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Halal Foods in the United States Present Opportunities and Challenges

Subin Poudel^a and Hikaru Hanawa Peterson^a^aUniversity of Minnesota

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Abstract

The US halal food market, growing 7.5 percent annually, reflects rising demand and demographic shifts. We discuss challenges in pricing, supply, and certification. Findings reveal a halal premium ranging from 4 percent to 118 percent, reliance on imports, and regulatory gaps, underscoring the need for stronger domestic production and supply chain standards.

1 Introduction

Halal food is lawful and permissible food produced, processed, and transported following Islamic dietary law and ritual slaughter. The term *halal* applies to various consumer products, including cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and chemicals. Halal customs have precise instructions on permissible animals, slaughter methods, processing, and transportation (e.g., Regenstein and Moghul 2020). Like certified organic products, halal is a credence attribute indicated through halal-certified labels, verified by halal-certifying bodies. The emerging evidence links limited access to halal food with food insecurity among American Muslim households.

In 2022, the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) found that 83 percent of American Muslims keep (37 percent) or prefer (46 percent) halal diets. The high adherence rate to their religious diets contrasts with the rate of 35 percent among American Jews who keep (18 percent) or prefer (17 percent) kosher diets. Muslims, particularly those who require halal-certified food for their adherence to religious dietary guidelines, are twice as likely to be food insecure as other religious groups (Mogahed 2023).

A large majority of American Muslims are immigrants, with 58 percent of US Muslim adults considered first-generation Americans (Pew Research Center 2017). Migrant families face greater food insecurity than native-born (Maynard et al. 2019), and food insecurity is associated with a host of health and social outcomes (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2022). Immigrants are at a higher risk of income instability as well as low enrollment into safety net programs for food due to ineligibility, fear of government authority, lack of preferred food options in said programs, or lack of awareness (Stokes-Ramos 2024), and children of recent immigrant mothers experience poor health (Chilton et al. 2009). A 2017 case study of 249 Somali American households in seven Midwestern cities found 22 percent experiencing food insecurity (compared to 11.8 percent of the general population), with less than 10 percent of households being aware of resources such as senior centers, soup kitchens, and Meals on Wheels (Karnik and Peterson 2023).

This paper provides an overview of the halal food market in the US and its accessibility among American Muslim households, drawing on a review of scholarly works, stakeholder conversations, in-store and online store visits, data collection from primary and secondary sources, and a synthesis of the results. We examine halal food consumers, major supply channels, certification processes, and price differences between halal and non-halal foods. Then, we highlight two major challenges in the current US halal food

market: the certification process and the limited availability of cultural staples. As an illustration, we discuss goat meat, which is the most desired source of protein among many American Muslim communities, including Somali, Caribbean, Arab, and South Asian Americans. We aim to inform food producers of the size, structure, and regulatory environment of the halal market and researchers of the major gaps in data and research in halal food systems.

2 US Halal Food Market

2.1 Consumers

Muslims represent the most racially diverse faith communities in the United States, with no single racial group making up a majority: 20 percent of American Muslims are Black, while 41 percent are White, followed by 28 percent Asian, 8 percent Hispanic, and 3 percent mixed race (Pew Research Center 2017). The Muslim American population is spread across the country, mainly in major urban areas. Over the past 2 decades, the population has nearly doubled as immigrants arrive fleeing war, famine, political unrest, and ethnic cleansing. These immigrants come from Muslim-majority countries like Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, and Palestine. The US Muslim population tends to be younger than the national average, with more than a third aged 18–24 years.

Financially, about 20 percent of American Muslim households earn incomes above \$100,000, similar to the national average (Pew Research Center 2017). However, American Muslim households are more likely than average American households (31 percent vs. 24 percent) to earn less than \$30,000 in annual household income. After controlling for household size and geographic region, Black Muslim households are most likely among all Muslim racial groups to earn below \$30,000 a year (Chouhoud 2018). According to a 2016 survey, 18 percent of US Muslims were underemployed and looking for work, compared to 6 percent of US adults overall (Pew Research Center 2017). Among all faith groups, Muslims experience the most religious discrimination and bullying in K-12 public schools (ISPU 2024).

