

## Important Bulletin: Please Read

### Coronavirus: the impact on the cleaning and hygiene supply chain

The coronavirus is having a significant impact on the cleaning and hygiene supply sector. CHSA members are now facing the most challenging trading conditions they have experienced.

The fragility of the 'just in time' supply chain combined with unprecedented demand for certain products and greatly reduced production capacity presents significant challenges. The uncertainty about whether the high volumes of products bought by customers has been used or allocated to stock compounds the challenge. Where previously demand was predictable, it is now uncertain.

Supply-side shortages are expected in biocides and virucides, gloves, disposable polythene aprons and non-woven cleaning wipes. Manufacturers are already reporting significant difficulties matching demand and in the search for alternative products, distributors need to be alert to product efficacy, aware of the risk of inferior product.

We are aware the decline in sales of many standard products is being offset by unprecedented demand for these products. With supply expected to be scarcer in the coming weeks and months the advice to distributors is:

- Plan now for shortages of these products; alert your customers.
- Protect your existing customers first. Meet their needs before taking on board new customers you may struggle to serve.
- Be careful about the commitments you make. Shortages in key areas are likely to make it difficult, if not impossible, to meet demand.

### Availability of cleaning & hygiene products

#### Trigger sprays and soap pumps

Consumption of cleaning products with trigger sprays has significantly increased during the lock down. The volume of trigger sprays consumed by the Away From Home market is small in comparison so manufacturers of the trigger spray itself are serving the consumer market first. The result is a foreseeable shortage of trigger spray products for the next six to 12 months. The issue is the same for soap pumps. The pumps primarily being manufactured in China and Italy has caused a shortage, likely to last for the remainder of the year.

#### Biocides, virucides and ethanol

**Biocides and virucides:** demand is exceptionally high, placing real pressure on the raw materials. This is at a time production capacity for these materials has declined. Chemical manufacturers are adapting, continually reformulating, but it is likely distributors will have increasing difficulty sourcing these products.

**Ethanol:** the supply of ethanol, the alcohol used in hand gels, is expected to significantly reduce. The extraordinary demand for alcohol hand gels, therefore, will far exceed the capacity of available ethanol production.

#### Cleaning wipes

The majority of disinfectant / antibacterial cleaning wipes are polypropylene (PP) based, a material also integral in the manufacture of face masks and other personal protective equipment. Demand is driving up the price of PP, making it not viable to manufacture non-woven wipes from this material.

#### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Problems in the supply of PPE are well known.

Major problems in the sourcing of nitrile disposable gloves are now predicted; already distributors are reporting a significant reduction in their availability. Production capacity was impacted first by the Chinese New Year and then the lock down in China and Malaysia, and manufacturers are indicating supply may cease very soon. Product can be air freighted into the UK now at a very high cost to meet current demand but, with supply being finite, it is believed this will simply result in severe shortages later. There is also a significant impact on the availability of vinyl and latex gloves.

Disposable single use aprons have seen a huge increase in demand. These have traditionally been made in the Far East, which brings supply chain challenges when demand goes up. UK production has restarted to meet the extra demand but is not keeping up with the national requirement.

