

## **Halal consumption patterns in a complex market. Basic tips and some proposals**

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*Bismillâh ar-Rahmân ar-Rahim*

Halal consumption has characteristics that go beyond the framework of market studies. We can divide regular consumers into two large blocks: Muslims (the majority) and non-Muslims (a growing minority). Non-Muslim halal consumers are those regular or sporadic consumers of halal products, basically in the food sector. They do not buy them out of religious convictions; sometimes they do not even know what halal means. The most usual situation is that they acquire halal food from a local convenience store, a butcher shop, a bakery, etc. In this category we can also include customers of restaurants, tea-shops, etc. Related to this category, and also on the increase, are non-Muslim halal producers, who supply halal food and nonfood commodities in countries where Islam is not the path of the majority (and also export them to so-called Muslim countries). Even if this quite recent trend of non-Muslim halal consumers and producers is really interesting and deserves much more attention, here I shall only speak about Muslim consumers in Europe. I shall try to outline some essential points, though this is a complex issue where many factors are involved.

### **Three identity markers as vectors shaping Muslims**

Hundreds of millions of people in virtually every corner of the planet conform the ummah. In some areas the density is greater for historical reasons, in others the amount has increased due to social, political and particularly economic conditions as well as the migrations that have resulted from them.

Our identity as human beings is modulated by three markers or vectors. Essentially we are, at the same time:

- 1) God's creation.
- 2) Our mothers children.
- 3) A product of our contexts.

I am going to stress these three features (which I call identity vectors) with the aim to explain some halal consumption patterns in Europe and to outline some strategies that we can develop for a healthier ummah. It is extremely important to take into account these three vectors that confirm Muslim identity.

-The first identity vector is vertical: we are God's creation. We are part of God's masterpiece creation with the rest of what we see and do not see, and we must therefore be aware of where we are and the responsibility that this entails. It is here where life becomes meaningful. This is the place of Islamic ethics and values.

-Secondly, we have the horizontal identity vector: we are children of our mothers, in other words, we are human, with the ability to reproduce. In addition, together with our ancestors and our family we are part of a common history, a link that also determines and shapes us. This vector also refers to one of the main modes of knowledge transmission: from generation to generation. Our relationship with our homeland also belongs to this category.

-The third identity vector is circular: we are a product of our context. In addition to the other two factors, we are also permeable to cultural, environmental and historical influences, ideological

trends, new paradigms, policies and interests (geopolitical, economic ones, etc.). This is the place of external pressure, and when this vector grows, it undermines especially the second vector, the horizontal.

These three vectors that shape our Muslim identity are often unbalanced. If Islam is healing, it is precisely because of its ability to balance these three elements in each one of us: awareness of a single and united reality whose laws we must acknowledge and accept; respect and love for family, parents, marriage, and the offspring as social structure; and, also, tolerance and advocacy of cultural diversity. However, to affirm that Islam balances these three vectors does not mean they are equally important: the vertical (we are God's creation) is the fundamental pillar, the axis where the other two are articulated. When the circular vector (we are a product of our context) increases in size we run the risk of unbalancing and destroying the fundamental axis.

Thanks to these three identity factors we can talk about Muslims as a whole. Yet, at the same time, it is extremely difficult to describe the ummah as a culturally homogeneous block.

With this in mind, is it possible to speak of patterns of consumption in the ummah? Yes and no.

The following scheme can be applied to the ummah as a whole, but also to specific parts of it:

1) Vertical vector (we are God's creation): 100% halal. Conscious consumption.

2) Horizontal vector (we are sons and daughters of our mothers): halal. Kinship, inherited practices, inertia, tradition.

3) Circular vector (we are a product of our context): less halal, more masbuq (doubtful) and even haram (unlawful). Colonialism and changes in social environment, market pressure, globalization, breaking old habits, industrialization in agriculture and livestock, aggressive advertising, environmental degradation, global warming, etc. Notably since colonialism in mid 19th century, many of the societies we call Islamic have experienced this growth of the circular identity vector that has undermined the other two, especially the horizontal (family/traditions).

