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<https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3354824/inside-chinas-unexpected-rise-global-halal-export-powerhouse>

Economy / China Economy

Inside China's unexpected rise as a global halal export powerhouse

Food, fashion and cosmetics have helped turn the country into a force in the fast-growing multi-trillion US dollar market

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Published: 9:59am, 26 May 2026 / Updated: 10:46am, 26 May 2026



A halal restaurant in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. Photo: Edmond So

China has emerged as a major player in the global [halal market](#), leveraging its manufacturing scale, logistics networks and trade links with Muslim-majority markets to expand exports, analysts said.

Home to about 25 million Muslims – including Hui, Uyghur, Kazakh and Dongxiang communities – China's halal industry had long been shaped by domestic demand. But the growth of online and offline distribution channels, together with rising demand from younger Muslim consumers worldwide, has accelerated a shift towards exports.

“It's fascinating that such a small halal market domestically has created an outsized player in the halal export industry, especially in a nation that does not have a unified halal food law like many in Southeast Asia,” said Humphrey Ho, president of consumer marketing group Helios Worldwide.

China was the largest exporter to the 57 member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2023, with total outbound shipments reaching US\$32.5 billion, according to the latest available data from market research firm DinarStandard. This put China ahead of India at US\$28.9 billion and Brazil at US\$26.9 billion.

China's halal-related exports span food, fashion, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, media and recreational goods, while the halal economy encompasses the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services in accordance with Islamic law. US consulting firm Frost & Sullivan estimated the sector could grow to between US\$9.5 trillion and US\$10.5 trillion globally by 2030.

China's flourishing industry is drawing on familiar strengths – vast manufacturing capacity, competitive pricing and well-developed distribution channels – as it expands exports to Muslim-majority markets across Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Central Asia.

Analysts said the country had strengthened transport links vital to the halal trade, including dedicated logistics hubs and cold-chain facilities, and had integrated export opportunities into its Belt and Road Initiative.

The rise of e-commerce has also amplified China's presence. Platforms by Alibaba Group Holding and JD.com have created dedicated halal sections, capitalising on the growth of online purchases.

Alibaba owns the South China Morning Post.

Halal food exports were benefiting from these supply-chain advantages, with processed foods and ingredients a major strength, said Ho of Helios Worldwide. The product range has expanded beyond traditional meat products to include ready-to-eat meals, frozen items, health foods, dairy goods and beverages.



One interesting trend [in China] is that halal is often associated with premium quality

Azmi Anees, American Halal Foundation

“In some cases, [US] companies find it easier or more cost-effective to source certain halal-certified ingredients and products from China than to source them locally,” said Azmi Anees, certification director at the American Halal Foundation, which has authorised nearly 500 Chinese companies.

Export growth could be further boosted by a broader expansion of China's halal food industry. The domestic halal food market was estimated at about US\$44.07 billion in 2025 and had grown at an average annual rate of more than 8 per cent, according to Beijing-based market consultancy Gonyn.

“One interesting trend [in China] is that halal is often associated with premium quality,” Anees said. “Many premium food products and even restaurants today in China carry halal certification because it is often linked not only to religious compliance but also to higher product standards, better controls and stronger market trust.”

Beyond food, fashion has become one of the most visible areas of China's expansion in Muslim consumer markets, according to DinarStandard's July 2025 report. Modest garments, including headscarves and abayas, have seen strong demand among Muslim consumers of affordable apparel.

The cosmetics segment, though still relatively small, has also emerged as a growth area, driven by social media influencers. Chinese brands such as [Sheglam](#) and retailers including KKV have expanded rapidly in Muslim consumer markets, helped by affordability, attractive packaging and strong online marketing, according to DinarStandard.

Yet credibility remains a critical hurdle to further growth. Zaynab el-Bernoussi, an associate professor of political science at the Africa Institute at the Global Studies University, said China's domestic halal certification system still lacked the prestige and recognition of those in Southeast Asian and Arab countries.

In China, certification is handled by government-backed Islamic associations and ethnic affairs bureaus at the local and provincial levels, resulting in standards that can differ from international norms. Bernoussi, who has studied Chinese efforts to expand the halal footprint in the Middle East and North Africa, said this remained one of the biggest barriers to further growth.

Even so, Anees of the American Halal Foundation said demand for halal certification among Chinese companies had risen sharply in recent years, signalling an industry trying to improve standards and build international trust.

That expansion could reshape the market beyond China, Bernoussi said. “China's growing of its halal exports makes the global halal market more competitive and diverse,” she added. “China's productive capacity can bring down prices of halal products.”

