

“Taiwan Halal Center” Vanguard of the New Muslim Expansion Plan

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Alvin Hu – Taiwan Trade

The 2016/2017 “State of the Global Islamic Economy” report indicated that the global Halal economic output in 2021 can reach up to US\$6.5 trillion. Furthermore, there are approximately 1.6 billions Muslims globally, and one in every four people is a Muslim. So the important key is how to help the manufacturers of Taiwan to master and contend for the Halal industry business opportunities.

In view of the growing importance of the Muslim market, the Taiwan External Trade Development Council has commissioned the Bureau of Foreign Trade to establish the “Taiwan Halal Center” (THC) to serve as the unified window for Taiwan to advocate the Halal industry by “promoting of the international Halal market information exchange,” “assisting manufacturers to obtaining Halal certifications and business opportunities,” and “creating a friendly environment for Muslims.”

The THC plays the role of an interactive exchange platform for the government as well as the domestic and foreign certification units. The Halal certification units such as the Malaysia JAKIM and HDC as well as the Indonesia MUI were invited to Taiwan, and over 200 manufacturers also participated in the event to learn about the latest Halal industry trends and market conditions, and to engage in more in-depth discussions regarding Halal industry trends. The “2017 Seminar on Halal Market and Food Import Procedures in Southeast Asia” was held during the Taiwan International Food Fair period. The chairman of the Indonesian Food and Beverage Import Association was also invited to Taiwan to share about the Indonesian food industry, the future Halal certification specifications, and the policy trends. The event has attracted over 150 manufacturers and different industry, government, and academic units.

Obtaining the Halal certification is the critical key to enter into the Muslim market. The THC has counseled the manufacturers of Taiwan on Halal certification applications. There were only about 500 Halal certified operators last year. That number has exceeded 700 today, and the number of Halal certified operators have increased dramatically by 40%. Industry partnerships have also been formed to import foreign Halal certified date palm raw materials for the domestic manufacturers and to conduct R&D on new products. Such products are already available in Malaysia and Singapore.

Providing a friendly environment for the Muslim friends at home and abroad has always been the goal of the THC. In addition to provide continuous counseling to assist the domestic chain restaurant industry to obtain Halal

certifications, the THC has also established Muslim prayer rooms at the Taipei World Trade Center and the Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center. During the month of Ramadan, the THC has also provided fasting snacks to Muslim buyers. The objective is to promote the Halal certified products of Taiwan while providing consideration to the Muslim buyers who are visiting Taiwan during the month Ramadan.

An Iraqi buyer who has visited Taiwan to participate in the exhibitions for four consecutive years pointed out that this year's Taipei professional show is quite different. He discovered the dedicated Muslim prayer rooms and the Mixed Congee with Okinawa Brown Sugar snack from Taisun Co. He has recognized the acceptance and understanding of the Muslim culture in Taiwan and is deeply touched by the efforts.

In Taiwan, the retail channels have successively established the Halal souvenir areas as well as Muslim friendly environment and facilities. The Goal of the THC is to help the industries in Taiwan to further satisfy the demands of the global Muslim market opportunities at home and abroad.