

Annotated Code of Maryland – Commercial Law Article

Title 14. Miscellaneous Consumer Protection Provisions

Subtitle 36. Halal Food Products

§ 14-3601. Definitions

- (a) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.
- (b) “Advertisement” has the meaning stated in § 13-101 of this article.
- (c) “Disclosure statement” means the form provided by the Attorney General for the purpose of disclosing to consumers practices relating to the preparation, handling, and sale of any unpackaged food represented to be halal.
- (d) “Division” means the Division of Consumer Protection of the Office of the Attorney General.
- (e) (1) “Food” or “food product” means any food, food product, or food preparation, whether:
 - (i) Raw, solid, or liquid; or
 - (ii) Prepared for human consumption.
- (2) “Food” or “food product” includes:
 - (i) Any meat, meat product, or meat preparation; and
 - (ii) Any poultry or poultry product.
- (f) “Halal” means prepared or processed in accordance with Islamic religious requirements.
- (g) “Meat” includes any meat product or meat preparation.

(h) "Person" includes an individual, corporation, business trust, statutory trust, estate, trust, partnership, association, two or more persons having a joint or common interest, or any other legal or commercial entity.

(i) (1) "Represents to the public" means any direct or indirect statement, oral or written, and any letter, word, sign, emblem, insignia, or mark which could reasonably lead a consumer to believe that a representation is being made that the final food product sold to the consumer is halal.

(2) "Represents to the public" includes an advertisement.

§ 14-3602. Halal foods; disclosure statements

(a) (1) A person that represents to the public that any unpackaged food that is sold or served is halal shall prominently and conspicuously display on the premises on which the food is sold or served a complete disclosure statement.

(2) The Division shall:

(i) Develop a form for disclosure statements; and

(ii) Make the form available to any person on request.

(3) The disclosure statement shall:

(i) Be understandable and written in simple and readable plain language;

(ii) Disclose to the public the basis for a representation that any unpackaged food sold or served is halal, including a specification of practices relating to the preparation, handling, and sale of the food; and

(iii) Contain any additional information or conform to any additional requirements that the Division considers reasonable and necessary to carry out the provisions of this subtitle.

(4) A person that displays a disclosure statement in accordance with this section shall:

(i) Retain a copy of the disclosure statement, and any amendment to the disclosure statement, for at least 3 years from the date on which the person no longer represents to the public that any unpackaged food that is sold or served on the premises is halal; and

(ii) Provide a copy of the disclosure statement to the Division within 2 business days after the person's receipt of a request from the Division for a copy of the disclosure statement.

(5) A person shall conform its practices with respect to the sale or serving of unpackaged food that is represented to the public as halal to the standard displayed in the disclosure statement.

(b) A person may not sell or offer for sale any food represented to the public as halal, whether for consumption in the person's place of business or elsewhere, if, in the same place of business, the person also offers for sale any food, not represented to the public as halal, unless the person includes on each window sign and display advertisement in block letters at least 4 inches high the words "halal and nonhalal food sold here" or, as to the sale of meat alone, "halal and nonhalal meat sold here".

(c) A person may not sell or offer for sale any food product, whether for consumption in the person's place of business or elsewhere, and falsely represent it to the public as halal.

(d) A person may not falsely represent, with intent to defraud, any food product or the contents of any package or container to be halal, by having or permitting to be inscribed on the package or container the word "halal" in English.

(e) A person may not display for sale, with intent to defraud, any food represented to the public as halal, whether for consumption in the person's place of business or elsewhere, if, in the same show window or other location on or in the place of business, the person also displays any food not represented to the public as halal, unless the person displays over the halal and nonhalal food signs that read, in block letters at least 4 inches high, "halal food" and "nonhalal food", respectively, or, as to the display of meat alone, "halal meat" and "nonhalal meat", respectively.

(f) (1) In this subsection, "Arabic character" means:

(i) Any Arabic word or letter; or

(ii) Any symbol, emblem, sign, insignia, or other mark that simulates an Arabic word or letter.

(2) In connection with any place of business that sells or offers for sale any food, a person may not display, whether in a window, door, or other location on or in the place of business, in any handbill or other printed matter distributed in or outside of the place of business, or otherwise in any advertisement, any Arabic characters, or any other representation to the public that the place of business sells or offers for sale halal food or meat, unless the person also displays in conjunction with the Arabic characters or other representation, in English, letters of at least the same size as the Arabic characters, the words “we sell halal meat and food only”, “we sell nonhalal meat and food only”, or “we sell both halal and nonhalal meat and food”, as appropriate.

(g) Possession of nonhalal food in any place of business advertising the sale of halal food only is presumptive evidence that the person in possession offers the nonhalal food for sale with intent to defraud.

§ 14-3603. Misrepresentations regarding Halal food prohibited

A person may not:

(1) Willfully mark, stamp, tag, brand, label, or in any other way or by any other means of identification represent, or cause to be marked, stamped, tagged, branded, labeled, or represented, as halal a food product that is not halal;

(2) Willfully remove, deface, obliterate, cover, alter, or destroy, or cause to be removed, defaced, obliterated, covered, altered, or destroyed, the original slaughterhouse plumba or any other mark, stamp, tag, brand, label, or any other means of identification affixed to food products to indicate that those food products are halal; or

(3) Knowingly sell, dispose of, or have in the person's possession, for the purpose of resale to another person as halal:

(i) Any food product not having affixed to the food product the original slaughterhouse plumba or any other mark, stamp, tag, brand, label, or other means of identification employed to indicate that the food product is halal; or

(ii) Any food product to which the slaughterhouse plumba, mark, stamp, tag, brand, label, or other means of identification has been fraudulently affixed.

§ 14-3604. Violations as unfair or deceptive trade practice; enforcement

A violation of this subtitle is:

- (1) An unfair or deceptive trade practice within the meaning of Title 13 of this article; and
- (2) Subject to the enforcement and penalty provisions contained in Title 13 of this article.