2.2 Availability of Halal Food

The global halal food market, valued at US\$2.71 trillion in 2024, is projected to reach \$5.91 trillion by 2033, driven by the 2.8 billion Muslim population forecasted for 2050 (Research and Markets 2025a). For reference, the global kosher market revenue was under \$24 billion in 2017 and is estimated to reach \$26.7 billion by 2025 (Mortas et al. 2022). The US food industry overall is valued at \$1.5 trillion, with the halal food market alone exceeding \$20 billion in 2024 and growing at a 9.4 percent compound annual growth rate between 2024 and 2033 (Research and Markets 2025b). Although figures vary depending on the source and market segment definitions, most peer-reviewed studies, including those by Halawa (2018), Roodbar and Veeck (2021), Atalan-Helicke (2023), and Riaz (2025) place the US halal food market value around US\$20 billion.

Halal foods, traditionally sold in specialty stores, are increasingly available at mainstream retailers. These major retail outlets offer halal food selections or dedicated aisles for halal items and delivery services for nonperishable food items nationwide. Walmart alone delivers to 45 million households across 50 US states and accounted for nearly 36 percent of all online grocery sales during the second quarter of 2023 (Moran 2024). Other major retailers—such as Costco, Target, and Whole Foods—offer delivery services in geographically select markets, often facilitated by third-party providers like Instacart, DoorDash, Uber Eats, and Amazon. Although access to ethnic foods is increasing, these services are offered to individuals willing to pay the membership costs, and delivery services are only available in limited cities in the US, particularly for fresh groceries, including halal food items.

In addition to mainstream retailers, online platforms have made halal food increasingly accessible to a broad range of customers across the US. Companies like Boxed Halal serve retail stores and

individual customers with their delivery of fresh halal meat. Baba's Hummus is sold in more than 400 stores, including Whole Foods. Other companies and brands like Crescent Meats, My Halal Meat, and Magic Dates serve both wholesale and retail stores. Online resources for local availability of halal food items, such as Zabiha.com, compile information on halal restaurants and grocery stores.

2.3 Halal Certification and Regulation

The modern halal certification system shows regulatory differences across countries, which develop their own regulations, frameworks, and standards based on local religious interpretations and jurisprudence. For example, countries like the US, Canada, and Australia have various halal-certifying bodies, while Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt operate a national certification system. Globally, there are more than 400 halal-certifying bodies. The scrutiny and standards that companies follow can vary from one country to another where they sell their products. Generally, certification systems in producing countries are adopted according to the requirements of importing countries. For example, if a company in the US supplies halal-certified beef to the United Arab Emirates, the certification must meet the standards established by the Gulf Standardization Organization.

In the US, the First Amendment's separation between church and state prevents the federal government from defining or regulating religious foods, such as halal and kosher. Halal certification is thus conducted by third-party certifying bodies, under the oversight of the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS). According to the USDA-FSIS (2024), firms seeking halal certification must submit a claim application to FSIS, including documentation of compliance with standards set by an Islamic certifying organization. Usually, these certifications are accepted across communities and countries. In addition to federal oversight, states like California, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Washington, and New Jersey have enacted halal food consumer protection laws to protect consumers from wrongful labeling of food as halal (Regenstein and Moghul 2020). Many halal certifying bodies publish a range of fees for certification services on their websites, some more specific than others. According to IFANCA (Chaudry 2023), for example, the cost of registering a single product ranges from \$350 to \$2,500, while plant registration and audits generally incur additional fees of \$1,000 and \$1,500, respectively. Annual renewal costs average between \$500 to \$3,000, depending on the certifying body and product category (Halal Food Council USA 2025). These expenses can be large for small, locally owned businesses. As a result, some local processors and retailers prepare food products according to halal standards and sell them locally without labeling them as halal, relying on the trust of ethnic consumers within their community.

Large companies that supply nationally or internationally typically adopt one of two approaches to certification. Some choose to use the same certifier for all their products, while others opt for different certifiers for different products or customer segments (see Table 1 for major certifying bodies in the US and primary products they certify). Importantly, a company can utilize only one certificate for a specific type of product processed at a specific plant. For instance, Crescent Foods, a leading halal meat producer, relies on eight different certificates from the Shariah Board of America, each linked to specific products or plants, such as individually frozen chicken (produced at plants 764 and 445) and beef (at plant 20887). In contrast, Cargill engages country-based accreditation agencies like the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of Canada (IFANCC) in Canada, the Islamic Society of California for exports to Egypt, and Halal Quality Control in Europe.

