



CIBO HALAL - UN CONFINE CHE NON DIVIDE
Cultura, Dialogo, Inclusione, Cooperazione, Business

HALAL FOOD - A BORDER THAT DOES NOT DIVIDE
Culture, Dialogue, Inclusion, Cooperation, Business

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Conference abstract

1. INTRODUCTION

On October 23th, 2015 a conference themed “Halal Food - A border that does not divide” was held in Milan. It was promoted by [Link 2007](#), [Assaif](#) and the Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Set within the context of Expo 2015 and the European Year for Development, the conference aimed at providing a chance for dialogue and knowledge on a topic that is still much misunderstood. The speakers thoroughly presented the opportunities that halal economy offers for integration and sustainable development. Hence, the conference hinged on these two building-blocks: social and economic.

The right to food for every human being was the first key message of Expo 2015. However, as unequivocally expressed in the [Milan Charter](#), the legacy of this Universal Exhibition, and as **Livia Pomodoro** - President of the Milan Center for Food Law and Policy - further discussed in the last session of the conference, such right does not only concern the amount of food available, but also its social and cultural value (the right to choose one’s *own* food), the sustainability of the production processes, the protection of the earth and the environment, the access to land and water resources, , the fight against waste. All these themes are, since time immemorial, implicit in the concept of halal food, which literally means: lawful, pure.

2015 was also an important year for international cooperation. **Cristiano Maggipinto**, Coordinator of the Italian Cooperation activities at Expo 2015, opened the conference recalling the July 2015 [Addis Ababa Conference](#) that established a partnership between public and private sectors in financing for development, and the adoption by the United Nations in September of [Agenda 2030](#) with its seventeen goals for sustainable development. This new set of internationally shared principles and practices fully accepts the concept of food security and right to food. The option to choose one’s own food according to cultural and religious requirements is unanimously recognized as belonging to the sphere of individual rights. International cooperation is thus facing new opportunities and challenges, which were examined in the last session of the conference by **Giampaolo**

Cantini, Director General for Development Cooperation, and by the President of Link 2007 **Paolo Dieci**.

An introductory overview on the social and cultural aspects of the halal ecosystem was presented by **Stefano Allievi**, sociologist and Director of the Master on Islam at the University of Padua, who in particular analyzed the concept of "border that does not divide".

The importance of the halal phenomenon can indeed be further understood by looking up some statistics. Muslims worldwide are about 1.6 billion and the halal market is worth 17% of the global market, or 1.3 trillion dollars. It is estimated that Muslims in the European Union are 19 million, 1.5 million of them living in Italy. These numbers are expected to grow as a result of demographic dynamics. It is evident how important is to leverage on the opportunities that such widespread changes give for integration policies in Italy and in Europe, the cooperation with Islamic countries, and for Italian and European food businesses. These figures, the economic opportunities and the related certification systems were examined by two international speakers: **Rafi-uddin Shikoh**, CEO of DinarStandard, and **Abid Masood**, Technical Director of the Halal Food Council of Europe.

Where do Italian food companies stand, within this context? According to **Nino Sergi**, Policy Advisor of Link2007 and chair of the conference, the answer is to be found in the principle of corporate social responsibility. Compliance with the halal values means indeed respecting and protecting the environment (received as a gift and to be preserved), the territory and the community, and preventing and minimizing waste: assumptions that have become a priority also in many Italian and European companies. Some trends and direct experiences were presented by **Elena Toselli**, of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development, and by **Giovanni Delle Donne** of Federalimentare, as well as by members of the audience: **Anna Maria Tiozzo** - President of the Italian Center of halal certification, **Hamid Roberto Distefano** - CEO of Halal Italy, and **Marinella Loddo** - Director of the ICE Milan, all coordinated by **Marella Caramazza**, economist, sociologist and Director General of ISTUD. The concrete prospects for Italian food companies throughout the chain of production, and the tools offered by Islamic finance, were lastly been shown in the contributions of **Koen De Praetere**, founder of Halal Balancing, and **Alberto Brugnoli**, Managing Partner of ASSAIF.

2. HALAL: A BORDER THAT DOES NOT DIVIDE

Run by Stefano Allievi, director of the Master on Islam in Europe at the University of Padua, this session highlighted the sociological changes produced by what he called "**a pluralisation of the religious supply**". In addition to conventional believers, a new way of experiencing faith is indeed developing, in which everyone can acquire elements and practices of different religions, choosing the values he/she most feels represented by. This creates types of "additional faiths" to one's own creed.

Religion, in other words, is adapting to the new forms of consumption, where the consumer becomes a *prosumer*. Therefore religion is not excluded from the mechanisms of modern branding. Just like the purchase of physical goods is almost exclusively driven by the consumer's emotional involvement with a particular brand, so the choice of religious beliefs is based on an ethical involvement and a sense of belonging to a more global and de-territorialized community.

