



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on December 31, 2022

Singapore Plans to Have at Least 5 Vaccine Plants 'By Next Pandemic'

SINGAPORE — Before Covid-19, Singapore did not have a single facility manufacturing finished vaccines. Nonetheless, over the past two years, five pharmaceutical companies have decided to establish plants projected to produce over a billion doses yearly in the city-state of around six million inhabitants.

The vaccines range from traditional types like live-attenuated and recombinant vaccines to those with mRNA technology, with the first slated to be unveiled as early as 2023.

Observers have credited the sudden influx of investments to experiences garnered during Covid-19. Pharmaceutical firms have seized on Covid-19 to expand worldwide while seeking more flexibility to churn out vaccines for future pandemics.

BioNTech, one of the companies establishing a vaccine plant in Singapore, remarked that its plant would offer a “rapid response production capability for South-east Asia to address potential pandemic threats.”

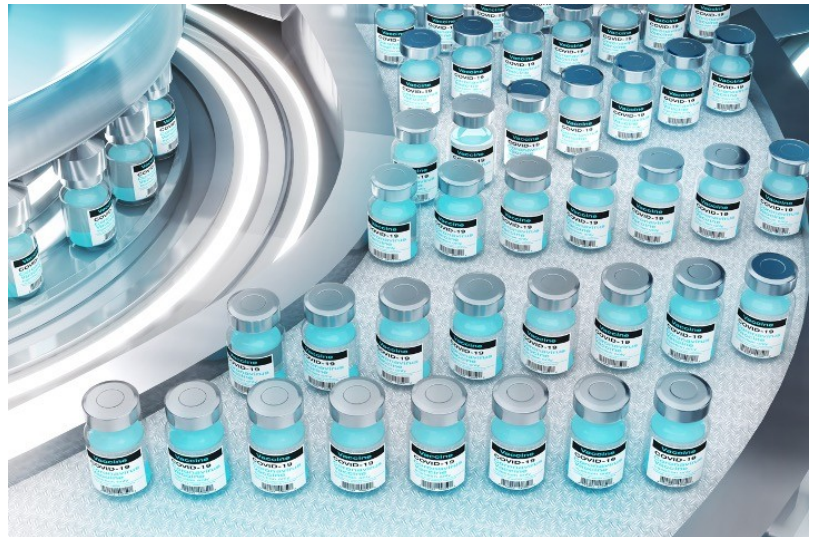
Professor Benjamin Seet, the deputy group chief executive at National Healthcare Group who directed Singapore’s efforts to procure the Covid-19 shots, said the nation’s small population is a plus point, as “our domestic needs are readily met and manufacturing capacity (can be) quickly directed to address regional demands and beyond.”

The Economic Development Board (EDB) of Singapore was also on the lookout for firms willing to develop and manufacture vaccines in the country, since this could ensure that Singapore would have access to vaccines during a pandemic.

Goh Wan Yee, EDB’s senior vice president in charge of healthcare, said: “The decision by several leading global pharmaceutical companies to locate their vaccine manufacturing facilities in Singapore is in line with our efforts to anchor more such activities here, to strengthen our pandemic resilience.”

Goh elaborated that the new facilities will “enhance our access to and cooperation with the producers of vaccines and therapeutics. In the event of future pandemics, these efforts will stand us in good stead to acquire vaccines for national needs while also supplying countries in the region.”

Trade and Industry Minister Gan Kim Yong told *The Straits Times*: “The past two years have seen us welcome significant investments from pharmaceutical players, which now include the manufacturing of vaccines. This is a good development for Singapore and will further strengthen our healthcare ecosystem and enhance the pandemic resilience of Singapore and the region by providing faster access



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to vaccines and therapeutics.”

“Coupled with continued efforts to build up our capabilities and talent pipeline in this space, these investments will enable us to enhance our position as a leading pharmaceutical hub in Asia and help us better deal with future pandemics,” he said.

On October 14, 2020, Thermo Fisher Scientific announced plans to do contract manufacturing of “fill and finish” for any type of vaccine, including the mRNA shots, with clients supplying the active ingredients.

The firm has constructed Singapore’s first large-scale high-speed sterile line for live virus vaccines. Once operational in 2023, the facility will have the capacity to make up to 30 million vaccine doses a month.

Also, on April 12, 2021, drugmaker Sanofi announced its plans for a digitally enabled plant that can make three to four different vaccines concurrently. The French juggernaut, which is among the top 10 pharmaceutical firms in the world with sales of US\$39 billion in 2021, will build an evolutive vaccine facility (EVF), one of two such facilities the company is constructing, with the other in France.

“The EVF will also be able to quickly switch its configuration towards one vaccine process to boost supply levels and adapt quickly to evolving public health emergencies, such as during a pandemic,” the company said.

Additionally, German-based BioNTech, which rose to fame when it joined Pfizer in making the world’s first Covid-19 shot, has taken over Novartis’ plant at the Singapore Tuas Biomedical Park, which it is transforming into a fully integrated mRNA manufacturing facility. The firm hopes to produce an array of novel mRNA vaccines and drugs for infectious diseases and cancer beginning in 2023. This highly automated plant is expected to make several hundred million doses of mRNA-based vaccines yearly, including its Covid-19 shots.

Its chief executive officer, Dr. Ugur Sahin, said that opening a plant in Singapore is an “important strategic step in building out our global footprint and capabilities” and expanding the firm’s ability to supply its shots and therapies around the world.

Hilleman Laboratories, a joint venture established in India in 2009 by pharmaceutical company MSD (Merck & Co.) and British charitable foundation Wellcome Trust, announced last year its plans to establish research and development facilities as well as production of biologics and vaccines at the Biopolis in Singapore. Its chief executive officer in Singapore, Dr. Raman Rao, said: “Singapore is an important base for Hilleman Laboratories to expand in the region and beyond, as we ramp up efforts to develop timely, novel and affordable vaccines and biologics for infectious diseases.”

Rao added that the company will offer “our expertise in vaccines and biologics to build local capabilities to address urgent public health challenges caused by vaccine-preventable diseases, some of which have pandemic potential.”

MSD, which came to Singapore in 1994, said in October 2022 that its latest expansion within its multi-product manufacturing hub in the Tuas region of Singapore will enable it to make more innovative medicines and vaccines to address the region’s demands. The American firm, which was established in 1891 and is the world’s oldest still-active pharmaceutical firm, is among the top 10 globally, with a revenue of US\$48.7 billion in 2021. This firm hopes to [produce its cervical cancer vaccine at the new plant](#) in Singapore.



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Since Covid-19 surfaced, pharmaceutical companies, government agencies, and the Singapore media have been repeating *ad nauseam* the merits of getting the Covid-19 shots. Such efforts to promote the “vaccines” come amid concerns from some segments of the population on the safety and effectiveness of these shots, as well as reports worldwide that the injections could lead to grave injury — and even death.



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