These three identity markers also define the Islamic corpus, where we can fit Qur'an in vector 1; sunnah in vector 2; and fiqh in vector 3. Likewise, we can relate them to the hadiz about the division of the daily duties: one to remembrance of God; one to family; and one to work.

I am going now to elaborate on these three determining identity factors and how they affect halal consumption in Europe. The paper will end with some advice and tips aimed at reestablishing the balance inside ourselves, inside the ummah and, therefore, at restoring our responsibility for the environment.

## **Halal consumption patterns according to these three identity vectors**

### a) First feature

Vertical vector (we are God's creation): halal. Foundational and fundamental axis for Muslims. Practice with conscience. Ethics and values.

The plural Muslim community is first recognized by the awareness of God. When we talk about consumption we talk about practice. Islam is not an ideology but a way of life, where theory and practice, interior and exterior, form a single unit that assumes and recognizes our dependence on the divine unity that transcends us. That's why we can talk about the Muslim consumer as a conscious consumer that follows an ethical path integrated in his/her everyday practice of Islam.

However, if we think roughly about this Muslim consumer, three typical characteristics, three clichés immediately come to our mind: slaughtering, pork and alcohol. Today these three aspects have become a dismembered identity obsession, especially among non-Muslims but also increasingly in the ummah. That's why more and more often we are witnessing an univocal

identification between the notion of halal and these three elements.<sup>1</sup>

Now I shall mention three fragments of the Qur'an which speak of these three elements.

### Sacrifice

And as for the sacrifice of cattle, We have ordained it for you as one of the symbols set up by God, in which there is [much] good for you. Hence, extol the name of God over them when they are lined up [for sacrifice]; and after they have fallen lifeless to the ground, eat of their flesh, and feed the poor who is contented with his lot [and does not beg], as well as him who is forced to beg. It is to this end that We have made them subservient to your needs, so that you might have cause to be grateful. (22:36)

### Alcohol

O you who have attained to faith! Intoxicants, and games of chance, and idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing: shun it, then, so that you might attain to a happy state! (5:91) By means of intoxicants and games of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you not, then, desist? Hence, pay heed unto God, and pay heed unto the Apostle, and be ever on your guard [against evil]; and if you turn away, then know that Our Apostle's only duty is a clear delivery of the message [entrusted to him]. Those who have attained to faith and do righteous deeds incur no sin by partaking of whatever they may, so long as they are conscious of God and [truly] believe and do righteous deeds, and continue to be conscious of God and to believe, and grow ever more conscious of God, and persevere in doing good: for God loves the doers of good. (5:90-93)

### Pork

And so, partake of all the lawful, good things which God has provided for you as sustenance, and render thanks unto God for His blessings, if it is [truly] Him that you worship. He has forbidden to you only carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that over which any name other than God's has been invoked; but if one is driven [to it] by necessity - neither coveting it nor exceeding his immediate need - verily, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. Hence, do not utter falsehoods by letting your tongues determine [at your own discretion], "This is lawful and that is forbidden", thus attributing your own lying inventions to God: for, behold, they who attribute their own lying inventions to God will never attain to a happy state! A brief enjoyment [may be theirs in this world] - but grievous suffering awaits them [in the life to come]! (16:114-117)

In short, if we intend to face the obsession to identify halal only with the trinity sacrifice-pork-alcohol, so often repeated as to strip it even of meaning, we can find a wealth of clarifications in the Qur'an: above all, the consciousness of God and his mercy; the importance of being socially responsible; the exhortation to the divine indulgence when it is impossible to comply with what is banned to us; the lack of coercion to impose this way of life; the prevailing gratitude that has to govern our deeds and lives, etc.

In conclusion, the halal practice should be an aware, equitable, social and ethical consumption that differs from capitalist consumption where individualism is promoted. For example, alcoholism or gambling are important social ills, so when we do not drink alcohol nor do we gamble, we do it also for our responsibility toward the common good beyond our own interest and our own ability to control ourselves.