Halal is an extraordinary example of this phenomenon. For the first time in its long history¹, halal culture (as well as kosher) needs to develop new marketing methods adequate to the contemporary era. This change is necessary because of obvious factors. Firstly, the traditional acceptance of values handed down from father to son is weakening: new generations feel the need to personally identify with the products and the ethical values represented by them.

Secondly, this becomes even more necessary in countries where the Islamic faith is in minority. Muslims in Europe are experiencing what Allievi metaphorically calls "an inverse Hegira, a return to Mecca". Besides being generally wealthier, more educated and freer than they would be in their home countries, European Muslims also live in places where Islam is not a recognized religion and where different Islamic beliefs coexist. These factors

1. Halal culture is as ancient as Islam itself, but a global awareness of its importance is very recent. The first World Halal Forum was held in 2006, the first European one was in 2009.

generate **new more personal interpretations of the Islamic rule** and new lifestyles, in some cases very different from the traditional ones.

Finally, there is no reason why halal food should not be **consumed by non-Muslims** as well. Many are in fact the examples in which the brand halal primarily conveys to consumers the guarantee of healthy food, high quality, and respect of precise ethical standards.

It is in this perspective that **borders become gateways**. A border (*cum-finis*) is indeed the line shared between two sides, the separation that connects them. The border often has a connecting, rather than separating, purpose. Borders can be dialogic and permeable. A significant sociological example is the experiment of an English residential area where all fences between houses were abolished in order to promote greater integration and social life. The result, however, was unexpected: people discovered that connection and interaction were much more facilitated when borders existed, since people would invite neighbors over to *their own house* or would go visit *someone else's home*.

In the halal case, permeable borders allow the inclusion of non-Muslim actors, among both consumers and producers². Offering consumption patterns that are religiously connoted but accessible to everyone, halal culture can generate a real **interreligious dialogue**. In this scenario, food consumption only represents a starting point, as the *halalization* process is affecting a wider range of sectors: from cosmetics to fashion, from tourism to Islamic finance, medicine (on issues such as organ donation and assisted procreation), from sexuality to humor, to music, to weddings, to the web.

The existence of a border allows for a selective appropriation of halal values, without necessarily adopting the Islamic religion. In other words, it consents people to choose a **specific way of being Muslim**. The certification of boundaries - what is halal and what is not - has nothing to do with faith, but with religion as a set of reference standards, rules, rituals. To conclude, Allievi suggests that "halal can become a huge regulatory space and symbolic reference for personal identification".

2. A prove of this is that demand for halal in Europe is growing much faster than the European Muslim population.

3. HALAL ECONOMY

After a thorough presentation of data regarding halal economy, with particular focus on Italy, this session addressed issues related to the certification systems, as well as case studies from Italian realities, to better understand the economic impacts of the phenomenon on European and Italian businesses.

3.1 FACTS, DATA AND TRENDS



The infographic above³, presented by Rafi-uddin Shikoh, CEO of DinarStandard, shows how **halal economy involves many other sectors besides food**. In particular, it affects all those spheres of everyday life that are more influenced by Islamic cultural values. To understand its economy, it is therefore essential to broaden the concept of halal from religious doctrine to a set of shared and sharable values: fair and honest entrepreneurship, charity, family bonds, self-control, education and - the topic of the conference - healthy eating.

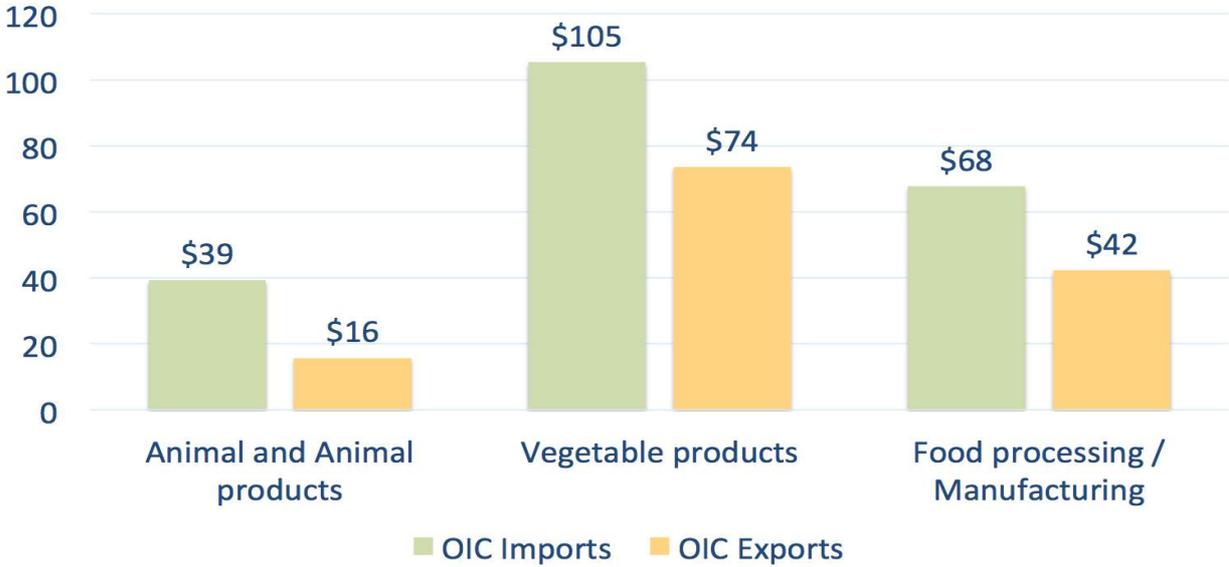
Global consumption of halal food in 2014 was about 1128 billion dollars. To understand the extent of the market, some benchmarks should be analyzed: total food consumption in China, the largest food market in the world, was in the same year 798 billion dollars; in Italy 187 billion. Halal covers about **17% of the global food market**, with an expected growth of about 6% by 2020.

