

Halal System Management in the Poultry Industry: A Comparative Study of Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia

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Hafit Khamnurak¹

Asman Taeali²

Abstract

Objective: The research aims to explore the management guidelines of the halal system in Thailand's poultry industry and to comparatively examine the halal management frameworks enforced by four key Muslim-majority countries: Malaysia, Brunei, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia.

Methodology: This research employed a qualitative methodology based on documentary analysis and in-depth interviews with 17 experts. The documentary analysis employed both deductive and inductive approaches and Interviews followed a semi-structured format based on Creswell & Poth (2018) purpose-driven interview methodology.

Research Findings: The study reveals that Thailand's current halal system management is limited in its scope and intensity particularly in the midstream and downstream sectors of the supply chain. It lacks comprehensive halal control mechanisms, especially in the upstream processes such as feed production and poultry farming. In contrast, the halal management systems of Malaysia, Brunei, UAE, and Saudi Arabia demonstrate stronger institutional regulations, rigorous auditing standards, and varying stances on stunning practices and certification authority.

Contributions: The findings indicate the necessity for Thailand to align its halal system management with international standards in order to enhance consumer trust, meet export requirements, and strengthen its position in the global halal market.

Keywords: Halal management, poultry industry, Thailand, comparative study, Halal standards

¹ Ph.D. Candidate (Islamic Studies and Muslim Studies), Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus, Hafitkhamnurak14@gmail.com

² Ph.D. (Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage), Assistant Professor, Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus, Asman.t@psu.ac.th

Introduction

The halal industry plays a vital role in the global food economy, especially in Muslim-majority countries where adherence to Islamic dietary laws is not only a matter of religious obligation but also a legal requirement (Riaz & Chaudry, 2003). Within this context, the poultry sector has become one of the most important components of halal food production due to its high demand and export potential. Thailand, as a leading exporter of poultry products, has sought to integrate halal principles into its food production and processing systems to meet the expectations of Muslim consumers and international halal certification authorities (Rahman et al., 2021)

Despite these efforts, studies and field observations suggest that Thailand's halal system management remains inconsistent, particularly in upstream operations such as feed production and poultry farming (Khamnurak & Taeali, 2025). Most regulatory mechanisms tend to concentrate on midstream and downstream stages such as slaughterhouses and processing plants where the Central Islamic Council of Thailand (CICOT) implements halal auditing and certification procedures. However, without a fully integrated supply chain management approach, including effective halal control points (HCPs), the system cannot ensure comprehensive halal compliance.

In contrast, countries like Malaysia, Brunei, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia have established more rigorous and systematic halal certification systems. For example, Malaysia's Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM) operates under the MS 1500:2019 standard, which outlines specific requirements for halal food production (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2019). Similarly, Brunei's Halal Certificate and Halal Label Order (Ministry of Religious Affairs [MORA], 2005) and PBD 24:2007-Halal Foods (MORA, 2007), the UAE's GSO 2055-1:2015 and UAE.S 993:2022 standards, and Saudi Arabia's SFDA/GSO 993:2015 provide comprehensive regulatory frameworks governing halal slaughter, processing, and certification. These systems have become benchmarks for halal food imports and exports worldwide.

This study aims to examine the current halal management practices in Thailand's poultry industry and to compare them with the regulatory approaches of Malaysia, Brunei, UAE, and Saudi Arabia. The goal is to identify management gaps, explore Islamic legal consistencies, and recommend improvements to align Thailand's halal system with international standards and global trade requirements.

Literature Review

1. Islamic Principles of Halal System Management

Halal, meaning “permissible” in Arabic, encompasses not only the nature of the product itself but also the ethical and procedural aspects of production as guided by Shariah law. The Qur'an and Sunnah establish clear criteria for lawful food, which include the prohibition of consuming blood, carrion, pork, and animals not slaughtered in the name of Allah (al-Mā'idah, 5:3). Scholars such as Al-Qaradawi (1999) emphasize that halal encompasses both external hygiene and internal religious intent. The modern halal management system must therefore align with core principles including tawhid (monotheism), tayyib (wholesomeness), maslahah (public interest), and avoidance of najis (impurities).

