve this diverse grouping.

**Question 3. Maybe a solution could be the government appointing a single Halaal body that will be controlled by an act of Parliament and all its structures like the Public Protector's office.**

Our response previously which is as relevant today is that neither our membership nor our Ulama will accept abdicating this important institution developed by the community over decades to any government agency. Apart from the non-negotiable principle of taking away the control from Ulama and the Muslims is not only abdicating one's religious responsibilities but also deemed invalid in terms of the Shar'iah.

**SANHA puts “U” first in ConsUmer  
Halaal Affairs**