Even geographically this market has vast proportions and involves several areas of the world. Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt, Bangladesh and Iran are the top six countries for

3. All the data presented in this section refer to Thomson Reuters and DinarStandard’s report [State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2015/2016](#) and to the [Salaam Gateway](#) where more insights can be found.

consumption of halal food, followed by the area that Shikoh defines “western Muslim”: in North America and Western Europe \$49 billion were spent on halal food in 2014. Interestingly, this “**western Muslim market**” ranks higher than countries such as Saudi Arabia.

Another important aspect reported by DinarStandard concerns the 57 OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) countries, whose **imports of food** - entirely halal - in 2014 reached 212 billion dollars, nearly 15% of global imports. The graph below presents specific data on such trades (in billions). The interesting fact is that 91% of these imports came from non-Muslim countries.



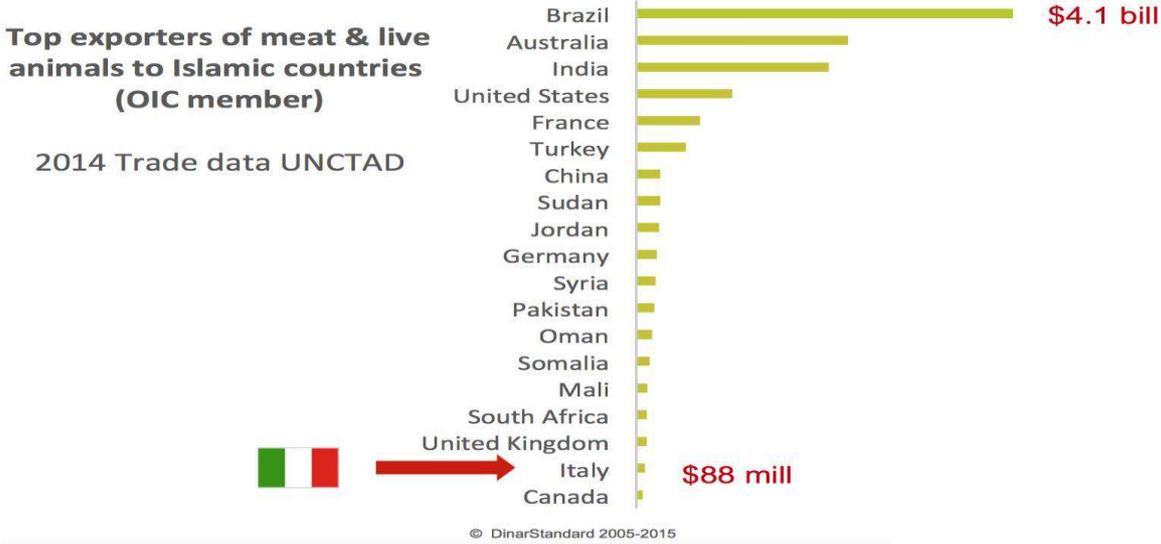
© DinarStandard 2005-2015

From a development perspective, the data collected by DinarStandard highlight a crucial connection between halal food and **fight against food insecurity**. 30% of the 800 million people suffering from malnutrition live in Islamic countries⁴. On the other hand, at least 21 OIC countries have a cereal import dependency ratio⁵ of over 50%. These factors must be taken into account to introduce the halal discourse in development policies.

4. Data from the last FAO’ report [The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015](#).

5. The cereal import dependency ratio is one of the indicators of food insecurity. It is the ratio between the extent of dependency on importation of cereals in relation to the domestic consumption.

In this scenario, Italy can find great opportunities. As described by Shikoh, domestic consumption of halal food was estimated at 4.9 billion dollars in 2014, while the value of Italian exports of meat and live animals to Islamic countries was 88 million dollars. Both of these markets have a wide margin of growth, where more and more Italian companies will have the possibility to fit. The cases of Brazil and Australia may offer some important reference case studies, given the high value of their exports.



Finally, Italy has the potential to play leadership roles in other sectors of halal economy. Our country is among the top ten exporters of **pharmaceuticals** to OIC Member States. For what concerns **fashion**, Italy is the fourth largest exporter to Islamic countries. This sector could be stimulated even further, suggests Shikoh, by creating halal oriented clothing lines – the so-called *modest clothing* or *modest fashion*.