2. Halal Assurance in the Poultry Industry

The poultry sector, especially in industrialized settings, presents unique challenges for halal compliance. These include mechanical slaughtering, the use of pre-slaughter stunning, and complex supply chains (Riaz & Chaudry, 2003). Effective halal assurance systems involve the establishment of Halal Control Points (HCPs), the presence of trained Muslim slaughterers, traceability of raw materials, and the exclusion of cross-contamination with haram elements. According to Rahman et al. (2021), the implementation of Control Points for Halal Poultry Supply Chain (CPHPSC) in poultry plants must be integrated into overall food safety protocols such as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP).

3. National Halal Management Systems

A Comparative Perspective, Several Muslim-majority countries have developed robust halal certification frameworks that serve as international references: Malaysia: Through JAKIM, Malaysia has developed the MS 1500:2019 standard which covers halal definitions, production requirements, slaughtering, handling of najis, and record keeping. It is widely accepted in the global halal market (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2019). Brunei: Under the Halal Certificate and Halal Label Order, Brunei implements strict controls including no stunning, onsite inspection by Brunei's religious officers, and bans on processed poultry imports (MORA, 2005). UAE: The UAE's halal standard includes GSO 2055-1:2015 for general halal guidelines (Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology [ESMA], 2015) and UAE.S 993:2022 for animal slaughtering in compliance with Islamic rules. The system permits electric stunning under specific conditions and emphasizes hygienic control

(Ministry of Industry & Advanced Technology [MOIAT], (2022). Saudi Arabia: The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) applies the GSO 993:2015 standard which prohibits stunning and requires full documentation of halal compliance, including on-site inspection and accreditation of foreign certifiers (Gulf Standardization Organization [GSO], 2015).

4. Previous Studies on Halal Management

Numerous studies have addressed gaps and strengths in halal system management. For example, Ramli et al. (2020) highlighted the implementation of halal assurance protocols at the farm level as a foundational element in the poultry supply chain. Meanwhile, Ibrahim et al. (2024) examined the integration of Halal Compliance Critical Control Points and IoT technologies in ensuring traceability and compliance throughout the halal chicken meat supply chain. In the Thai context, Khamnurak and Taeali (2025) pointed out the lack of integration in upstream operations and inconsistencies in halal enforcement.

These works collectively suggest that effective halal system management in the poultry sector requires not only technical compliance but also alignment with religious principles, international expectations, and operational transparency.

Research Objectives

This article aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the current management practices of the halal system in Thailand's poultry industry.
2. To compare Thailand's halal system management with the regulatory standards and operational models of Malaysia, Brunei, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing two primary methods: documentary analysis and in-depth interviews. The objective was to explore halal system management in Thailand's poultry industry and to comparatively examine halal standards and practices in Malaysia, Brunei, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia.

1. Documentary Research

A comprehensive documentary analysis was conducted to examine both Islamic jurisprudential foundations and contemporary halal regulatory frameworks. The reviewed materials included: Primary Islamic sources such as the Qur'an, Hadith, classical fiqh texts, and fatwas relevant to halal slaughter, najis (impurities), and purification. National halal

standards and regulatory guidelines from the five countries under study, including: MS 1500:2019 and the Malaysian Protocol for Halal Meat and Poultry Production, PBD 24:2007-Halal Foods (MORA, 2007), UAE.S GSO 2055-1:2015 and UAE.S 993:2022 (UAE), SFDA/GSO 993:2015 (Saudi Arabia), Thai regulations including the Regulation on the management of Halal Affairs B.E. 2558 (2015) and halal guidelines issued by the Central Islamic Council of Thailand (CICOT) and Secondary sources such as academic journals, theses, and previous studies on halal system management in poultry production.

The documentary analysis employed both deductive and inductive approaches, allowing for thematic interpretation of religious principles, operational standards, and regulatory enforcement.

2. In-depth Interviews

To supplement the document analysis and gain expert insights, in-depth interviews were conducted with 17 key informants selected via purposive sampling. These informants were chosen for their direct involvement in halal certification, auditing, and poultry processing operations in Thailand. The sample included: Halal Executives, Halal Auditors, Halal Assurance controllers and Halal Slaughtering supervisors

Interviews followed a semi-structured format based on Creswell & Poth (2018) purpose-driven interview methodology. The questions were designed to elicit perspectives on: Current halal management practices in Thailand's poultry industry, Challenges in aligning with international halal requirements, Comparative reflections on halal systems in the four reference countries

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The data were analyzed using thematic coding, with emergent categories reviewed against documentary findings to ensure analytical triangulation.

