

BIOVAC to help make Pfizer/BioNTech COVID vaccine



South Africa, 21st July 2021 - Pfizer (PFE.N) and BioNTech (22UAY.DE) have struck a deal for South Africa's Biovac Institute to help manufacture around 100 million doses a year of their COVID-19 vaccine for the African Union, to "fill and finish" the vaccine, the final stages of manufacturing where the product is processed and put into vials. It does not cover the complicated processes of mRNA drug substance production, which Pfizer and BioNTech will do at their own facilities in Europe. It will make Biovac - a joint venture between the South African government and private sector partners - one of the few companies in Africa processing and distributing COVID-19 vaccines, and the first to do so using the mRNA technology.

African countries have some of the lowest vaccination rates worldwide, and many are dependent on global vaccine sharing scheme COVAX, which has struggled to deliver. Morena Makhoana, CEO at Cape Town-based Biovac, said Biovac aims to start "towards the second half of 2022" and then ramp up to maximum output of around 100 million doses a year by early 2023. Biovac would modify its plant by expanding the filling line and investing in new freezers, as the vaccine needs to be stored at -70 degrees Celsius. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, called the agreement a breakthrough in efforts to overcome vaccine inequity. He added, it entailed a shared investment of 200 million rand (\$13.6 million) in the coming six months. The World Health Organization last month chose a consortium including Biovac for a "tech transfer hub" in South Africa, part of efforts to give poor and middle-income countries the knowledge and licences to produce COVID-19 vaccines.

More information at <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/pfizerbiontech-strike-south-africa-covid-19-manufacturing-deal-with-biovac-2021-07-21/>; or <https://www.pfizer.com/news/press-release/press-release-detail/pfizer-and-biontech-announce-collaboration-biovac>; or <https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/eye-on-africa/20210722-covid-19-in-south-africa-biovac-to-help-manufacture-pfizer-biontech-vaccine>; or <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-07-21/pfizer-partners-with-biovac-to-boost-africa-s-vaccine-supply>