2.4 Price and Packaging Differences Between Halal and Non-Halal Products

Halal certification involves additional costs in certification, monitoring, and handling, which are passed down to the consumers through a price premium. In addition, halal food availability is restricted in package size and variety. To assess the availability of halal products in the Minneapolis–St. Paul metro area in Minnesota, we visited major retailers—including Costco, Walmart, Aldi, Target, and Restaurant

Table 1. Major halal-certifying bodies in the United States

Name of the Organization; the Location of Headquarters	Industries Certified								Brands/Companies Served
	Fresh and Processed Meat	Other Food and Food Additives	Supplements	Cosmetics	Pharmaceuticals	Restaurants	Retailers	Non-Food Items/Chemicals	
Islamic Food & Nutrition Council of America (IFANCA); Des Plaines, Illinois	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	Baskin Robbins, Ben and Jerry’s, General Mills, Impossible Foods, Nestle Central & West Africa Ltd., etc.
Halal Chamber of Commerce (ISWA); Silver Springs, Maryland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	Tyson, George’s, Koch, Pilgrim etc.
American Halal Foundation; Tampa, Florida	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	Archie’s Food, Boxed Halal, Emir Foods, Halal Foundry, etc.
Halal Transactions of Omaha; Omaha, Nebraska	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	Deli Halal, Creekstone Farms, Hormel Foods, Maple Leaf Farms, etc.
Halal Food Standards Alliance of America; Oakland, California	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	Archie’s Foods, Aziz Halal, Boxed Halal, Skinny Crust, Reed Farm, Halal Bites, etc.
Islamic Services of America (ISA Halal); Cedar Rapids, Iowa	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	Hawkins, Beyond Meat, Lyons, Trisco foods, Global Food Industries, etc.
Halal Watch World; Glenmont, New York	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	US Durum, Cosmax, United Dairy, Sarah Farms, Wonder Meats, Vineland Syrup, Jamac foods, etc.
Shariah Board of America; Chicago, Illinois	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	Minnesota Halal Meat, Crescent Foods, Superior Farms, Great Lakes Poultry, etc.

Note: Tick marks “✓” imply that the organization explicitly claims, on its website, to certify the corresponding industry. The list of organizations represents author-selected major certifying bodies; at the time of this study (September–November 2024), we found 19 certifying bodies operating in varying capacities in the US. Information on the industries and brands certified was gathered directly from each organization’s publicly available website.

Depot—and checked their websites as customers to evaluate available delivery options. Apart from Costco and Restaurant Depot, halal product offerings were either very limited and overpriced (e.g., Walmart and Target) or unavailable altogether (e.g., Aldi).

To better understand the market-level product availability and price premium of halal products, we tracked the prices of halal and non-halal products at Costco, a large retail company serving both

individual and business customers. Prices for halal products and their closest non-halal alternatives were manually collected from Costco Wholesale (costco.com), the company's online shopping platform for individual customers, and Costco Business Center (costcobusinessdelivery.com), its online platform for business customers, in October 2024. Costco Business Center products are available to individuals with membership and physical access to in-store purchases; online delivery is limited to business addresses. Four sets of weekly data collected for ZIP code 55108 beginning on October 13 revealed that Costco Business Center offered 77 halal products, including meats such as chicken, beef, lamb, goat, and duck, as well as nonmeat items like paneer, ramen, and instant coffee. Halal product offerings were sold in large packs that serve multiple meals, were relatively more expensive, and less varied in cuts and packaging than the non-halal options. For example, halal chicken was only available in variety and locker packs. Overall, the halal premium ranged from about 4 percent for chicken thighs to as high as 118 percent for beef steak. Kagan, Draeger, and Olive (2020) similarly report an average halal meat premium of \$0.96/lb across their data collection in July 2019, which equals 16–51 percent of the coinciding retail beef and poultry composite values, respectively, reported by the USDA Economic Research Service (n.d.). In our survey, no halal food items were cheaper than their non-halal alternative, including non-meat food products such as coffee and ramen noodles.