3.2 HALAL CERTIFICATION

Although Islamic ethical approaches resonate with some Italian and European entrepreneurial methods - for example, Marella Caramazza mentioned the value of family ties, being the family business one of the cornerstones of Italian economic development, or the general halal food production methods, which recall Slow Food’s slogan "good, clean and fair" - the practical application of these values requires some complex **regulatory and**

institutional prerequisites. Dr. Abid Masood, Technical Director of the Halal Food Council of Europe and Certification Body, tried to clarify the complicated issue of certification practices, supported by interventions from Anna Maria Tiozzo, President of the Italian Center of Halal Certification and Hamid Roberto Distefano, CEO of Halal Italia.

HISTORY OF HALAL CERTIFICATION

Halal certification is a guarantee scheme to verify that foodstuffs are produced in accordance with Islamic requirements, for example applying ritual slaughter. For most Muslim countries this certification is a necessary requirement to authorize imports. It is therefore fundamental to analyze its history and controversies.

The first **Muslim immigrants in Europe and in the USA**, during the Seventies, personally certified the production methods of meat and poultry products. In some cases they also managed to arrange to slaughter animals themselves. As the Muslim population grew, in the early Eighties, so did the need to set up a specific body in charge of certification, which was initially consulted exclusively for domestic consumption. In the Nineties the governments of Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore expanded the scope of these certification bodies to European and American exports directed to their countries. The need for an organized and technically qualified structure grew with the increase in exports and the heterogeneity of products⁶ exported to Islamic nations.

EUROPEAN NORMS ON HALAL CERTIFICATION

In 2013 all EU Member States adopted [Regulation 1099/2009](#) on the protection of animals at the time of killing. These rules establish the obligation of avoiding their suffering and pain whenever possible. Animals must be treated, stunned and killed by licensed professionals using specific methods. This legislation is at loggerheads with Jewish and Muslim requirements, where animal stunning is forbidden. Some Member States therefore

6. An example mentioned by Abid Masood, to illustrate how many products imported from West countries need checks and certificates for admission, is that of dishwasher tablets.

implemented national measures to authorize, in specific cases, the slaughter of animals without stunning, to meet these religious requirements.

Dr. Masood presented the case of the UK, which provides for religious slaughter in specific abattoirs, authorized and regulated by the [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#) of the British government. In addition, slaughter without stunning must be carried out by Muslim and certified personnel. In no other case is this type of slaughter allowed.

CONTROVERSIES

The debate over animal stunning generates large disputes. First, for its **economic impacts**. Abid Masood pointed out, for instance, that “around 10.000 chickens a day can be slaughter using stunning techniques, while only 800 are slaughtered when non-stunning methods are introduced”. The economic consequences are obvious: “an un-stunned chicken could cost the consumer around €5, compared to €2 or 3 for a stunned chicken”.

The value of the **animal welfare** is crucial in the debate. The Institute for Research and Technology for Food and Agriculture ([IRTA](#)), together with the European Food Safety Authority⁷, has opened a debate on the possible use of electroencephalogram (EEG) on animals to measure their pain at the time of killing without prior stunning, in support of the “stun to kill” policy. The major criticism raised by some members of the scientific community, including Masood, are based on the belief that EEG does not produce reliable results, so much so that it is not accepted in pharmaceuticals as evidence for the development of human painkillers.

The greatest challenge is, however, the division existing in the same Islamic environment. There are no precise, globally shared and defined standards of production, nor official and international hallmarks. The same certification agencies are not present in all Muslim countries - understandably because halal standards in these countries are the norm and not

7. The results of the IRTA's studies can be found in the July 2013 EFSA document: [Scientific Opinion on the electrical parameters for the stunning of lambs and kid goats](#).

the exception - causing problems for exporters. The first urgent task is therefore to harmonize the global halal market with clear standards and official certification systems.

The lack of uniformity creates another problem highlighted during the debate: the divide between on the one hand more or less authoritative certification bodies and on the other hand companies that resort to self-declaration to satisfy halal requirements. With the absence of a governmental certification and with constantly changing international regulations, it is necessary for each firm to define its own interpretation of halal. In a context where there are various religious orientations and different schools of thought within the same orientation, many certification bodies tend to **adapt to the “lighter” doctrine**, recognized only by a small part of consumers. The risk is to allow certifications that are not accepted abroad, in countries where controls and laboratory tests to find any type of contamination are increasingly rigorous. Besides ensuring the authority of certification bodies, it is also urgent to create a deterrent for those companies self-styled halal compliant.

Ensuring detailed quality guarantees conforming to certain standards is increasingly becoming indispensable because, as already mentioned, the halal ethics now involves several sectors. A.M. Tiozzo, for example, points out that 60% of certification requests her institution receives are on **cosmetics and medicines**. Halal in fact refers to any type of product that can enter someone’s body, not only through food. For non-food products, Hamid Roberto Distefano adds, certification becomes even more complex because several factors must be taken into account – the absence of blood and its derivatives, fats from pork or non-ritually slaughtered animals, parts of human or animal body, ethanol – and ingredients and formulas vary greatly.

