

SMIIC and halal food standards^ΨHaluk Dağ^{*1}, and Emel Erbasi-Gonc²*Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), Istanbul, Türkiye**(Received December 5, 2013; Revised December 25, 2013; Accepted December 30, 2013)*

Abstract: As it is known that the differences existing in standardization, certification and laboratory testing are the indirect technical barriers to trade. In this context, harmonization of standards and conformity assessment procedures under the umbrella of an international or regional organization like the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), the affiliated institution to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), aims at removing the most likely adverse effects to trade and includes the establishment of common certification schemes for the purpose of expediting exchange of materials, manufactured goods and products in Muslim Countries. SMIIC, aims at achieving uniformity in metrology, laboratory testing and standardization activities among Member States and also providing training and technical assistance to the OIC Members in the domain of standardization, metrology and accreditation, has been established by OIC Member States. SMIIC is specifically focusing on establishing a sound Halal Certification system in the world and provide the world wide recognition of accreditation certificates issued on OIC/SMIIC Halal Standards.

Keywords: OIC; SMIIC; standardization; metrology; accreditation; halal food.

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1. Introduction

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations which has membership of 57 countries spread over four continents. The Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world ensuring to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.

The OIC has many organs working on various areas such as statistics, economic, trade, finance, fiqh, education, communication, press, sports, urbanism, maritime, youth, banking, consulting, technology, building industry and standardization. This structure allows for OIC to respond to all sorts of needs of the Islamic World.

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2. SMIIC History

That difference in standardization, certification and test practices in different countries are an indirect barrier to trade is apparent. In this sense, the harmonization of standards and conformity assessment procedures by the establishment of a common certification programme under an international or regional organization initially encompassing mutual recognition of certificates, aims to remove any barriers to trade in order to increase and expedite trade in the respective countries.

Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC) has been established by OIC Members States with an aim to achieve uniformity in metrology, laboratory testing and standardization activities among Member States and provide education and training as well as technical assistance to the OIC Members in the domain of standardization, metrology and accreditation. SMIIC is affiliated to the OIC.

The idea to establish a sound mechanism for the harmonization of standards among Islamic countries can be traced back to the 1st Meeting of the Economic and Commercial Cooperation Standing Committee (COMCEC) of OIC in 1984. The Standardization Experts Group for Islamic Countries (SEG) which was established in 1985 for this purpose worked to this end and its work led to the approval of the SMIIC Statute at the 14th COMCEC Meeting in 1998.

The Statute of SMIIC was first submitted to the member countries for its signature during the 15th COMCEC Meeting held in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey, on November 04-07, 1999. The Statute entered into force after fulfilling the ratification requirement of 10 OIC member countries in May 2010. SMIIC was officially established in August 2010 after the first inaugural General Assembly meeting was held. SMIIC has the membership of 28 OIC Member States and one Member State with an observer status as of December 2013.

SMIIC, as a sound mechanism for harmonization of standards among the OIC countries and for preparation of new ones, aims at realizing harmonized standards in the Member States which will help to eliminate technical barriers to trade and thus developing trade among themselves. It shall establish certification and accreditation schemes for the purpose of expediting the exchange of materials, manufactured goods and products among Member States.

Accreditation activities aim at the removal of technical barriers to trade by harmonisation of standards ensuring that conformity assessment procedures are in line with international regulations and strengthened.

2.1. Main objectives of SMIIC

- 1) To develop harmonized standards to eliminate adverse effects to trade among OIC Member States.
- 2) To prepare OIC/SMIIC Standards enabling the OIC Member States to gain maximum benefit from the economic advantages of them.
- 3) To achieve uniformity in metrology, laboratory testing and standardization activities among OIC Member States.
- 4) To initially provide technical assistance to the OIC Member States who do not possess such standard bodies and in the long-term aid/help them to establish their own bodies and reach a competitive level.

2.2. Halal

Until the recent increase of international trade, Muslims were consuming food which they were producing themselves in their own region according to the “tayyip” and “halal” guidelines mentioned in the Quran. Hence, halal food was not seen as problem in most Muslim Countries. However, globalization has meant that not all food products consumed in that country are produced in the same country or even in the neighboring country. Not only the food but the raw materials, source, production aids and equipment need also to be Halal. The feed which the animals are fed on, the fertilizers used in farming and the

additives used in the production of food products are sourced from all over the globe. Therefore, Muslims have begun to ask whether the food we consume is Halal? and Healthy?

SEG was established and mandated to develop common Halal Food standards and after approximately four years of work, prepared three draft standards according to international standard preparation criteria and mutual work with the contribution of 39 OIC Member Countries and its related institutions.