This is the first feature of halal consumption patterns. A feature that fits into the first identity vector and axis: the awareness of God. A consumer that does not only apply the concept of halal to food: for this reason, as we have just seen in the Qur'an, the prohibition of narcotic drugs comes next to the warning about gambling, and the reference to animal sacrifice comes next to solidarity to the poor. The message is holistic, everything is interconnected in Islam because nothing is fragmented or disconnected.

This point is the most important when we talk about patterns of consumption, because we must not associate them only with the act of buying and selling. It is because of social responsibility that we are asked to not waste water; that usury and speculation are forbidden in finance, mortgage and

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Radha Vengadasalam's article «Can we be Halal in parts?», Halal Journal n° 35, Jul/Aug 2010.

insurance products; that we must apply fair prices and measures; that standards in dressing are set; that we are asked not to exceed in the consumption of food (especially of meat), and so on.

To go beyond of these three clichés (slaughtering/pork/alcohol) related to halal is very important for our health, for our relation to the environment and also for a better understanding of what implies halal, especially when is linked to tayyib (good, wholesome) as stated in the Qur'an. For example, most Muslims usually check labels in search of haram content when commodities are not halal certificated by an official or reliable organization. Both consumers and certification bodies typically move between vectors 1 and 2 when they think of halal (which is associated with Islamic values, traditions, family customs, etc.), but not in their daily practice, which can be fitted in vector 3 because, in an increasingly complex scenario, food industry grows and develops its strategies in vector 3. Therefore, there is an important gap between what is most commonly understood as halal and what we really eat, and between theory and practice. Qur'an states clearly that we cannot attribute our own inventions of what is halal and what is haram. This should prevent us from arguing that some ingredients labelled halal in our contemporary world are actually haram. However, for this reason we must focus on qur'anic concepts such as tayyib (wholesome) and also azka (pure). This second word appears significantly at sura al Kahf where we find the story of a group of young men that went to a cave in search of Allâh protection and fell asleep for several years. When they woke up, we read: «Let, then, one of you go with these silver coins to the town, and let him find out what food is purest there, and bring you thereof some provisions.» Interestingly here the focus is not on halal or zabihah (sacrifice), but rather in the pureness of the food.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), which we can fit in vector 3 because it is a contextual product/response, is more inclined to allow these changes in the food industry by applying to them two key notions related to halal instead of labelling them haram. These concepts are masbouq (doubtful) and makrouh (detestable). Of course, we must retain as well some Prophet Muhammad's (saws) sayings like the following: "Both legal and illegal things are obvious, and in between them are (suspicious) doubtful matters. So whoever forsakes those doubtful things lest he may commit a sin, will definitely avoid what is clearly illegal; and whoever indulges in these (suspicious) doubtful things bravely, is likely to commit what is clearly illegal"<sup>3</sup>. In short, Muslims are provided with a huge range of divine precepts, prophetic traditions and hermeneutic tools to confront the complexities and pressures of the globalized market.

## b) Second feature

Horizontal identity vector (we are our mothers' children): halal. Inheritance practices, inertia, tradition, transmission of knowledge from generation to generation. Native land.

In non-majority Muslim countries, for example in Europe, this is the most visible practice when we speak about halal consumption due to its link with immigration. Retailers, flavours and colours, community, import through formal and informal channels depending on demand...

Whereas in the above first identity vector we fit lamb's slaughtering according to the normative halal law, here we find the recipes for cooking it.

Regional ingredients and clothing, therapies, music, modes of managing business and family... These are practices that travel with the Muslims from maternal home to their current home. Beside these, we encounter the experience of the Muslims whose homeland is Europe and who have accepted Islam. Here we also find traditional techniques related to preindustrial farming and agriculture and the clearly diverse cultural practices that shapes different approaches to Islam. As Johan Fischer says in his study of the London Malay community and its consumption patterns: «Muslim groups understand and practice halal differently from other ethnic and Muslim groups in the marketplace and often perceive other groups as overly pragmatic or purist about halal. Moreover, the length of stay in Britain plays a significant role in patterns of halal consumption.

