

Fighting back: Fonterra, Danone, Beingmate join COVID-19 product push for sanitisers, face masks

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Danone Aqua factory in Indonesia has been making hand sanitiser bottles. ©Danone Aqua

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Nutrition businesses such as Fonterra and Danone are devoting resources into making hygiene products, such as ethanol and face masks, to help meet the exceptionally high demand in light of COVID-19 spread.

From face masks, hand sanitisers, to disinfectants, global demand for these essentials has been pushed up to an unprecedented level.

N95 respirator maker 3M said in late March that it planned to double production of its N95 masks to 2bn within 12 months.

The company behind Dettol and Lysol disinfectants, Reckitt Benckiser, also told *South China Morning Post* that its factories have been running at maximum capacity and shifts were added to meet the soaring demand.

Against the backdrop, nutrition businesses across APAC are helping meet the urgent need for hygiene goods.

Hand sanitisers

Fonterra is one example, where it supplies high-grade ethanol for local companies which are producing sanitiser products.

It said in early April that it was manufacturing an additional 220k litres, on top of the 375k litres that were made available to the sanitiser manufacturers earlier on.

It has been working with customers who use ethanol but not for the purpose of making sanitisers, to see if the stock could be redirected.

To date, Fonterra, together with its customers, have provided 1m litres of ethanol for making sanitisers. This is as good as 5.7m bottles of 250ml hand sanitisers.

"We will continue to work with our distributor and transport providers to improve supply chain efficiencies and increase the weekly volume available of ethanol available to producers from less than 85k litres a week to more than 250k litres a week," Peter Motion, head of Fonterra's ethanol business, Lactanol, said.

Holista Colltech, Malaysia's homegrown biotech firm and dietary supplement brand owner, has also launched a hand sanitiser, NatShield, that claims to be effective in combating over 170 deadly pathogens, including previously known coronaviruses.

On April 3, it was announced that it would team up with fellow ASX-listed Skin Elements to launch an all-natural non-alcohol-based sanitiser.

The sanitiser combines Skin Elements' new skin-sensitive anti-microbial formula with a proprietary active ingredient – Path-Away – distributed by Holista.

Another company involved in the good cause is Danone Indonesia.

Its Danone Aqua factory has been producing 13,000 250ml bottles for organisations making hand sanitisers.

Mask-up

In China, infant formula maker Beingmate has been producing face masks since mid-March at factory normally used by its infant diaper business unit.

According to local media *Sohu*, the company has even imported two high-speed ultrasound 3D face masks production line for manufacturing both adult and children face masks. Daily production could top 500,000.

On April 1, Want-Want, the maker of children's snacks and beverages said on its Weibo account that it would launch new products – adults', children's face masks and disinfectant sprays included – on May 11.

On the other hand, ASX-listed TCM firm Eagle Health said in early March that it had added medical mask production lines to its factory in Xiamen, China.

It has since secured its first order from Hainan Yiling Medical, a subsidiary of Yiling Hospital Management Group, for 3.2m masks.



Snack brand Want-Want produces face masks for adults and kids