Significant concluding remarks were made by Marinella Loddo, director of ICE in Milan (the agency for promotion and internationalization of Italian companies), who intervened in the debate: “Products cannot be sold abroad if the consumers’ habits, culture, social stratification of the country, are unknown. This is the reason why certification is essential for entrepreneurial success and competitiveness: it is not only a necessary condition to enter a market in some countries, but it is also a crucial element that certifies **the company's attention to the culture of the country of export**”.

3.3 THE ITALIAN SITUATION

Many positive developments in halal products have occurred in Europe and in Italy. The **field of cosmetics** offers great evidence: 80% of cosmetics destined to Muslim markets are produced in Europe, with Italy ranking first. Next year Cosmoprof, the international exhibition of aesthetic products, will host the first pavilion in the world dedicated to halal products, with the participation of more Italian companies than international ones. This success is due to the spread of halal cosmetic goods even among non-Muslims, who prefer them to the normal bio products.

Moreover, many Italian businesses have created separate brands dedicated to **halal-certified foodstuffs**. According to A.M. Tiozzo, a further step, already implemented by some French firms, should be to insert halal lines directly into their existing brand, in order to conduct even larger advertising campaigns. In Italy there are still few companies in the food sector that offer halal product lines⁸. In the third part of the conference, Koen De Praetere exposed a third possibility for companies that want to successfully enter the halal market: apply production methods accepted by Islamic laws to their whole production lines.

In addition to the individual choices of each company, what is essential at this time is to **raise the awareness of Italian companies** of the various possibilities. A successful experience in this direction was shared by Elena Toselli⁹ of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development and Giovanni Delle Donne of Federalimentare. They, in fact, began talking about the halal economy with governmental officials during the difficult economic situation faced by Italy in 2010; a crisis that created the need to find new ways of promoting Italian products in foreign markets.

As a consequence, attention focused on religious certifications, after surveys on foreign key players demonstrated their centrality in consumers' purchasing decisions. In mature markets

8. A list can be found on [Halal Italia](#).

9. For further information we suggest her book, in Italian: [Le diversità convergenti. Guida alle certificazioni alimentari kasher, halal e di produzione biologica](#), Franco Angeli, 2015.

(e.g. the USA) such certifications were attracting new and large segments of consumers, not necessarily belonging to religious communities, but interested in the guarantees embedded in the certification processes and in the sustainable production models implemented. In other areas of the world with strong growth potential and primarily populated by Muslims (e.g. South East Asia), halal certification embraced all productive sectors and was increasingly orienting consumers' behavior. It soon became clear that owning these certificates could allow Italian companies to obtain **new and significant growth opportunities in foreign markets**, overcoming the difficult domestic economic situation.

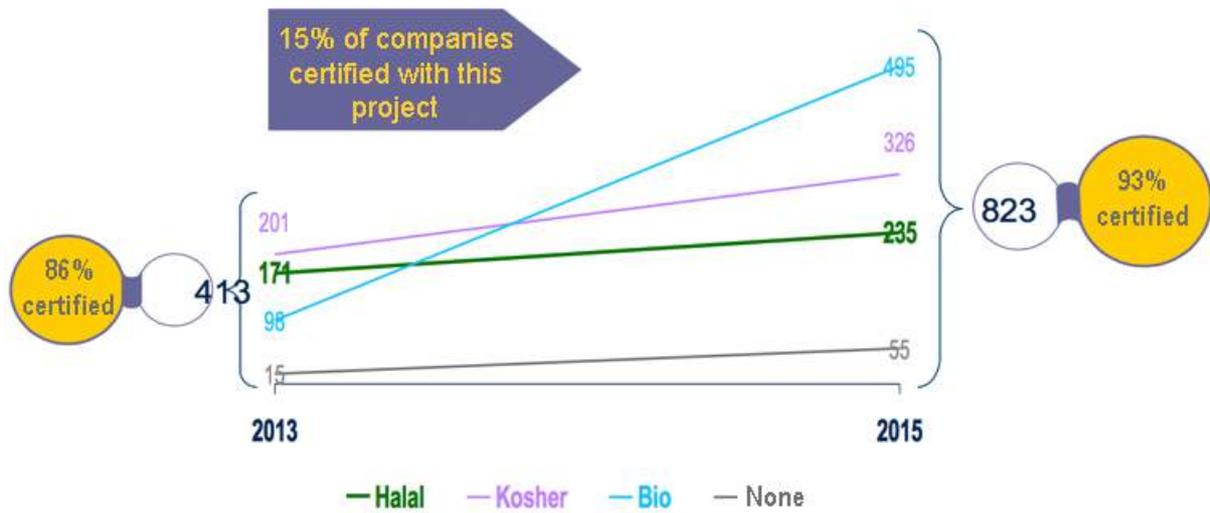
These considerations led to the elaboration of a project called "Promotion of Italian food certifications" (original name: [Promozione delle Certificazioni agroalimentari del Made in Italy](#)), promoted and financed by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development and carried out with the collaboration of Federalimentare, Federbio, Union of Italian Jewish Communities, the Islamic Cultural Center of Italy, with the support of Fiere di Parma. The project, which now involves more than 800 small and medium-sized food enterprises, aims at strengthening Italian products in foreign markets and the international competitiveness of SMEs. At the same time, it intends to consolidate the role of Italian certification bodies in the global scenario and to expand the supply of certified products in the domestic market, in order to meet the needs of minorities living in our country and facilitate their integration. An extraordinary and unique project, which led to very gratifying results, but which also required, like all integration processes, a serious commitment of all partners to understand the respective sensitivities and the different operating models.

