

MCB Press Releases

Halal meat - Consumers demand answers from certifiers, regulators and Government

Muslim Council of Britain calls for greater transparency from industry and regulators

* Latest discovery of non-halal meat require greater oversight of certifiers

* Government and regulators must be more transparent with community and consumers

The Muslim Council of Britain today echoed the deep anxieties held by many British Muslim consumers after yet another revelation of non-halal meat found in certified halal food. Today, Westminster Council said that non-halal meat was found in meat passed off as halal in St Mary's Bryanston Square School.

Dr Shuja Shafi, Deputy Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain said: "All consumers have a right to know what they are eating. We are greatly concerned about authenticity and accuracy of food labelling."

Dr Shafi added: "This latest episode highlights the need for the halal food industry, regulators and government to restore trust. While it is commendable that the Food Standards Agency has been swift in acting on the horse meat issue, it has been lamentably slow in acting on halal meat regulation. "

"When the discovery of pork DNA and non-halal meat was reported in halal meat products at the start of the year, many of us expected swift action from the Food Standards Agency. When we heard nothing, I wrote to the FSA seeking clarification on what action has been taken, what proposals for monitoring were in place and what assurances were given by food business operators and certifying agencies to ensure this would not happen again. Thus far, I have not had a response."

The news about this finding of pork DNA and other animal species in halal certified chicken sausages and lean minced beef comes at a time when the Department of Communities and Local Government in conjunction with DEFRA and the FSA were holding a meeting with halal certifying agencies. Dr Shuja Shafi spoke out against the lack of transparency coming out of these meetings. "There has been no effort to inform the public about the outcome of such meetings. At a time of acute consumer anxiety, we would expect the government to be as robust in engaging with the public as it did during the horsemeat scandal."

Dr Shuja Shafi added: "Thus far, the response to these revelations has been to stop the supplier. This is not enough, it is more important to investigate what has gone wrong. The finding of different species gives cause for serious concern about the source of meat and its safety (fit for human consumption) in which vulnerable sections of the community are exposed. Both the supplier and certifier have misled the community and appropriate enforcement action must be taken." (**MCB Press Releases 15.3.2013**)