

PRESS RELEASE



19 November 2004

. Seminar addresses food safety and illegal imports

Hackney Council is teaming up with other organisations to provide help for the Muslim community seeking safe Halal food.

Halal Food Safety

Suleymaniye Mosque and UK Turkish Islamic Cultural Centre Trust
212-216 Kingsland Road, London, E2 8AX

Saturday 27 November, 1.30pm

All welcome to attend.

Journalists - please RSVP with Mary Anna Wright 020 8356 3359

Talks include:

Is your meat and food Halal?
Halal food crime in the UK
Hackney's meat safety and Halal food project

Among the speakers are representatives from Hackney Council, the Food Standards Agency, the Health Protection Agency and the Muslim Council of Britain.

In the case of meat this means it must have been produced, transported and stored in accordance with the Fresh Meat (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1995 as amended.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) will bring their mobile information unit as part of a campaign to raise awareness of the foods that cannot be legally brought back to the UK.

Cllr Jessica Crowe, Hackney Council's Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Environment, said:

There is a lot of evidence to show that a large percentage of the meat sold as Halal has been mis-described. This is not only a health issue, but a cultural concern since Halal food should conform to Islamic law. This event aims to educate both traders and consumers especially from the Muslim community on how to get genuine Halal food.

'Hackney Council will continue to target sellers peddling meat which is unfit for consumption or misdescribed as Halal. Anyone caught engaging in such activities should be aware that they can be prosecuted. In Hackney we have removed significant amount of wrongly described meat and illegally imported foodstuff from the human food chain. This conference will bring together experts from across the country to discuss these important issues.'

The event also welcomed by Dr Ahmed Al Dubayan, Director General the London Central Mosque Trust and the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC):

'I would like to congratulate Hackney Council for their achievements, the Muslim community is very grateful for the hard work by Hackney's team which is evident everywhere in the Borough especially in Ridley Road market. ICC will continue to support the work of Hackney Council, FSA, and DEFRA to stamp out the illicit trade in unfit meat which often mis-described as Halal.'

Programme

1.30pm Recitation of the Holy Qur'an

Imam Burhan Aygun, UK Turkish Islamic Cultural Centre

1.40pm Welcome

Dr Hasan Gumusoglu, Chariman Suleymaniye Mosque and UK Turkish Islamic Cultural Centre

1.50pm Message from the Islamic Cultural Centre

Dr Ahmad Al-Dubayan, Director General ICC

2pm Hackney Council, opening address

Cllr Jessica Crowe, Deputy Mayor, Hackney Council

2.10pm Halal food crime in the UK

Mr John Pointing, Barrister Field Court Chambers and Senior Lecturer, Kingston University

2.45pm Hackney Council's meat safety and halal food project

Mr Andrew Foster, Head of Environmental Health, Hackney Council

3pm Is your food and meat halal?

Dr Yunes Teinaz, Senior Environmental Health Officer, Hackney Council and Health and Management Adviser to ICC

3.15pm Illegally imported food

Mr Richard Robinson, Principal Environmental Health Officer, Hackney Council

3.30pm The Food Standard Agency's position

Mr Shaheen Zar, Head of Diversity, Food Standards Agency

3.45pm - Halal meat and food

Dr A Majid Katme, Health and Medical Committee, Muslim Council of Britain

4pm Halal food science and religion

Dr Adel Abbas, Consultant Microbiologist

4.15pm The way forward

Dr Shuja Shafi, Chair, Health and Medical Committee, Muslim Council of Britain and Consultant Microbiologist Health Protection Agency

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Notes for editors:

The event is organised by Hackney Council in association with the Sulemaniye Mosque and the UK Turkish Islamic Centre, the London Central Mosque Trust and the Islamic Cultural Centre, the Muslim Council of Britain and the Food Standards Agency

The Council will continue to take action in cases where sellers are peddling meat which is unfit for consumption or misdescribed as Halal. Anyone caught engaging in such activities should be aware that they can be prosecuted.

All food businesses are required under the Food Safety Act 1990 to ensure all food purchased for sale to the public is fit for human consumption and not misdescribed.