Giovanni Delle Donne from Federalimentare explained how the project was structured. After a roadshow to gather information, various initiatives were launched in Italy in particular related to the CIBUS Global Forum, and information material was produced on individual countries and Italian certified companies. Abroad, the project was presented in various international festivals¹⁰. The results are widely measurable especially in the increased awareness of Italian companies of the certification issue, as shown in the graph below presented by the speaker¹¹. In this regard, Delle Donne emphasizes an important point:

10. Details can be found on: www.promozionecertificazioni.cibus.it

11. It is important to note that the project involved halal, kosher and bio certifications.

many companies were already eligible to apply for certification, but having no knowledge of it, were precluded from interesting commercial possibilities.



A critical aspect, however, remains the estimation of real economic impact. How much has the acquisition of religious certifications impacted exports? Statistics on this are complex to obtain because, on the one hand, certification is not always necessary, and on the other hand companies are not obliged to declare to be in possession of one. A monitoring system has recently been set up to assess which are the most used certifications and how they actually affect exports and annual revenues.

4. OPPORTUNITIES AND PROSPECTS

After analyzing the economic and regulatory scenario, it was important to examine what real prospects exist for businesses, and for international cooperation, to open up to the halal world. What are the first steps to take and what means do companies have? The speakers of this session provided insights on these issues.

4.1 CREATING AN HALAL BUSINESS

Koen De Praetere, Founder of Halal Balancing, clarified the crucial entrepreneurial steps to deal with when entering the halal market.

- **Remove barriers** – Knowing and understanding the context in which the business operates is essential. As it was thus far exposed, the halal world is complex and diverse; rules are few but applied in many different ways. It is therefore important to select a targeted audience and precisely understand its needs.
- **Earn trust** – Muslim consumers tend to buy their products from Muslim sellers. Entering into this chain of trust for a non-Muslim is complicated by certain cultural requirements. The traditional European way of earning trust is through consolidated systems: food-safety, legal, and quality systems guaranteed by governmental control mechanisms, accredited by third parties to assess conformity, and by consumers feedbacks. Halal certifications are not yet that far: warranty systems are not official nor universally recognized. It is therefore essential to earn customers' trust by being credible in the commitment and dedication to the values shared by halal food consumers. Before getting a certification, it is vital to make the company's intentions known and to prove a true integration of these Islamic values within the business activities, involving for instance Muslim professionals.

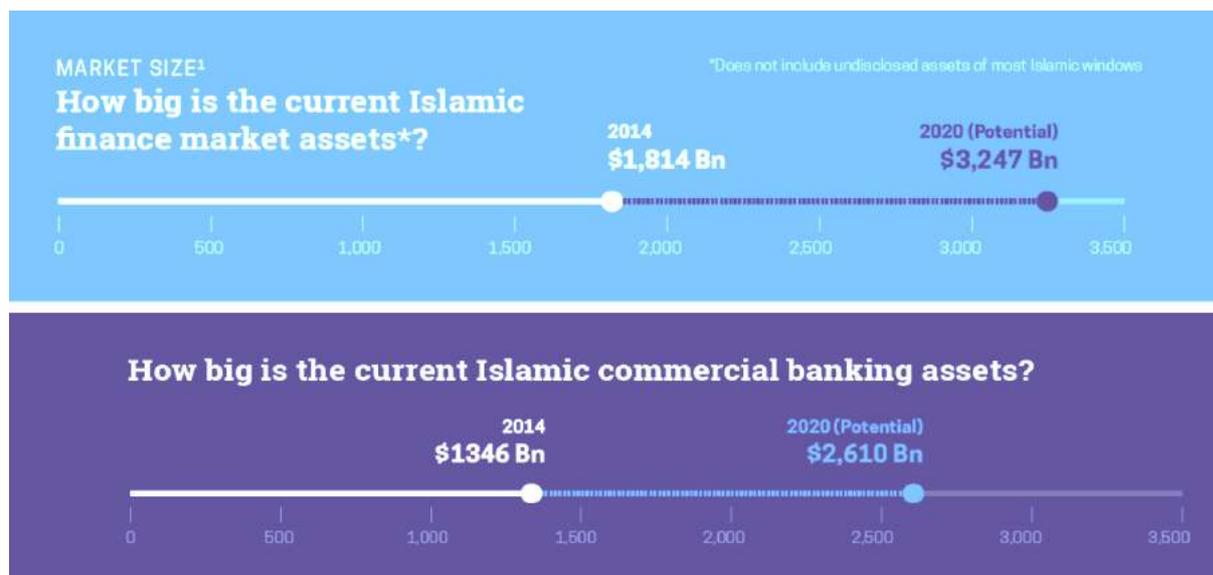
- **Create synergies** – The link between halal food and non-halal food is the main theme of this conference. A border that does not divide, “from border to gateway” said Koen De Praetere. And this is the last crucial point for success: not considering halal food production as something to be implemented separately from the main business, but optimizing the connection between Islamic food values and healthy eating and high quality. It could be risky but revolutionary to apply, for example, Islamic slaughtering methods to the entire production chain of the firm, not only to the halal industry.

