

## Halal award a boon for NZ meat

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The New Zealand meat industry is expected to grow significantly after the Agriculture and Forestry Ministry won the award for best service provider at the World Halal Forum in Malaysia last week.

"This award will definitely put the New Zealand halal meat industry in a better position to market New Zealand meat to the Muslim market with confidence," said Taoufik Elidrissi, director of the New Zealand Islamic Development Training Board.

"It is something that is really useful for the New Zealand meat industry. It's worth millions of dollars."

It is the first time a non-Muslim country has won the award, and comes a year after MAF implemented the Animal Products (Overseas Market Access Requirements for Halal Assurances) Notice.

"To have a government system set up in New Zealand for halal, that's a big step. Even Muslim countries don't have that," Mr Elidrissi said.

The systems began on March 3 last year, redefining the process of halal meat production and certification in New Zealand, overseeing the standards that are in place to ensure meat is prepared in the manner prescribed by Islamic law.

The award was accepted by Dr Tony Zohrab, MAF director of market access, alongside New Zealand's High Commissioner to Malaysia, David Pine.

"The award will create further opportunities for the New Zealand meat industry down the track," said Dr Zohrab.

"It recognises the work that the ministry has done with halal and the meat industry, and it puts us in a better place in the future."

The awards were very important in Malaysia, and there would be a lot of media coverage of the event, Dr Zohrab said.

Foreign affairs and trade principal adviser Wade Armstrong was also optimistic that there would be further growth in the industry.

"I think it's a positive step," he said. "But we will have to wait to see what that means in monetary terms."

Mr Elidrissi said the production of halal food for export formed a significant part of New Zealand's dairy and meat exports, and New Zealand had to evolve its halal system to meet the requirements of the Islamic world.

The sixth world Halal Forum awards ceremony attracted more than 1000 people from over 40 countries.

**- Manawatu Standard**