

## **FDA HOSTS A COURTESY CALL FROM NATIONAL HALAL CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE.**

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020, received a courtesy call at the FDA Headquarters, Shashie Accra, from the National Halal Certification Committee (NHCC), who visited the Authority to introduce and discuss matters pertaining to the issuance of the Halal Certificates.

The NHCC is responsible for matters pertaining to the welfare and development of the Ghanaian Muslim. The committee explained its role in ensuring that, according to Islamic guidelines, Halal food is safe and not harmfully prepared. It does not contain non-halal and najis (unclean) ingredients and it is processed or manufactured using equipments that are not contaminated with alcoholic substances, pork or its by-products or cross- contamination of any of these. The Halal food preparation utilizes safety controls including the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) food safety system implemented by the FDA.

The work of the NHCC involves the inspection of a product from conceptualization to final production, considering analysis, added value and services associated with the product or company. They enforce that it conforms with the Islamic principles, esthetics, ethics and consumption laws.

The Committee recognizes that the FDA is the only mandated Government Agency responsible for the regulation of the Food and Beverage industries in Ghana, thus the visit is to strengthen the existing relationship. Furthermore, the committee sought support from the FDA in ensuring that the Halal certification process is formalized. This they believe would facilitate an increase in the registration of products said to be Halal with the NHCC, by all Food and Beverage companies including restaurants that produce or deal with meat, poultry or any beverage that could be 'contaminated' with alcohol based on their belief.

The NHCC emphasized that, food labeled Halal and restaurants with Halal certificate would provide foods that are permissible, lawful and clean for Muslims and non-Muslims to consume. The Committee pledged that they would ensure that all aspects of

preparation, processing, packaging and distribution of Halal foods are free from any unclean (pork, alcohol or unhygienic) materials.

Applauding the initiative of the NHCC, the Chief Executive Officer of the Authority, Mrs. Delese Darko said the duty of the FDA includes the authentication of any Halal certificate, Kosher or any other with timelines that would not impede the FDA's product registration process. She stressed on the public's right of choice and their decision to either consume Halal certified products or not.

She asked the NHCC to provide a sample of the Halal certificate, highlighting its security features so officials working under the FDA can have a detailed knowledge. The FDA made a commitment to inculcate the Halal certification into its guidelines such that if a product is claimed to be Halal, it must have a Halal certificate. Mrs. Darko said once the committee is able to satisfy its part of the process in certifying Halal products, the FDA would be willing to collaborate with the NHCC.