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<sup>2</sup> See Chef Yusuf, *Cooking in the Islamic Way. Food in the Holy Qur'an & the Blessed Sunnah*, Chef Yusuf Foundation, 2010, p. 53-54.

<sup>3</sup> Sahih Al-Bukhari 3.267, hadith narrated by An Numan bin Bashir.

Malays in London tend to be more relaxed about halal, the longer they have lived outside Malaysia. In general, women appear more focused on halal compared with men.»<sup>4</sup> Therefore, this second identity vector is conditioned by and intimately related to the following one: vector 3.

### c) Third feature

Circular identity vector (we are a product of our context): in appearance less halal, more masbouq (doubtful) or even makrouh (detestable), although permeable to change. It is the vector par excellence of social and economic paradigms. We come from a modernizing paradigm which, in the name of progress, development and individual freedom, has succeeded in homogenizing some parts of the Islamic world to the detriment of vector 2, but not of vector 1. This means that Western colonialism has left a mark on many Muslim societies, notably in their elites, undermining traditional values and practices and relegating them to folklore, as happens, for example, with some knowledge and manners inherited from generation to generation. However, at the same time, these societies are still aware of God, i.e. they continue to define themselves as Muslim.

This process of modernization has now become much more aggressive within the neoliberal paradigm, which entails such effects as climate change, capitalist pressure, globalization, transnational corporations, the replacement of old habits with unattainable desires, the spread of industry and intensive agriculture and animal farming, the emergence of corporate marketing and aggressive advertising, etc.

To put it in a graphic form: the hypermarket has entered our lives. Large distribution chains, rupture of the environmental balance, the disappearance of the rural world, etc. We can talk about a colonization of the imaginary. We have moved from consumption to consumerism, i.e. from real needs to unfounded and untenable needs. This is highly dangerous both for humans (who suffer psychological imbalance, illusory obsessions, debt) and for the environment (waste, pillage of raw material, deforestation, monocultures, pesticides, GMOs, etc.). It is also the realm of international finance, usury and speculation.

Therefore, it is in this category where halal consumption is more prone to become masbuq (doubtful, where there is no consensus among experts and different legal schools), makrouh (detestable) or directly haram (unlawful).

## **Where would we like to go? Basic tips and some proposals**

Paradigm shift in vector 3 to step up vector 1 and recover vector 2. What in political terms is called «to recover sovereignty». To decolonize us.

We have said that we need to balance these three identity vectors that make up and shape our identity in order to harmonize our inner and outer life. Thus, we cannot discard or cancel vector 3, because definitely we are always a product of our context. On the other hand, we cannot afford to be «just» that. A non-religious and modern secular society is characterized precisely by leaving the first two vectors and keeping only the third one. But Muslims continue to rotate around the first axis, that of the divine consciousness. And despite all the external pressure and colonization that the second vector has suffered, it has not disappeared. That is why I believe that it is not so complicated to rebalance the three key points of our identity. In this sense, the third identity vector (we are a product of our context) becomes a powerful tool of change and awareness. As said above, rebalancing our identity markers does not mean to make them equal, but to grant and protect the particular place that each of them occupies in our life. Thus, while we can relate Qur'an to vector 1, sunnah to vector 2 and fiqh to vector 3, the latter cannot undermine the second or put above the first one: we must respect hierarchy, a key point often omitted in crucial Islamic issues, from women's status to environmental protection.