Research Findings

This section presents the findings based on the analysis of documentary data and in-depth interviews with 17 experts. The results are structured in two parts: (1) halal system management in Thailand's poultry industry, and (2) comparative analysis of halal management guidelines in Malaysia, Brunei, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia.

1. Halal System Management in Thailand's Poultry Industry

The findings reveal that Thailand's halal system management is still limited in its scope and application across the poultry supply chain. While general food safety practices such as Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) are widely adopted in the upstream sector (e.g., feed production, poultry farming), specific halal-related controls are mostly concentrated in the midstream and downstream sectors, including slaughterhouses and processing plants.

Several informants emphasized that halal considerations are often introduced only at the slaughtering stage. "In most farms, halal is not discussed at all. The focus starts when the chickens arrive at the slaughterhouse" (Halal Executive 2, personal communication, September 13, 2024). Similarly, a halal auditor noted that upstream operations are generally treated as "halal-neutral" rather than "halal-sensitive." "Feed formulation and rearing practices are assumed to be halal by default, but there are no clear halal control points defined at these stages" (Halal Auditor 7, personal communication, September 7, 2024).

Key issues identified include:

(1) Lack of halal control points (HCPs) in upstream activities such as feed formulation and animal rearing. "Without upstream HCPs, halal assurance becomes partial and reactive" (Halal Auditor 5, personal communication, September 7, 2024).

(2) Insufficient religious supervision and monitoring in certain certified facilities. "Some plants have certificates, but religious supervision is not continuous; it depends on audit schedules" (Halal Assurance Controller 10, personal communication, September 18, 2024).

(3) Limited staff training in Shariah compliance for halal operations. "Workers understand hygiene very well, but many do not understand the religious rationale behind halal procedures" (Halal Slaughtering Supervisor 12, personal communication, September 11, 2024).

(4) Regulatory gaps between the Central Islamic Council of Thailand (CICOT) and industry actors, especially in remote provinces. "In some provinces, coordination with CICOT is minimal, and local implementation varies significantly" (Halal Assurance Controller 9, personal communication, September 18, 2024).

(5) Low international recognition of Thailand's halal certification compared to JAKIM (Malaysia) "Buyers often ask first whether the product is certified by JAKIM or recognized by Middle Eastern authorities" (Halal Executive 3, personal communication, September 14, 2024).

As a result, Thailand's halal poultry management is perceived as fragmented and inconsistent, especially for establishments that do not export to Muslim-majority countries.

2. Comparative Halal Management Guidelines: Malaysia, Brunei, UAE, and Saudi Arabia.

The study identifies several distinct features in the halal certification systems of Malaysia, Brunei, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. Interview findings confirm that these systems demonstrate stronger institutional integration, clearer authority structures, and stricter enforcement mechanisms than those observed in Thailand.

An Islamic studies expert explained Malaysia's approach as follows: "JAKIM functions as both a religious and regulatory authority, which gives its halal certification strong legitimacy" (Halal Auditor 6, personal communication, September 8, 2024). Regarding Brunei, informants highlighted the strict on-site supervision requirement. "Brunei requires their own inspectors to be present. This shows how seriously they treat halal enforcement" (Halal Slaughtering Supervisor 16, personal communication, September 11, 2024). Saudi Arabia was consistently described as the most stringent in terms of religious compliance. "In Saudi Arabia, halal slaughter is non-negotiable no stunning, no compromise" (Halal Executive 3, personal communication, September 14, 2024). The UAE was perceived as more flexible but highly systematic. "The UAE allows conditional stunning, but the documentation, training, and traceability requirements are very strict" (Halal Auditor 7, personal communication, September 7, 2024).