These standards are OIC/SMIIC Standards, namely,

- a) OIC/SMIIC 1:2011, “General Guidelines on Halal Food” (with the references of CODEX, ISO 22000, ISO 22005 + Islamic Fiqh Rules) [1]
- b) OIC/SMIIC 2:2011, “Guidelines for Bodies Providing Halal Certification” (with the references of ISO/IEC 17020, ISO/IEC 17021, ISO/IEC 17025, ISO/TS 22003 + Islamic Fiqh Rules) [2]
- c) OIC/SMIIC 3:2011, “Guidelines for the Halal Accreditation Body Accrediting Halal Certification Bodies” (with the references of ISO/IEC 17011 + Islamic Fiqh Rules) [3]

The mentioned standards entered into force as of 17 May 2011.

2.3. Standardization

A standard is a document that provides requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose. It is a document that describes the important features of a product, service or system and the essential requirements that it must meet. Standardization is simply the process of making standards.

Standards are made by technical experts and are reached by consensus among its stakeholders ensuring a high level of safety and quality of goods and services while simultaneously encompassing state-of-the-art technology. The application of standards is voluntary and contributes to international trade.

Standards are not developed by the standardization organization itself. Standardization is handled by various technical committees or TCs as they are called. The TCs are the key bodies that drive the standardization and comprise experts from the member organizations and are a completely voluntary effort. Currently SMIIC has seven (7) TCs which are as follows:

- TC1 - Halal Food Issues
- TC2 - Halal Cosmetics Issues
- TC3 - Service Site Issues
- TC4 - Renewable Energy
- TC5 - Tourism and Related Services
- TC6 - Agricultural Processes
- TC7 - Transportation

2.4. Technical Committee

The primary duty of a Technical Committee is the development and systematic maintenance of the OIC/SMIIC Standards according to related activities within a particular scope of work (e.g.: TC 1 Halal Food Issues, etc.).

A Technical Committee is composed of a chairman, a secretary and SMIIC members. The national delegations are designated by the SMIIC members. At meetings SMIIC members are represented by a number of delegates. Observers in the TC may be Non-Member States of SMIIC, Observer States of OIC and Organizations working on related issues or areas of standardization, metrology or accreditation in Member States. Observers are from organizations that have been granted liaison, having indicated that they want to and have been granted the right to participate in the TC.

2.5. SMIIC Accreditation Committee

Accreditation ensures to the consumer that standards have been adhered to and certificates issued appropriately. SMIIC has an independent Accreditation Committee (AC). AC is the unit carrying out activities aimed at the establishment of an accreditation scheme amongst the OIC Member States. AC shall provide the world wide recognition of accreditation certificates and protect against unfair uses.

AC is responsible for supporting actions for establishing a sound accreditation system OIC-wide and raise awareness of the accreditation concept within the OIC Member States. This Committee is responsible for implementing OIC/SMIIC accreditation standards, performing peer assessment activities and issuing related certificates.

2.6. SMIIC Metrology Committee

Metrology Committee (MC) was established during the 5th SMIIC BOD Meeting and commenced its activities, to aid in achieving uniformity in metrology and laboratory testing amongst OIC Member States.

2.7. SMIIC Certification Bodies Programme

In order to prevent technical barriers to trade amongst OIC countries, it is important that the OIC/SMIIC Standards which have been prepared in parallel to the international standardization norms be applied throughout the Islamic Countries. Additionally, in order have a harmonized and common Halal Standard for all Muslims, the SMIIC Certification Bodies (CBs) Programme is essential. The most important part of this programme regarding conformity assessment is the Accreditation. CBs Programme Working Group (established to prepare the programme) and the SMIIC Accreditation Committee are continuing their activities in this area. All Certification Bodies who are using the OIC/SMIIC Standards and are accredited by the Accreditation Committee can be part of the program.

3. Activites of SMIIC

3.1. SMIIC Forum 2012

SMIIC Forum 2012 was held in Antalya, Republic of Turkey during 08-09 November 2012. Aiming at functioning as a platform to bring experts and professionals from the fields of Standardization, Accreditation and Metrology together, the SMIIC Forum 2012 gave participants the opportunity to discuss the current situation of these fields in the OIC Member Countries and at the international level.

The Forum was participated by 160 senior level delegates from 35 countries including National Standardization Bodies (NSBs), relevant national organizations of member countries and international organizations comprising of the OIC General Secretariat, Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC), The Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIIC), Islamic Centre for Development and Trade (ICDT), International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), GCC Standardization Organization (GSO), Saudi Standards, Metrology and Quality Organization (SASO), The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC) and International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), Turkish Standards Institution (TSE), Turkish Accreditation Agency (TÜRKAK), National Metrology Institute (TÜBİTAK-UME), Turkish Ministry of Economy and Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA).

Twenty (20) representative speakers from the above mentioned organizations gave presentations of their organisations and shared their experiences. During the Forum the importance of harmonization of Standards, Metrology and Accreditation to the development of economy and trade was highlighted.