In this order to attain this paradigm shift, we need to leave the ideology of unlimited

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<sup>4</sup> Johan Fischer, *The Halal Frontier. Muslim Consumers in a Globalized Market*, Palgrave, New York, 2011, p. 104.

economical/industrial growth that shapes our contemporary globalized world -an ideology that was established by those obsessed with greed for more and more until the grave, as stated in sura At-Takathur. This way of life can hardly fit with some qur'anic precepts, for example: «Do not waste: verily, Allâh does not love the wasteful (7:31) or «Let not your own hands throw you into destruction» (2:195), not to mention other social Islamic principles related that exhort to show solidarity with immigrants and feed with food the needy, the orphan and the captive saying «We feed you for the sake of God alone: we desire no recompense from you, nor thanks» (76:8). This last qur'anic precept has been completely reversed in our colonial and postcolonial time, where transnationals and empires not only do not feed with food the needy, but steal and control amounts of food and raw materials that famines have become a political rather than humanitarian problem. Likewise, the hegemonic solidarity discourse held by this same mentality is far from acting only for the sake of God and independently from any desire for recompense nor acknowledgement. Nowadays, as Muslims we know that facing misfortune and hardship has a goal: to be humble (6:42). It is our duty to reflect and act according to this. We also know the meaning and consequences of tawhid, which implies that every action is connected and therefore we must seek coherence and Allâh's protection from our faults. Consumption is part of this jihad.

### -Organic farming

Among global consumers, Muslim and non-Muslim, there is a growing suspicion about food industry's obsession with benefits to the detriment of people's health (even of people's faith) and the environment. That is why we are witnessing an unprecedented growth of organic farming: sustainable and local farming, treating animals humanely, eating seasonally... In short, we will be regaining awareness of what we eat. Ibrahim Abdulmatin, author of the book *Green Deen* states: «An entire generation of Muslims is living the principles of green islam. They respect and value nature and want to see the signs (ayat) of God protected so they can enjoy and benefit from them; they seek out opportunities to move toward justice (adl) by serving their community; and they respect the fact that disturbing the balance (mizan) causes injustice. Consumers want to have food that is antibiotic-free, ethically packaged, free-range, fair-trade, tasty and halal.»<sup>5</sup>

Some European countries as Spain are on the front line of organic production in Europe, although the bulk of its output goes to export. The lack of local demand is one of the main factors that makes the organic products more expensive and that hamper its distribution. «My experience is that Muslims are willing to pay for Nike shoes for \$150 but when it comes to meat to feed their family, they will bargain on pennies», says Adnan Aldayel, president of Dakota Halal Inc. and quoted in an article published in Sound Vision, a well-known North America Islamic media company. The article reminds us that «75 percent of Halal meat in America produced in the year 2000 came from pork fed cows, according to Dr. Stephen Emanuel, from Agway Feed Company.» Therefore, their statement is clear: «Organic meat is one option for Muslims insistent on feeding their families Halal and Tayyib food. Organic meat is produced with animals raised on land free of pesticides, fertilizers, genetically engineered or irradiated foods. Farmers keep a detailed record of all methods and materials used in growing or producing the meat.»<sup>6</sup>

One of the solutions that arise from consumers themselves is to establish autonomous consumers' groups to avoid middlemen and cut costs. Another one is the awareness and changes in people's dietary habits. Lower prices in the meat sector are closely related to the exaggerated increase in the global consumption of meat in the last decades, something harmful to our body and the environment. Moreover, the animals are not mere products, but beings that deserves respect and consideration. In the Islamic tradition, as in many traditions of the planet, eating meat is the exception and not the rule.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet*, Berret-Koehler, San Francisco, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> «Mad Cow: It is time to be organic and natural» at <http://soundvision.com/info/halalhealthy/organicornot.asp>

