

ERROR IN LABELLING OR ERROR IN JUDGEMENT

Risk is the element of uncertain danger or hazard which is an inherent part of human life. Individuals and communities are subjected to unavoidable risks in their growth and development. Risks are attached to the entire spectrum of human life encompassing physical, mental and spiritual health, reputation, assets, construction, security, financial, government etc.

To guard against this, a process described as “**risk management**” is implemented. This involves understanding, analyzing and addressing the risk with certain interventions and measures to minimise or eliminate them.

When a child steps out of the house onto the street he is open to many risks such as an accident with a vehicle or cyclist, construction on the pavement, harassment, hijacking and robbery. The risk management undertaken by parents and educators, in this case, is to prepare the child with the knowledge and example of how to negotiate and respond to these threats, i.e. sticking to the pavement, crossing at the traffic lights, being vigilant etc.

The parents also would have further assessed potential threats and decided whether they should accompany the child, arrange an escort or have an alternative as the street maybe far busier than usual such as it being peak hour. Government also plays its part by passing laws and enforcing these through officers of the law.

While the playing field in Halaal regulatory services differs from the above scenario, the principles of risk management are the same. As mandated servants of a constituency that they represent or are self-appointed, Halaal certifying bodies uphold a trust that makes it necessary for the management of the risks in a responsible and appropriate manner. The higher the risk, the more interventions and vigilance is required in terms of management, controls, on-site monitoring and audit frequency etc.

Therefore, one cannot apply the same risk management interventions for a site manufacturing sugar and one that processes meat.

As with a hospital ward where many patients are monitored by a few health care professionals and a doctor’s daily audit, the converse is applicable in a high care unit where the patient is monitored by many health

care personnel with real time monitoring equipment and a doctor on standby.

Unquestionably, the highest risk category in Halaal certification in terms of the Shar’iah is on the slaughter and processing of meat products exacerbated with permutations on types of meat, the variety of abattoirs, slaughter procedures, logistics and contamination. As if this was not enough, one has to also contend with meat coming to our shores from dubious sources that are endorsed and legitimized by the issuing of a Halaal certificate by local sources. The ultimate risk factor in certification though is the handling of pork and other non-Halaal meats on the common retail premises.

With the risk level running highest in this category it is not surprising that errors occur which we aver are avoidable. Very recently we had the case of Muslims in the Western Cape purchasing beef sausages with alleged “**traces of pork**” with a Halaal label from a major national chain store. This is not an isolated case as there have been several such cases in the Western Cape by chain stores carrying the Halaal certification mark. All of these were simply explained away as “**labeling errors**”. SANHA has refused to certify such outlets due to the inherent risk of contamination with Haraam.

In the province in question, according to information gleaned from the web, some 134 such retail sites of national chains have been issued Halaal certification. Without the required stringent controls, consistent daily monitoring, authorised trained on-site Muslim supervisors and frequent impromptu audits, we have grave misgivings on coverage of the number of sites. The proof of the pudding is in the eating and we take the number of cases that have surfaced in this regard as testimony of this.

Therefore, these incidents cannot be brushed off as errors in labeling but rather errors in judgement in certifying such outlets.

We urge the community to be vigilant and avoid purchasing meat products at such retail chain outlets which also sell Haraam meats. Hopefully organisations that certify such outlets will reconsider their actions.

**WHY PLACE YOUR RIZQ AT RISK!
RATHER BE SAFE THAN SORRY...**