Simultaneously, the upgrading of quality infrastructure for sustainable development, full participation in international trade and fulfillment of technical requirements of the multi-lateral trading system were discussed and steps that need to be taken to achieve these evaluated.

Preceding the SMIIC Forum 2012 all Committees including the Accreditation Committee and Technical Committees convened for their meetings. Simultaneously, during the Board of Directors Meeting on the 07 November 2013 the Metrology Committee was established and had its first meeting.

3.2. SMIIC Workshop on LDCs Capacity Building

SMIIC Workshop on “Building and Enhancing Standardization, Metrology and Accreditation Capacity in the OIC Least Developed Countries (LDCs)” with cooperation and/or support of TİKA, TSE, TURKAK and TÜBİTAK-UME was organized on 7-10 May 2013, in TSE Quality Campus and UME premises in Gebze-Kocaeli, and TSE Headquarters in Ankara, Republic of Turkey and attended by 21 representatives from 19 OIC LDCs.

The workshop aimed to be a precursor to a series of projects which are to lead to the enhancement of any relevant standardization, metrology and accreditation body or to the establishment of such a body in its absence in these countries.

The workshop functioned as a platform to draw together experts and representatives from the fields of standardization, accreditation and metrology. In the workshop the current situation of these fields in those countries, steps that need to be taken and briefly, possible projects that need to be launched were discussed. After the evaluation and analyses of the data phase two (2) of this project needs to be taken into consideration.

4. Conclusion

Standardization, metrology and accreditation, three pillars of international trade enabling sustainable development of all economies and which will promote common understanding throughout all member states, are vital for accelerating the development of Muslim country economies to be competitive enough and be able to easily integrate with world economies. A common standards, metrology and accreditation framework eliminates trade barriers and facilitates trade between the OIC Member States and the entire world. In an age of globalisation and economic interdependence Islamic countries need to work together to establish fully functional and sustainable knowledge-based economies.

On the other hand, there are numerous benefits of free trade between countries, not only for governments but also for producers and consumers. On the government side, free trade strengthens the economic bonds between trade partners, in turn, paving the way for better political relations. As for producers, free trade opens up new markets and thus new opportunities, while pressuring them to increase their competitiveness in terms of price and quality. With regards to consumers, access to a wider choice of high quality and affordable goods has a positive effect on overall consumer welfare.

In very general terms, international trade liberalization can be realized as a two-fold process:

- 1) one involves the reduction of customs tariffs (zeroing as an ideal case) which is out of scope of this subject currently,
- 2) while the other relates to the elimination of non-tariff barriers such as technical barriers to trade, which create unnecessary obstacles resulting from different technical regulations prepared and applied by individual countries.

Countries make certain commitments in accordance with its membership to World Trade Organization (WTO) and are signatories to Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreements with regards to its policies related to technical regulations, standardization, conformity assessment, metrology and accreditation. These TBT Agreements provide a framework on how countries should prepare and implement their technical regulations, allowing them to enforce these regulations to pursue legitimate objectives (e.g. protection of next generation; animal, human health and life, and the environment, etc.)

while ensuring that they do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade which requires to establish and improve their quality infrastructures.

As a matter fact, when we look at the current situation from Halal standardization point of view, it can easily be seen that many different Halal standards exist in many Islamic Countries and certification according to those Halal standards contradicts the idea of removing technical barriers to trade among OIC Member States.

Furthermore, there is a need for a harmonized halal standard among OIC Member States in order to ensure trust and safety for both producers and consumers. It is undoubted that Muslim Countries having halal food standards are expected to share and transfer their experience under the umbrella of SMIIC for a common Halal standard which surely will result in a great synergy throughout Islamic Countries. It is expected from all member countries and especially those member countries who are well established as far as the quality infrastructure is concerned to take their stances actively in a way to increase the intra-OIC trade with regards to WTO-TBT Agreements.

One of the other objectives of SMIIC apart from harmonising standards and preparing new ones for the needs of OIC member countries is to help in the aiding of the establishment of OIC Least Developed Countries quality infrastructures which are a majority in the United Nations list.

Consequently, without any delay, it is a top-priority of OIC member countries to initiate and develop joint action aiming to establish, promote and expand industrial cooperation amongst themselves to boost the intra-OIC trade on the basis of sustainable economic, environmental and social development with the help of standardization which gives a crucial role to SMIIC and which is the main reason of establishment of SMIIC.

Therefore, SMIIC General Secretariat expects from all members of SMIIC (ideally from all OIC Member States after completing the membership procedure) to harmonize existing OIC/SMIIC Standards as their national standards and commence certification accordingly for the sake of supporting common standards and a common certification mechanism which will eliminate technical barriers to trade and thus increase the intra-OIC trade.

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References

- [1] OIC/SMIIC 1:2011, “General Guidelines on Halal Food” (with the references of CODEX, ISO 22000, ISO 22005 + Islamic Fiqh Rules),
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