3 Challenges

3.1 Reception of Halal Labels Among Consumers

Assurance of halal standards can be coated in uncertainty because halal is a credence product attribute, not visibly discernible from non-halal products. The certification process can be challenging due to the complex nature of food, the long supply chain, and an increasing number of adulterants that make detection difficult (Tieman et al. 2013). Additionally, the lack of a uniform standard, forgery, and expired certifications have resulted in an erosion of consumer trust (Al-Mahmood and Fraser 2023). Halal consumers often question the authenticity of the halal claims, particularly for products originating from non-Muslim-majority countries (Zulfakar et al. 2014), and overwhelmingly prefer those produced and labeled in Muslim countries (Yener 2022). In a focus group study in Ontario, Canada, Muslim participants expressed a willingness to pay a premium for certified halal products when assured of their authenticity (Adekunle and Filson 2020). This price premium creates incentives for fraudulent representation of products as halal.

Several incidents of fraudulent labeling, contamination with non-halal food, and other violations have tarnished the trust in the halal food industry. In 2011, Nestlé suspended production of its Herta halal line in France after pork traces were found in its halal sausages (Bon and Vinocur 2011). Similarly, in 2014, the founder of Midamar Crop in Iowa was charged with falsely selling \$4.9 million worth of beef as halal to consumers in Malaysia, Kuwait, and the UAE (Associated Press 2014). Halal Foods Inc. and Fine Foods Wholesale Distributors in New York were barred from selling uncertified meat and poultry products (DOJ 2023).

To address such breaches, technological innovations have emerged to verify the sources of protein in food. For instance, in 2013, French entrepreneurs launched portable test kits that detect traces of pork protein, costing €6.9 per unit test and demonstrating 99 percent accuracy (The Halal Journal 2014). Advanced analytical methods—such as polymerase chain reaction, chromatography, and molecular spectroscopy—further enhance verification accuracy. Integrating artificial intelligence and chemometrics can strengthen these detection systems, fostering greater consumer confidence. Although still developing, these technologies offer a promising pathway for stringent monitoring, evaluation, and restoration of trust in halal-labeled products.

3.2 Limited Availability of a Cultural Staple: The Case of Goat Meat

While there is no market dataset clearly identifying halal products in the US, goat meat has been used as a product to illustrate the state of the halal market by other researchers (e.g., Kagan et al. 2020). Muslims originating from many African, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American, and Caribbean regions prefer goat meat for cultural festivals, such as Eid al-Adha (Bakrid), Ramadan, and Eid al-Fitr. Beyond rituals, goat meat is integral to many cuisines—like Mexican *birria* and *mole de caderas*, Middle Eastern and North African *kebabs* and *kofta*, Caribbean and South Asian goat curry, and East and West African stews, grilled meats, and soup (Tasteatlas.com 2024). The standard Somali diet, for instance, consists of meat (camel, goat, and lamb are preferred, but chicken, beef, and fish can be included), rice or pasta, and vegetables (Haq 2003), and 87 percent of Somali American women in Maine reported eating meat daily (Dharod et al. 2013). Additionally, more than half of the US goat meat supply is imported from Australia. Australia operates under the Australian Government Authorized Halal Program (AGAHP), ensuring halal certification of red meat for the maximum global market, under which almost all goat meat imports to the US from Australia are halal certified. As such, goat meat serves as an instructive case study of the availability and prices of a cultural staple to American Muslims.

US goat meat production has fallen since its 2008 peak of 865,800 head, bottoming out in 2016 and rebounding to 685,000 head in 2024. Texas holds 36.5 percent of the national inventory (2.47 million head), followed by Oklahoma (4.0 percent) and California (3.8 percent), with a median herd size of 20 (USDA-NASS 2025). Unlike other livestock, a large portion of goats are slaughtered outside federally inspected facilities. Only 62.4–83 percent of goats were slaughtered in federally inspected facilities between 2006 and 2024. This number contrasts sharply with higher inspection rates for other species: 99.5 percent for hogs, 99 percent for chickens, 98.2 percent for cattle, and 86.7 percent for sheep and lambs (USDA-NASS 2025). The remaining goats are slaughtered through unregulated, small-scale, or direct-to-consumer operations, often serving ethnic and religious markets.