## -Organic-halal debates

Currently, some voices within the global Muslim community are committed to organic meat and therefore differentiate between zabiha and halal and underline the halal-tayyib (lawful and good) qur'anic binomial. Those who defend this position argue that the majority of meat commercialized as "halal" comes from animals that have bred in industrial farms under a totally disrespectful and stressful conditions, without enough space, mutilated (especially in the case of poultry), sometimes sick, fed with transgenic cereals (soybeans, corn...) or with feedingstuffs of animal origin other than milk and crammed full of antibiotics and hormones -all of them factors that cause a negative impact on animal welfare, the environment and of course to consumer's health. Therefore, the meat from animals raised in these conditions cannot be considered tayyib (good) even it has slaughtered (zabiha) according to Islamic norms. Some go further and claim that it is zabiha but not halal<sup>7</sup>, because as we said above Qur'an tells us that we must eat halal and tayyib. As a result, they defend meat from organic farming, where respect for animals is higher<sup>8</sup>, although this is a more expensive product. When organic halal meat is not available, some Muslims choose organic over halal, what has generated strong responses, because the qur'anic mentions is about halal and tayyib and not halal or tayyib<sup>9</sup>. We must remember that at the time of the first Muslim community, meat was organic, but it had to be sacrificed according to laid down rules to become halal. When organic-halal meat is not available we have a simple, healthy alternative that is also beneficial for the environment and recommended in the sunnah: eating meat should be the exception and not the rule. Today it is common that many Muslim families in Europe identify meat with «real food», but as I have said this is a recent fashion due to industrialization and the globalization of the market that carries serious inner and outer imbalances (in our own bodies and in the environment). In fact, the vegetarian option (whether organic or not) is a natural ally for the halal consumer in countries where Muslims are a minority and halal certification is weak or confusing, but where ecological and vegetarian certification is much more developed, both in food and nonfood commodities (toothpaste, soap, etc.). Another option is kosher certification, although, as with organic certification, there are certain certified products (alcohol for the kosher certification, alcohol and pork for the organic certification) that are not considered halal and thus force Muslim consumers to check the ingredients list of each product.

As the organic certification is much clearer than the conventional one, issues such as E-numbers (number codes for sometimes dubious food additives) are also much more adapted to halal consumer's demands, because E-numbers are not used, and fats and additives (most of which are not allowed) tend to be detailed explicitly. Likewise, organic standards are safer and is not allowed apparently cancerogenous additives as aspartame (artificial sweetener) and other cheap but unhealthy or dubious ingredients (as L-cysteine a non-essential amino acid added to many baked goods as a dough conditioner in order to speed industrial processing and directly synthesized in laboratories, most of it is extracted from a cheap and abundant natural protein source: human hair). This change in consumption habits can be expensive for the family economy, so we must diversify strategies to find imaginative solutions. First of all, pure food is more nutritious, so in some cases we need to eat less or we can stop consuming unhealthy or junk food<sup>10</sup> and save money for purer one instead. Secondly, we must recuperate the time devoted to cooking. Paradoxically, modernity has brought to the kitchen all sorts of tools gadgets and technology, but the time we spend there is

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<sup>7</sup> Debates abound on Internet about these topics. See, for example, «It may be zabiha, but is it halal?» at <http://www.azhar.jp/info/halal-eng/halal3.html> and at <http://soundvision.com/Info/halalhealthy/madcow.asp> or «The Labels Halal & Zabihah And Why I Choose Local And Organic Instead» at <http://www.hijabman.com/journal/halal-zabihah-organic-eat-local/> and its responses.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, <http://organicrules.org>

<sup>9</sup> See «Eat halaal! Organic is no substitute» at <http://www.blogistan.co.uk/blog/mt.php/2012/04/28/organic-is-no-substitute-for-halaal/> and its responses.

<sup>10</sup> Here you can find a list that includes commercial breakfast cereals, canned soups, commercially baked goods and also some tips to help you avoid unhealthy foods: <http://www.natural-health-restored.com/unhealthy-foods.html>

shorter than ever. So we should recuperate this important and central space in the household, cooking as much as possible: from bread to sauces, cookies or pastries, fruit juices (instead of soda pop and other artificial beverages) and so on, reducing thus industrial fats, salt and sugars. Between the organic and the highly industrialised farming we also find farming sustainable methods, which are a combination of organic and conventional farming, so the range of alternatives is wider. This option empowers again the second identity vector by promoting a change of habits in the third vector. Decreasing our hypermarket shopping can increase our halalness. For example, if the usual snack for a child is industrial pastries made with saturated fats, although halal, it is best to replace it with fruit and nuts. It is better to buy these fruits in the street market or in a convenience store than in a hypermarket. It is also better if they are from local or national production than imported from the other corner of the planet. And, finally, it will be healthier and will supply us with more vitamins if they come from organic farming.