A summary of key findings is as follows:

Table 1 Title: A summary of key findings

Country	Key Features of Halal Management
Malaysia	Operated by JAKIM, uses MS 1500:2019 standard. Allows stunning with conditions. Strong documentation and audit system. No imports of cooked poultry allowed.
Brunei	Regulated by MORA, uses PBD 24:2007-Halal Foods, prohibits stunning before slaughter. Onsite Bruneian inspectors are required. No processed poultry imports accepted.
UAE	Uses UAE.S 993:2022 and GSO 2055-1:2015. Allows conditional electrical stunning. Emphasis on hygiene and staff training. Imports allowed only from approved facilities.

Saudi Arabia	Uses SFDA/GSO 993:2015. No stunning permitted. Strict requirements for religious slaughter, traceability, and label compliance. Imports subject to re-certification.
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Source: (Khamnurak,2025)

These systems exhibit high levels of integration, oversight, and standardization, especially in their use of religious authorities, trained personnel, and codified control points. Each system maintains strict rules regarding stunning practices, import restrictions, and inspector authority, which directly affect Thailand's poultry export procedures.

3. Cross-Cutting Challenges

The comparative analysis revealed several cross-cutting challenges for Thailand's halal system:

(1) The lack of harmonization between Thai halal standards and those of key trading partners often leads to redundant inspections or delays in certification. "Sometimes we pass Thai certification but still have to start over for Middle Eastern markets" (Halal Assurance Controller 11, personal communication, September 18, 2024).

(2) Human resource shortages in qualified halal auditors impact system credibility. "The number of trained halal auditors is not sufficient for the scale of the industry" (Halal Executive 2, personal communication, September 13, 2024).

(3) Halal assurance mechanisms are still reactive rather than preventive in nature. "Most corrective actions happen after non-compliance is found, not before" (Halal Slaughtering Supervisor 14, personal communication, September 10, 2024).

These challenges indicate that Thailand must enhance the robustness and global alignment of its halal management system, particularly in preparation for long-term halal export growth.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal significant gaps in Thailand's halal system management, particularly in comparison with the more institutionalized and internationally recognized frameworks of Malaysia, Brunei, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia. These differences have important implications for the effectiveness, credibility, and export competitiveness of Thailand's halal-certified poultry products.

1. Systemic Gaps in Thailand's Halal Management

Despite Thailand's active participation in the global poultry export market and the presence of a national halal certification body CICOT its halal assurance framework remains fragmented. The lack of halal control points (HCPs) in upstream operations such as feed manufacturing and poultry farming contrasts with the midstream and downstream focus of existing regulations. This limited scope compromises the holistic integrity required by Shariah law, which emphasizes tayyib (purity and wholesomeness) across the entire production process (Al-Qaradawi, 1999). As one informant observed:

“Halal cannot start only at slaughter; it must begin from feed and rearing” (Halal Assurance Controller 8, personal communication, September 19, 2024).

Furthermore, Thailand's halal oversight suffers from inconsistency in auditor qualifications, insufficient religious supervision, and a lack of mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) with key Muslim-majority markets. These issues resonate with findings by Rahman et al. (2021), who stressed the need for integration of halal assurance into every stage of the poultry supply chain.

2. Comparative Strengths of Foreign Halal Frameworks

Malaysia's JAKIM certification system offers a well-established model based on MS 1500:2019, which incorporates rigorous documentation, auditing, and traceability protocols (Department of Standards Malaysia, 2019). It also demonstrates flexibility in allowing pre-slaughter stunning under certain conditions an approach supported by some Islamic scholars and recognized under maslahah (public interest) (Riaz & Chaudry, 2003).

Brunei and Saudi Arabia, by contrast, adopt more conservative stances by prohibiting stunning altogether, reflecting their interpretation of dhabīhah (slaughter) as an act that must preserve the animal's full consciousness. The UAE provides a hybrid model, balancing modern industrial needs with Shariah principles by allowing electric stunning under specific guidelines (MOIAT, 2022).

These countries also benefit from centralized religious governance and strict enforcement mechanisms, which not only enhance compliance but also boost consumer trust and international credibility.

Interview findings confirm that centralized religious authority and legal enforcement significantly enhance compliance consistency and global trust.