The US is the world's largest importer of goat meat, importing 49.1 million pounds (\$142.9 million) in 2024. The 2024 imports were a historical high after a recent low in 2020 of 21.60 million pounds (Figure 1). The goat meat in the US is primarily imported from Australia (98.3 percent) and Mexico (1.2 percent). Goat meat from Australia is almost all (97 percent) frozen (Meat and Livestock Australia 2019) and halal certified. The Australian government recognizes 19 Islamic organizations authorized to certify meat products destined for the US (Australia Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry 2024). In 2024, the US exported 794,355 pounds (\$930,252) of goat meat, mainly to Mexico (34.3 percent) and Caribbean nations.

We estimate the US goat meat supply using domestic production and trade data, assuming a 45 percent dressing percentage of goats without heads and organs (Greenwood 1996). Due to data restrictions, estimates cover 2006–2024. In 2024, 69.8 million pounds of goat meat were marketed, with domestic producers and imports supplying 30–51 percent and 50–73 percent of demand, respectively (Figure 1). In comparison, US supply for the same year reached 28.6 billion pounds of beef, 27.8 billion pounds of pork, 46.5 billion pounds of broiler chicken, and 134 million pounds of sheep and lamb (Shagam 2024).

Since 2018, when data are available, fresh domestic goat meat has been consistently priced 5.8 times higher compared to imported goat meat (see Figure 2). In October 2024, the average customs price of imported goat meat was \$3.05/lb, while it retailed at \$4.10/lb in 15-lb packs in Costco Business Center and \$12.72/lb in 2.2-lb packs on Costco Wholesale. In contrast, the direct-to-consumer retail price of fresh, grass-fed goat stew meat in the same month ranged between \$12.00/lb and \$28.22/lb, with a weighted average price of \$17.67/lb in October 2024. In the US, surging demand for goat meat from ethnic communities outpaces domestic supply, which remains low due to limited farming scale. Meanwhile, Australia's goat meat exports thrive on vast feral herds that require minimal effort to grow

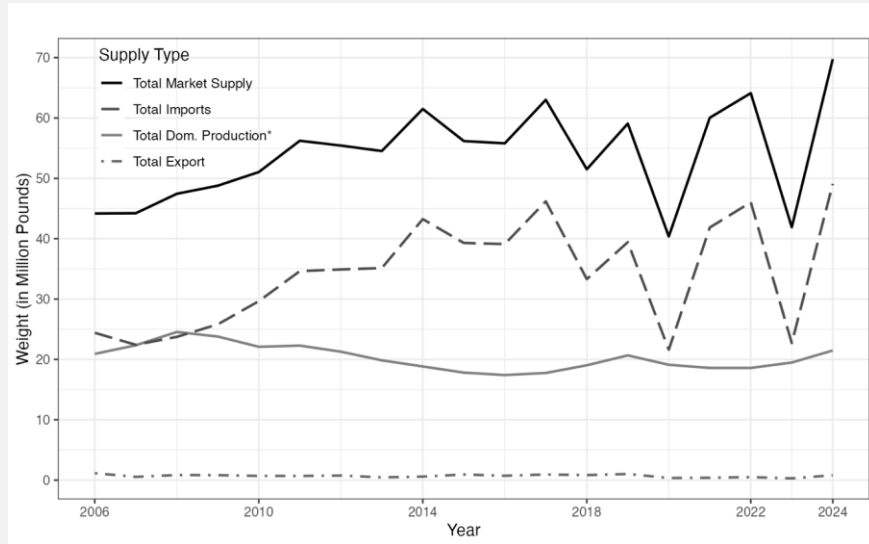


Figure 1. Market supply of goat meat

Note: Total market supply is calculated as: Total Market Supply = Total Domestic Production + Total Imports – Total Exports. The values of total imports and exports are taken from the UN Comtrade dataset.

*The total domestic production is calculated as the product of the total heads of goats sent to slaughter, the average weight per head reported by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. Missing values for the average weight per head for goats slaughtered in federally inspected facilities in 2024 were imputed using an ARIMA process.

