

Halaal certification arm in spotlight

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7 Feb 2012

The Muslim Judicial Council's halaal certification organisation will be placed under the microscope by an independent review panel soon.

The panel is to meet this week to "critically analyse the structure and operations" of the Muslim Judicial Council Halaal Trust after the uproar sparked by the Orion meat debacle.

The scandal unravelled in the Cape Town High Court last year when film of employees of Orion Cold Meat Storage relabelling pork hearts as halaal boneless veal hearts were handed in as evidence by, among others, the SA National Halaal Authority.

Orion's MD, Patrick Gaertner, said it was Heinrich van Staden, a former business associate, and Van Staden's brother-in-law who had told staff to relabel the meat. He also claimed that the pair tried to sabotage his company.

In November, Orion conceded that the relabelling took place on its premises. It cut ties with Van Staden and his brother-in-law, and made an undertaking that "no such acts would take place on its premises" again.

Before the litigation was resolved, the Muslim Judicial Council suspended "all certification of Orion Products until the matter has been cleared".

The council came under fire in the media and from Muslim communities, which called for it to be disbanded.

It was because of the concern of members of the Muslim community about the integrity of what they are consuming that lawyers Zahir Williams and Noor Kapdi offered to establish the independent review panel.

Source: *The Times*