

US pharmaceutical firm Moderna to build plant in Africa

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US pharmaceutical giant Moderna announced Thursday it would build a plant in Africa, as pressure mounts on drugmakers to help ramp up COVID-19 vaccine production in areas that have received fewer doses.

The biotech firm said it "will build a state-of-the-art mRNA facility in Africa with the goal of producing up to 500 million doses of vaccines each year."

Moderna said earlier this year it would increase global production of its mRNA [vaccine](#), and in August announced it would build a Canadian plant, as manufacturers struggled to meet soaring demand for COVID-19 shots worldwide.

However, the statement did not say where the facility would be built or give a date for its initiation—only that the company "expects to begin a process for country and site selection soon."

The [pharmaceutical firm](#) said it anticipated investing up to \$500 million in the new plant, which is "expected to include drug substance manufacturing," as well as the opportunity for packaging capabilities.

"This may help, but there is a distribution issue with a whole infrastructure that is not in place," Jean-Jacques Le Fur, an analyst at Bryan, Garnier & Co. told AFP.

The announcement comes as US pharmaceutical firms face increasing

pressure to lift patents on their coronavirus vaccines to help produce doses in regions where fewer have been received.

The World Health Organization's office for Africa said that half of the continent's countries that have received vaccines have fully inoculated less than two percent of their populations.

In July, Pfizer Laboratories and BioNTech announced that they were partnering with the Biovac Group to bottle their serum in Cape Town, South Africa, beginning in 2022.

However, the creation of the messenger RNA—the most delicate and crucial step—will continue to be carried out in Europe.

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