4.2 ISLAMIC FINANCE

The Islamic capital market provides important financing means for the halal production chain. The so-called Islamic finance, clarified Alberto Brugnoli - managing partner of ASSAIF - in his presentation, should not be considered inextricably linked to a religious belief, but a financial approach based on some eternal principles (***Shari’ah compliant finance***). The basic assumption of Islam, in every field, is that there cannot be a real blossoming of human beings without applying some universal values.

In the financial world these values translate into **some postulates**:

- Financial brokerage cannot occur through interest rates: money can’t be earned only because of the passing of time;
- Profits and risks must be shared: an individual cannot gain from an enterprise if the same enterprise doesn’t succeed;
- It is unacceptable to lend money to individuals and legal entities engaged in financial leverage;
- Connection to real goods: one can’t sell goods he/she doesn’t own;
- All investments must be socially responsible, aimed at financing activities that enhance living and environmental conditions.



The statistics exposed by Brugnoni¹² show a financial scenario with a high growth potential. The GDP of OIC countries is 7000 billion dollars, which is about 11% of global GDP. This means that the Muslims, that represent 25% of the world population, participate to only 11% of the wealth. Islamic finance is also about 2-3% of global finance. Many are thus the spaces to fill. Many possibilities exist, since it is a market based on shared ethical values of sustainable development, corporate social responsibility and impact investing; moreover transactions on food financed by *Shari'ah compliant* investments are growing.

The **Islamic finance market** is diverse. Geographically, Malaysia is ranked first, followed by the United Arab Emirates. Many African countries have issued their first sovereign *sukuk* (*Shari'ah* compliant participating bond) and have opened the first Islamic windows (ad hoc offices and branches). Some Asian countries are adapting their regulatory structures to Islamic finance. In Central Asia, especially in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, as well as in some European and Russian banks, these types of financial transactions are being implemented.

In the **capital market** some of the largest European banks have launched participatory Islamic bond issues. In Italy no *sukuk* has yet been issued, but some banks have participated in at least two occasions to the subscription of these emissions. Britain has also issued the first sovereign *sukuk* and the EU aims to become the largest center of Islamic finance outside

12. Data refer to DinaStandard's report [State of the Global Islamic Economy Report 2015](#).

the Islamic world. Luxembourg also moved in the same direction: it passed a law on *sukuk* in July 2014 and in October of that year issued the first euro-denominated sovereign *sukuk*. Finally, the World Bank is a leading actor in Islamic finance.¹³

Also with regard to the **banking business**, Europe is witnessing an increasing spread of Islamic banks in the continent. Germany has recently approved its first ‘retail’ Islamic bank based in Frankfurt. In Britain, an Islamic ‘retail’ bank has been operating since 2004. In Italy there are studies undertaken to follow suit.

The Islamic financial industry therefore tends to be **cross-border**: it is no longer located in a region, but it crosses borders and becomes global. Halal production companies are heavily involved in international trade, in particular those operating outside OIC countries. Islamic finance offers multiple tools in supporting what Brugnoli identifies as the three major problems of halal enterprises: international trade financing, risk management and working capital. In addition to some specific tools of trade finance and risk control, it is noteworthy to note that *sukuk* play a crucial role in financing corporate goals, specific projects, investment programs and debt refinancing.

The Islamic Development Bank, which includes the 57 OIC countries, is rated AAA and includes, like the World Bank, a private finance sector. Within this structure there are two large institutions to consider. The [International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation](#), which deals with *Shari'ah compliant* trade financing to the 57 Muslim countries, and which therefore is a potential counterpart of European halal businesses; the [Islamic Corporation for Insurance of Investment Export Credit](#), which provides tools and mechanisms for all types of insurance.

4.3 RIGHT TO FOOD

In addition to business, financial and economic development opportunities, the debate on halal food allows for a general assessment on the possibilities for cooperation and

13. For further information visit Assaif's publications: www.assaif.org

integration. The theme of Expo 2015 was mentioned at the beginning of the conference: the right to food. The Universal Exposition leaves a significant legacy that must be valued to successfully develop shared methods to concretely implement a right to food. Or, as Livia Pomodoro, President of the Milan Center for Food Law and Policy, notes: the “right to *adequate* food”, the freedom to choose one’s own nutrition based of his/her cultural traditions.

