

Exploring Kosher and  
Halal Food Markets

 **SURGE**

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## Background

Dr John Lever has been researching and writing about the production and consumption of halal and kosher food, particularly meat, for the last decade. He has carried out extensive empirical work applying a mixed methods approach using interviews, surveys and participant observation to investigate the changing nature of the global markets for halal and kosher food, with a specific focus on the regulatory environment and the impact of market expansion on business practices and consumers. The work is significant given the US kosher food market alone is estimated to be worth \$25 billion, while the global halal food market has been valued at US\$632 billion.

## Findings

Some of John's most significant research findings focus on the controversy surrounding the slaughter of animals for food and the wider provision of halal meat in European countries. Following a ban on the killing of animals that are not stunned before slaughter in Denmark, Muslim consumer demand for non-stunned meat increased, and John thus advised against a similar ban in the UK. His subsequent work demonstrates that ongoing controversy about the volume and visibility of non-stunned meat in the UK results from a lack of meat market transparency, inaccurate media reporting and discretionary business practices, which create the misleading impression that most halal meat in the UK comes from non-stunned animals, when around 80% actually comes from stunned animals.

John's research also explores the role of certification bodies and businesses in regulating and labelling halal and kosher meat, as well as the wider impact of these regulatory practices on businesses working in different regional and international contexts. While the expanding global markets for religiously certified food products present many export options for British businesses, John's work demonstrates that these opportunities can be undermined by public and political opinion, consumer anxiety, meat market fraud and by concerns about reductions in animal welfare standards.

## Impact

John's on-going engagement with associations, certification bodies and businesses has resulted in a range of impacts that stretch far beyond academia and change the way key stakeholders think about halal and kosher food.

He has been instrumental in influencing policy development at the British Veterinary Association (BVA), advising on their strategies and approaches to banning non-stunned meat in the UK, and he continues to be consulted on policy as an expert advisor in this area. John is regularly invited to BVA campaign meetings, contributes to the Association's blog, and in 2018 he gave a keynote address at the BVA Annual Congress in London. The BVA note that his work is important in *"ensuring wider understanding among our staff and members of the social, cultural and religious framework in which we situate our policy on non-stun slaughter"*.

Additionally, the Halal Food Authority (HFA) in London has commended John's work for outlining the social, economic and religious parameters within which UK business must work within the global halal industry. John attends HFA events and he is helping major British food businesses to understand the pros and cons of certification in order to make sense of the global opportunities halal and kosher food markets present for producers of meat and non-meat products in the post-Brexit period.

More generally, John is working with UK food producers and retailers to advise how they can respond to increasing anxiety surrounding non-stunned meat among religious and non-religious consumers.