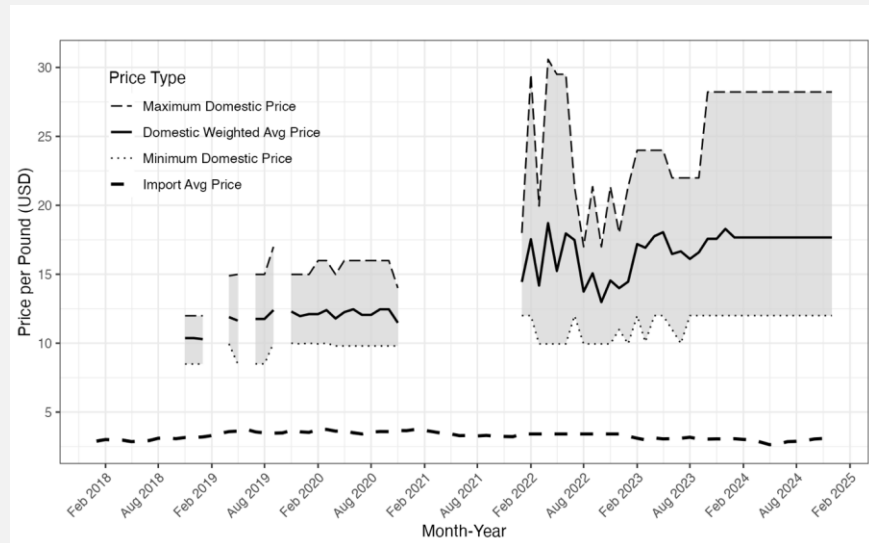


Figure 2. Price of grass-fed stew-goat meat, and average imported goat meat

Note: Prices for domestic, stew-cut, grass-fed goat meat represent the hanging weight prices without processing fees. Import prices, originally reported per kilogram, were converted by the authors using a conversion factor of 1 kg = 2.20462 pounds.

Source: USDA Agriculture and Marketing Service *National Monthly Grass Fed Lamb and Goat Report* and United Nations (2025) for 5-digit Standard International Trade Classification commodity code 20450 (fresh and frozen goat meat).

and harvest, allowing for low, year-round production costs and efficient frozen shipments that undercut US prices (Meat and Livestock Australia 2019; McKeesick 2024).

4 Conclusion

The US halal food market is expanding, driven by growing Muslim populations, rising awareness, and greater culinary diversity. Yet, product mixes remain limited, particularly for cultural staples like goat meat, and access remains restricted to big cities and population centers. To meet the needs of a Muslim population, projected to reach 8.1 million by 2050 (Mohamed 2018), integrating halal protocols into American food production and supply chains is essential. Doing so would not only support religious compliance but also improve access to nutritious foods, helping prevent nutrition-related deficiencies among Muslim consumers. Interested food producers could initiate the process to seek halal certification by referring to halal certifying bodies in the US, summarized in Table 1. Producers can select agencies that cover their products and services and seek additional information about halal-compliant practices for sourcing, processing, and handling practices to ensure halal compliance, and finally submit documentation. In our report, we further explain the difference in certification requirements for domestic and export markets, initial and recurring costs of certification, underscoring the lack of a single standardized pathway to halal compliance.

Our analysis shows certified halal food commands a 4–118 percent price premium over conventional products, reflecting certification and specialized production costs. Availability of halal products is uneven, with limited options and freshness, constraining consumer choice. For example, fresh domestic goat meat costs nearly six times more than imported frozen alternatives, mainly from Australia. Despite the industry's potential, growth is hindered by the absence of federal regulation, limited local production, and inconsistent state labeling laws. A useful expansion of the halal food infrastructure should include a single universal certification standard. The call for such coordination should originate from faith leaders, given the restricted role of the government in regulating protocols. Public entities can help bolster the infrastructure through consumer protection and the expansion of halal options in institutional settings, including school cafeterias and food pantries. Greater halal infrastructure would expand opportunities for producers, retailers, and certifiers to cater to a growing consumer base and help alleviate food insecurity among Muslim communities.

About the Authors: Subin Poudel (Corresponding Author Email: poude033@umn.edu) is a Graduate Student, Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN. Hikaru Hanawa Peterson (hhp@umn.edu) is a Professor, Department of Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN.

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