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Virus Outbreak: Taisugar, TTL ordered to produce more 75% alcohol

VIRUS PREVENTION: More than 8 million extra bottles of the alcohol product are expected to enter the market at an affordable price this week, the manufacturers said

By Dennis Xie / Staff writer, with CNA



The Executive Yuan has instructed state-run Taiwan Tobacco and Liquor Corp (TTL) and Taiwan Sugar Corp (Taisugar) to increase their production lines for 75 percent alcohol, hoping to fix a lack of stock by this week amid fears over the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

The coronavirus has led to a shortage of surgical masks and alcohol-based sanitizers containing at least 75 percent alcohol in Taiwan, with media reports that some people have been stealing from hospitals after failing to purchase sanitizers.

TTL management said that its staff have been working around the clock since the end of the Lunar New Year holiday.

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A woman and her children leave a store in Taipei on Thursday carrying bottles of alcohol.

Photo: CNA

To meet rising demand, the Executive Yuan has instructed the two state-run manufacturers to increase production lines for 75 percent alcohol, on top of their existing production lines for 95 percent alcohol.

For every 10 bottles of 95 percent alcohol produced, 13 to 15 bottles of 75 percent alcohol could be made, which would rid customers of the need to dilute, said a TTL manager who asked to remain anonymous.

Producing more bottles would mean that more people could buy them, the manager added.

A Taisugar manager said that the company only has one production line for 95 percent alcohol.

It would consider outsourcing the production of 75 percent alcohol and is planning later this month to ship 200,000 to 300,000 350ml bottles, the

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Taisugar manager said.

TTL is to start production of 75 percent alcohol at its factory in Pingtung County, followed by another three to four factories across Taiwan, depending on how the situation develops, said a second TTL manager, who also asked to remain anonymous.

To ensure availability, TTL would produce 330ml, 110ml and 60ml bottles of 75 percent alcohol, with the first batch expected to be delivered by its Pingtung factory today, the second TTL manager said, adding that production capacity is 2,000 to 3,000 dozen bottles per day.

Taisugar and TTL promised to sell 75 percent alcohol at an affordable price, adding that factories would not cease production, so there would be no need to stock up on the product.

More than 8 million additional bottles of alcohol-based sanitizers are expected to enter the market this week, the state-run manufacturers said.

Separately, Minister of Economic Affairs Shen Jong-chin (沈榮津) on Thursday said that the nation was producing 3.2 million surgical masks per day, but hopes to boost the figure to 3.9 million this week and 4.6 million next week.

The Executive Yuan on Jan. 31 also approved a plan to build 60 production lines to make an additional 6 million masks per day to meet demand.

Adding the projected capacity of 4.6 million masks per day, that would eventually bring total production to more than 10 million masks per day, hopefully by early next month, Shen said.



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