The concept of right to food as one of the fundamental human rights is supported and regulated by the **international legal framework**. Already stated in Article 25 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) of 1948 and confirmed by Article 11 of the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) of 1966, the right to food was clearly reaffirmed in 1999 by the [General Comment No. 12](#) of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General Comment (CESCR), which introduced the concept of “proper food”: the availability of food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, in compliance with the physiological needs at all stages of the life cycle, and acceptable within a given culture and religion.

In the definition of right to food, **suitability** is supported by two other concepts: **availability** and **sustainability**. Availability implies the constant improvement of the means of communication and distribution, the development and reform of agrarian systems, the exploitation of natural resources as efficiently as possible, and fair distribution. To ensure everyone’s nourishment, in the future too, access to food resources must be sustainable.

An overview of these legislative frameworks is offered by Jean Ziegler, who defines right to food as the right of every human being

«to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensures a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and

dignified life free of fear».¹⁴

A gap between legal declarations and the actual application of the right to food worldwide however persists. To reduce this gap and ensure food security it is important, Dr. Pomodoro stated, to have a proper market to guarantee supply, supported by clear regulations and certifications on the type of food to which people are entitled.

The debate on halal food takes on a predominant role in this context to strengthen **intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding**. Providing quality food to the Islamic populations would not only mean increasing the economic opportunities of our businesses but would promote food security and social inclusion in our communities.

4.4 NEW GOALS AND ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Some strong signals of obligations and responsibilities regarding the right to food was highlighted by Giampaolo Cantini, Director General for Development Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in the last part of the conference. The [2030 Agenda](#) with its **seventeen goals of sustainable development**, adopted in September by the United Nations, introduces important new elements in this regard.

The concept of sustainable development is being expanded to its economic and social dimension, as well as environmental, resulting in the introduction of some individual rights - including the right to adequate food – as urgent development goals. The concept of sustainability is, in other words, applied also to rights.

Another innovative element is the **universality of these goals**, which no longer exclusively refer to developing countries, but are addressed to all nations. Every nation, culture and territory becomes the responsible protagonist for the sustainability of the entire planet. The rights of all individuals are valued, and inclusiveness becomes the main subject of the

14. Ziegler J. (2003), *Le droit à l'alimentation*, Fayard.

Agenda, which, together with the [Milan Charter](#), is an instrument of mobilization, awareness and commitment also to the right to food.

Concretely, this step sets a new agenda for national governments. While the Millennium Agenda represented the framework for the sole action of international cooperation, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls into question national policies. Emblematic is the first objective reported in the new Agenda, which calls for fight to poverty in all its forms and everywhere, not just in poor countries.

The topic of this conference therefore recalled one of the priorities of the international community and of Italian development cooperation, as it emphasized the right to food combining it with social inclusion and integration.

“Never before in history there has been the overriding need we are experiencing today to foster positive processes of integration and contamination,” stated Paolo Dieci, President of Link 2007, in his conclusions to the conference. “We must look for the most universalistic values of each identity, and there are many universal contents in the halal culture, as it was widely demonstrated by the speakers of this conference. Halal is a border that does not divide.” In fact halal food, while it is intended for Muslims, in no way precludes followers of other religions or non-believers. Indeed, the conference has highlighted how several values surrounding the “halal culture” have to do with important shared values on the ethical level: respect for the environment, correct and balanced relationship between humans and other beings, consciousness of limited resources. Themes that are also included, for instance, in the Encyclical of Pope Francis *Laudato Si*, which has in fact gathered together hundreds of thousands of people from different cultures and religions.

International cooperation must also adapt to these changes and take advantage of new forms of inclusion and opportunity for dialogue. The most food-insecure areas of the world are largely Muslim. It is a fact that must be taken into account when implementing development and cooperation strategies, in order to propose projects that do not only safeguard life but also preserve the population’s identity. We must, if necessary, change methods and go beyond the traditional means used so far.

A second aspect is that of **inclusive business**. The new Italian [Law n.125 on International Development Cooperation](#) adopted in August 2014, sets, among its main targets, the fostering of joint ventures aimed at achieving the goals of international development cooperation: the Islamic criteria of doing business perfectly falls into this process.

The evolution of humanitarian aid strategies is also strongly reaffirmed worldwide. In May 2016 Istanbul will host the first [World Humanitarian Summit](#), intending to reassess the methods and goals of international cooperation and humanitarian aid. The recent global changes are indeed exponential, including the increasing involvement in humanitarian actions of a larger number of diverse subjects, from which additional resources, but also new requirements to plan, coordinate and implement actions are required.

The road ahead is wide and is, above all, based on the knowledge and the awareness that a border does not divide but can connect all the different realities. We should keep this in mind in all cultural, economic, social, and international cooperation endeavours.