

Is Your Vegetarian Product Business Ready for Halal Certification?

PRE-CERTIFICATION READINESS CHECKLIST — VEGETARIAN & VEGAN PRODUCTS

IMPORTANT: Vegetarian does NOT automatically mean Halal.

Alcohol-based flavourings, non-halal emulsifiers (e.g. E471), shared production lines, and fermentation-derived additives can all cause a vegetarian product to fail halal compliance. This checklist helps you identify the gaps.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Tick each item your business already satisfies. Any unticked item is a gap to resolve before your NHASA audit.

1 INGREDIENTS & ADDITIVES

The most common failure point for vegetarian products

- CRITICAL** All flavourings and flavour enhancers are free from alcohol-based carriers.
Alcohol-based flavour solvents are one of the leading causes of halal non-compliance in vegetarian products.
- CRITICAL** Emulsifiers (e.g. E471, E472, E481) are verified as plant-derived, not animal-derived.
These codes can be sourced from pork fat — supplier confirmation is mandatory.
- Colourants and food dyes have been reviewed for halal permissibility.
E120 (carmine/cochineal) is insect-derived and not halal permissible.
- CRITICAL** Gelatine, if used in any form (coating, capsule, confectionery), is halal-certified or replaced.
- WATCH OUT** Fermentation-derived ingredients (vitamins, enzymes, yeast extracts) have been assessed.
Growth media used in fermentation may contain non-halal substances.
- A full ingredient inventory with supplier specification sheets is maintained.

2 MANUFACTURING & CROSS-CONTAMINATION CONTROLS

Shared lines are a critical audit focus

- CRITICAL** Production lines are dedicated to halal products OR validated clean-down procedures are documented.
Auditors will request cleaning records — a verbal policy is not sufficient.
- CRITICAL** Vegetarian/vegan products are not produced on lines that also handle alcohol-containing products.
- Storage areas for halal and non-halal ingredients are physically separated and clearly labelled.
- WATCH OUT** Packaging materials (inks, adhesives, coatings) have been reviewed for halal compliance.
Some inks and adhesives contain animal-derived shellac or non-halal solvents.
- Cleaning agents and sanitisers used in the facility do not contain haram substances.

YOUR READINESS SCORE GUIDE

90 - 100% ticked

Certification-ready — contact NHASA to lodge your application today.

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3 LABELLING, CLAIMS & BRAND INTEGRITY

Incorrect halal claims carry legal and reputational risk

- CRITICAL** No halal logo or claim appears on any product without a current, valid halal certificate.
Unauthorised use of halal logos is a serious compliance breach — and a legal liability.
- WATCH OUT** All 'vegan' and 'plant-based' product claims have been reviewed in the context of halal compliance.
Vegan certification and halal certification are different — one does not substitute for the other.
- Ingredient labels accurately reflect all additives including processing aids.
Processing aids not declared on the label may still affect halal status.
- Packaging clearly identifies the product as halal certified with the NHASA mark post-certification.
- WATCH OUT** Any 'natural flavour' or 'natural colour' ingredient has a documented halal-compliant source.
'Natural' does not mean halal — source verification is required.

4 DOCUMENTATION & SUPPLIER VERIFICATION

Paper trail is audited — verbal assurances are not accepted

- CRITICAL** Valid halal certificates are on file for every ingredient and additive supplier.
Certificates must be current — expired supplier certs invalidate your own compliance.
- Supplier halal certificates reference a recognised halal certification body.
- A documented Halal Management System (HMS) or SOPs specific to halal are in place.
A general food safety system is not a substitute for a halal-specific HMS.
- Batch records link each finished product to specific ingredient lots and supplier certificates.
- A register of all approved halal suppliers is maintained and reviewed annually.

5 EXPORT & MARKET READINESS

For vegetarian exporters targeting Muslim-majority markets

- Target export markets have been identified — Malaysia, Indonesia, UAE, Saudi Arabia, GCC.
Each market has specific halal import requirements — confirm with NHASA before applying.
- WATCH OUT** Vegetarian and vegan claims are understood not to substitute for halal certification in export markets.
- Export documentation processes include provision for halal certificate endorsement.
- Products targeting the Malaysian market have been assessed against JAKIM halal food standards.
- Retail and food service buyers in target markets have confirmed halal certification is required.
Many Australian importers and distributors now require halal certification as a baseline listing condition.