But, first and foremost, beyond the choice of eating this or that, let's start with bismillâh. That is, do not forget your Sustainer and do not indulge in health-related obsessions that can unbalance your relationship with Creation. It is also a very common and traditional choice to mention bismillâh before eating food of dubious origin with the aim to revert it and make it halal -a useful strategy for today, when choices in the food market have become more complex and plural.

A few basic tips when we are «forced» to go to the hypermarket are provided by journalist and writer Michael Pollan in his book *In Defense of Food. An Eater's Manifesto*, who recommends: "Don't eat anything your great-grandmother failed to recognize as food"; "avoid food products that exhibit health claims"; "quit the hypermarket as soon as possible"; "avoid products that contain unknown or unpronounceable ingredients".

#### -Autonomous Consumers' groups

As I have said, there is a «new not-so-new» trend today: autonomous consumers' groups, some of them informal and other formal. The informal ones are more rooted in the second identity vector and are much more difficult to register, but at the same time they are much more spread. The most obvious case is Eid al-Adha, where families, friends and communities come together to buy the lambs they need. But in the every day these informal unions occur in the food sector (for example to purchase wholesale of cereals or imported products) and also in the financial sector, with the establishment of small groups of savings and small loans. As I say, these experiences are very much rooted in some diasporic Muslim communities, who have brought them from their areas of origin. So I think that they are more related to the second vector.

On the other hand, we find formal consumers' groups, mainly for purchasing food, and where Muslims may participate and they belong to the third vector because respond to the need for a change in the general consumption paradigm.

#### -Raising awareness

One of the main tasks is awareness. Muslim communities, on the one hand, can draw on the rich Islamic heritage to improve the quality of the whole society. On the other, proposing solutions or inputs that go beyond the request for respect of diversity is a way to combat islamophobia. In this sense, it is also important to engage in interreligious dialogue around these practices and take part in the discussions of what is called "deep ecology", i.e., that field where spirituality and environmental protection are not separated.

Zack Abdullah goes further in developing this binomial halal-tayyib calling it «Thoyiban consciousness». In an interesting article published by *Halal Journal*, one of the world leading publications covering halal industry, he states: «Muslims in general know from the Qur'an that Holistic Purity is not only about food, but covers more. For example, the tayammum or dry ablution using sand or dust. Finding a Thoyib sand or dust for tayammum is impossible in a place where the society do not care about the condition of nature (inexistent of Holistic Purity). Logically, in such a



place, nature will not respond to our need for tayammum as the sand and dust will be harmful to us. [...] Holistic Purity is the Islamic consciousness that define a human being as 'one with nature'. And for the Muslims, Holistic Purity is the Sign for confirming that human beings were created from Mother Nature, thus we will face difficulties if the natural balance is disturbed in any way. [...] With the rise of the Halal industry is the re-birth of Islamic science – with its own perception of the universe and its conscious spiritual values. Halal and Thoyib seems to be the best contribution from Islamic science for the betterment of human beings and nature... We should understand that in the Halal industry, harmonious balance is pivotal and more important than optimistic rapid growth.»<sup>11</sup>

By emphasizing these aspects of Islam, our desire is to provide alternatives that are beneficial to the whole society. It is a work that recovers Muslim legacy and History, hermeneutics, interreligious dialogue, academic field work and what it has called «green jihad»<sup>12</sup>. Without generating frictions or getting into struggles about ideologies or dogmas. We must propose, talk, add, promote. And Allâh knows best.

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\*Qur'an translations from: Muhammad Asad, *The Message of The Qur'an*.

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<sup>11</sup> Zack Abdullah, «The Death of Philosophy and The Rise of Thoyiban Consciousness», *Halal Journal* n° 36, Sep/Oct 2010.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Rianne C. ten Veen, *199 Ways to Please God. How to (re-)align your daily life with your duty of care to Creation*, Fastprint Gold, 2009.