Trade-related Bottlenecks and Trade-Facilitating Measures on Critical Products to Combat COVID-19

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Background

Key message: Goods and inputs need to flow efficiently and expeditiously to support the rapid scaling up of COVID-19 production capacity worldwide. Therefore, trade policy matters!

Source: Information gathered during WTO organized events & Multilateral Leaders Task Force outreach with stakeholders.

Methodology: Compiling and categorizing possible bottlenecks and trade facilitating measures

Disclaimer: Information is presented in no particular order, and no judgement is made on the effect or significance of the reported bottlenecks.

Indicative list of trade-related bottlenecks and trade-facilitating measures on critical products to combat COVID-19

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See: Joint indicative list of critical vaccine inputs (07.2021)
Cross border movement
Exporting country

Standard export and transit procedures can take time (“business as usual” can be slow)

Export authorizations & licenses
SLOW TRACK
- Can also affect:
  - Exports to “fill & finish” manufacturing sites
  - Non-commercial samples for quality testing
  - Reagents and equipment used for clinical trials

Green Channel
Simplification / waiving of export procedures, e.g. requirements, licenses, certificates

FAST TRACK

Export prohibitions
Reduce / eliminate / waive Tariffs and other taxes (See also G/MA/W/168/Rev.1)

Tariffs and other taxes can be high

- Full implementation of the TFA
  - Prearrival processing
  - Electronic payments, etc
- TFA plus measures
  - Digitalization & simplification
  - 24/7 working hours

Reduced or short working hours in some government agencies

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Importing country

Green Channel

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  (See also G/MA/W/168/Rev.1)

Constant public-private dialogue to identify and solve problems

Finished vaccines don’t face many problems…

… but vaccine inputs and ancillaries for vaccination probably do.
Regulatory approval
Registration and Authorization, Release

SLOW TRACK
- Rely on WHO EUL or approval by another NRA; share regulatory documentation between NRAs
- Different requirements for application and authorization

FAST TRACK
- Retesting of vaccines prior to release
- Use batch release from producing country
- +2 weeks
- +2-4 weeks

Many of the regulatory aspects have to be concluded before exportation takes place
Regulatory approval

Post-approval changes and scaling-up production

**SLOW TRACK**

- Post-approval changes: lack of accelerated process; uncoordinated between NRAs

**FAST TRACK**

- Expedite approval of new production sites and strengthen regulatory capacity
- +1 day – 2 months

Delay in approvals & inspections needed to scale up production

+ Less than a week

Enhance reliance; make scientific advice from NRAs to manufacturers publicly available
Regulatory approval

Donations

**SLOW TRACK**

- Full (re-) approval of donated vaccines

**FAST TRACK**

- Waive requirements for approval of donations – on each supply chain and facility

**DID NOT FINISH**

- + 2 days – 2 weeks

- Shelf-life expiry of vaccines doses

- Shelf-life of COVID vaccines is 6-9 months

- Is the country ready to vaccinate?

Vaccine administered
Emerging issues

Divergent approaches to approval of boosters

Variant vaccines – lack of guidance from NRAs

Mix and match approaches – liability, data

Shortages of ancillary materials – vials, vaccine vial monitors etc.

Preparation for growing volumes of COVID-19 vaccine delivered to developing Members, delivery timelines, e.g. cold storage capacity
Thank you!

Resources:

WTO Reports on COVID-19: Link

Indicative list of trade-related bottlenecks and trade-facilitating measures on critical products to combat COVID-19 (10.2021): Link

Summary of notified export restrictions and trade facilitating measures relating to the COVID-19 Pandemic (10.2021): Link

Infographic – The global race to vaccinate: Link