3. Implications for Thailand's Halal Strategy

The comparative analysis suggests that Thailand must adopt a more comprehensive and Shariah-compliant approach, particularly in the upstream segment, to align with international expectations. Key areas for reform include:

- (1) Developing a national halal standard modeled after MS 1500:2019 or GSO 2055-1:2015.
- (2) Strengthening CICOT's technical and theological oversight capabilities.
- (3) Expanding halal control points to cover all nodes in the poultry supply chain.
- (4) Engaging in bilateral recognition agreements to minimize redundant re-certifications.
- (5) Increasing training for halal personnel, including auditors and slaughter supervisors.

These adjustments would not only reinforce religious compliance but also strengthen Thailand's reputation in the global halal economy, especially in high-demand markets such as the Middle East. As one informant concluded: "If Thailand wants to be a global halal hub, halal must be treated as a system, not just a certificate" (Halal Executive 1, personal communication, September 10, 2024).

Limitations

This study employed qualitative methods, including documentary analysis and in-depth interviews with 17 experts, which provide rich contextual insights but do not aim for statistical generalization. The findings primarily reflect expert perspectives on halal system management rather than quantitative performance indicators such as compliance rates or audit outcomes. In addition, the comparative analysis of Malaysia, Brunei, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia is based on regulatory documents and expert interpretations rather than direct field observations in those countries. Finally, the findings are situated within a specific regulatory context and may evolve alongside future changes in halal standards and international trade policies.

Future Research

Future research may adopt a mixed-methods approach by integrating qualitative insights with quantitative compliance and export data to assess the effectiveness of halal system implementation. Further empirical studies focusing on upstream halal control points, particularly in feed production and poultry farming, are recommended. Comparative field-based research involving direct observation of halal certification and slaughtering practices in

Muslim-majority countries would also enhance understanding of enforcement mechanisms. Additionally, future studies may explore international market perception and consumer trust in Thailand's halal certification to support long-term export competitiveness.

Conclusion

This study explored the current state of halal system management in Thailand's poultry industry and compared it with the regulatory frameworks of Malaysia, Brunei, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia. Using qualitative methods documentary analysis and in-depth interviews with 17 experts the research revealed that Thailand's halal system, while institutionally present, remains fragmented and lacks comprehensive oversight in the upstream sector. Most controls are concentrated in the slaughter and post-processing stages, while feed production and poultry farming often operate without clear halal guidelines or religious supervision.

In contrast, the four benchmark countries exhibit strong and integrated halal management systems. Malaysia's JAKIM, Brunei's MORA, the UAE's ESMA, and Saudi Arabia's SFDA all provide systematic, standardized, and enforceable halal frameworks recognized internationally. These systems embed Shariah principles throughout the production chain and offer better alignment between legal, religious, and technical dimensions of halal compliance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study proposes the following recommendations to enhance halal system management in Thailand:

1. Develop a National Halal Standard: Thailand should formulate a national halal standard for the poultry industry modeled after MS 1500:2019 (Malaysia) or GSO 2055-1:2015 (UAE), covering feed, farm management, slaughtering, packaging, and logistics.
2. Expand Halal Control Points (HCPs): Introduce clear halal control mechanisms in upstream operations such as animal feeding practices, veterinary drug usage, and breeding. These areas should be supervised and certified under religious guidelines.
3. Strengthen Auditor and Slaughterer Training: Implement structured training programs on Islamic jurisprudence and international halal practices for halal auditors, slaughtering supervisors, and food technologists.

4. Enhance Institutional Collaboration: Foster closer cooperation between CICOT, provincial Islamic committees, government regulatory bodies, and private sector stakeholders to standardize implementation and compliance.

5. Pursue International Recognition and MRAs: Engage in bilateral and multilateral agreements for mutual recognition of halal certificates with major import markets, especially Middle East and Southeast Asia.

6. Invest in Halal Research and Development: Establish research units focused on halal innovation, certification technology (e.g., blockchain traceability), and jurisprudential interpretations related to modern production methods.

7. Public Awareness and Consumer Education: Promote awareness among producers and consumers regarding the theological, ethical, and commercial significance of halal compliance through educational campaigns and public seminars.

By implementing these recommendations, Thailand can enhance the integrity, consistency, and international reputation of its halal poultry system, contributing to both religious compliance and sustainable economic growth in the global halal market.

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