

WORLD LOCAL PRODUCTION FORUM

Enhancing access to medicines and other health technologies

Report of the First WLPF

21-25 June 2021



**World Health
Organization**

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Abbreviations

AI: artificial intelligence

COVID-19: 2019 coronavirus disease

DFIs: development finance institutions

EUA: Emergency Use Authorization

GMP: good manufacturing practices

LMICs: low- and middle-income countries

NRA: National Regulatory Authority

PPE: personal protective equipment

R&D: Research and Development

WHA: World Health Assembly

WLPF: World Local Production Forum

Introduction

The *World Local Production Forum: Enhancing access to medicines and other health technologies* (WLPF) brings the global community – foremost government leaders, industry associations, technology experts and innovators, civil society, the international community, and other stakeholders – together under the auspices of WHO to shape the development of local production and highlight the challenges and opportunities for the sector for public health impact.

For over two decades, there has been an increasing emphasis on the importance of local production and related technology transfer in the context of promoting equitable access to medicines and other health technologies. Many countries, particularly low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), are viewing local production as a strategy to improve timely access and safeguard health security; however, existing challenges remain, and new challenges have emerged. In the face of the current COVID-19 pandemic, global manufacturing capacity has been shown to be insufficient to meet global health needs, and diversifying manufacturing of health products geographically to complement existing production chains could contribute to addressing this issue.

This report summarizes the first World Local Production Forum which was held virtually from 21-25 June 2021. The Forum brought together over 70 speakers and panellists and was attended by delegates from over 100 countries, industry associations, finance providers, civil society groups, UN agencies and international partners. Topics that are key in promoting sustainable local production in the current COVID-19 situation and beyond were explored and discussed more deeply in the Forum: partnerships and cooperation business ecosystem, regulatory systems, licensing and technology transfer, financing, vaccines, and innovation, artificial intelligence (AI) and the digital revolution. The agenda of the first WLPF is available on the World Local Production Forum website.¹

Looking ahead, the WLPF will provide an ongoing platform to drive efforts to support and strengthen local production of health products in low- and middle-income countries, with support from the Local Production and Assistance Unit, WHO, as the WLPF Secretariat.

On the closing day of the first World Local Production Forum, it was announced that The Netherlands would be the hosting country of the next Forum. This secures it as a long-term mechanism to promote dialogue and decision-making to strengthen local manufacturing capacity and move towards the shared goal of universal access to health technologies.

¹ The WLPF website URL is: <https://www.who.int/initiatives/world-local-production-forum>.

Opening remarks, and Plenary Session: Accelerating local production through partnerships and cooperation

Key messages

- World leaders and heads of agencies resonated the local production agenda and the timely World Local Production Forum, especially in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic
- Collaboration and sustained collective actions supported by an effective governance mechanism are required to generate a synergized and coordinated approach in strengthening local production to improve access
- Regional approaches (e.g. regional manufacturing hub, pooled procurement) to address regulation, financing, skills development, infrastructure, scientific collaboration, fragmented local markets, the resilience of supply chain, etc. are important in the context of local production
- Sufficient resources need to be mobilized and allocated in promoting local production

The World Local Production Forum (WLPF) is a new WHO initiative focused on improving access to quality, safe and effective medicines. Benefits include strengthening health security as well as socioeconomic development through job creation, market development and boosting of research and development. Alongside this, there is an understanding that Member States must meet standards of quality, safety and effectiveness and that the local production capacity that is created and supported needs to be sustainable.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the dangers of concentrating production capacity in just a few countries or regions and is a

pandemic and the consequences of a fragile global supply system becoming clear. Those countries dependent on imports for the majority of their health products were particularly exposed – a factor which has heightened the pressing need to build and diversify local production capacity geographically.

Numerous speakers recognized that the WLPF has come at a timely moment, helping to strengthen production capacity where it exists and building it where it is lacking. It is understood that this process requires long term commitment from all stakeholders, leadership from governments, and collaboration across countries, companies, finance institutions and industrial development.

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