

22nd March 2020

Re: Continued production of essential medical products and materials

As we all face this extended period of public health crisis across Europe we, The Sterile Barrier Association, the European trade association for the Sterile Barrier manufacturers industry, are working tirelessly to ensure our members are able to provide their continued help and support.

The availability of safe sterile medical products to doctors' offices and hospitals is an essential element in the fight against COVID-19.

Our members are working actively with Member States healthcare services and medical device manufacturers across Europe; to ensure continued provision of essential medical products and materials, and to tackle any bottleneck in their supply chain. These products include: Sterile Barrier Systems, sealing equipment and maintenance services to hospitals for the reprocessing of surgical instruments; Sterile Barrier packaging and packaging machines to Medical Device Manufacturers; and the manufacture of Microbial barrier materials to enable the production of surgical gowns and drapes.

It is of fundamental importance that the industry's manufacturing facilities stay open and functioning in order to supply the necessary Medical packaging that Medical Device companies and Hospitals need to operate through this health crisis. We have written to the President of the European Commission to fully support their guidance to the Member States that borders remain open. The free movement of goods and specialist materials is vital in maintaining the manufacture and supply of these essential products across the Member States.

We have all seen the unprecedented queues at stores with the resulting empty shelves as consumers attempt to provide for their families. Supplies of even the basics, such as staple foods, toilet paper, and hand sanitiser quickly becoming short in supply. We are concerned that the need for increased production of medical supplies to our hospitals and doctors, should be recognised with a similar degree of urgency to that seen in the food industry. Our members stand ready to assist in all ways possible to increase supply of Sterile Barrier materials and packaging to ensure Hospitals and Device manufacturers can continue to operate as Europe faces this crisis.

We have requested the Commissions support in working with the Member States to ensure that production facilities manufacturing these products, together with their critical suppliers, have the assistance and dispensation to enable them to be fully operational in the interest of public health.

We remain at your disposal throughout this difficult period.



Patrick Sparkes
Director General

Annex: Continued production of essential medical and health care products

The SBA represents the entire value chain that leads to Sterile Barrier Systems and Microbial Barrier materials that are essential in the fight against COVID-19.

Our members are active in the provision of Sterile Barrier Systems and training, both of which are paramount in the fight against the spread of infection and diseases. Amongst the products manufactured are:

- Sterile Barrier Materials for Protective Clothing and Surgical Drapes
- Sterile Barrier Systems and sealing equipment for Hospitals for the reprocessing and packaging of Surgical sets supplied to the Operating Room (OR) and Intensive Care Units (ICU).
- Microbial Barrier Packaging and packaging machines for Medical Device Manufacturers designed to support all kinds of Sterilisation processes, ensuring single use surgical instruments may be safely stored ready for use when needed.

Sterile Barrier Systems and Microbial barrier materials are extensively used in the medical field and in other sectors as protection against biological agents. They deliver critical safety properties, such as prevention against infections and diseases. Sterile Barrier Systems are designed to provide long term protection for the sterilised product, giving both the professional healthcare worker and the patient, confidence that the products will be safe and ready for use when required. With today's multi-drug resistant strains of bacteria and virus, these vitally important products can help in the fight against cross-contamination and the spread of infection in a medical or surgical environment. Because they are used only once and incinerated after use, the need for handling is avoided and the spread of contaminants is minimised.

Uses include:

- Medical Device packaging
- Procedure Packs
- CSR Sterilisation Wraps (Central Sterilisation and Reprocessing)
- Drapes, Wraps and Packs
- Materials for OR and ICU single-use protection such as caps, gowns, shoe covers & head covers

Microbial Barrier materials and Sterile Barrier Systems were widely deployed to deal with previous epidemic scares, including the 2003 SARS outbreak, the wave of Bird Flu that swept through south-east Asia in 2005 and during the Swine Flu panic of 2009. In all cases and again during the Ebola outbreak of 2014-15, these products supported the public health measures employed to contain the epidemics. This was achieved by ensuring both protection at the point of use and also enabling the professional to dramatically reduce the risk of cross contamination and further spread of the disease.

Conclusion

In light of the current pandemic, we request that the Sterile Barrier Systems Industries' value chain be recognized as a critical sector, and that it be given the means to continue ensuring production at all its facilities for the benefit of the Public Health at large.

About the SBA

The Sterile Barrier Association (SBA) is the European trade association for companies who produce Sterile Barrier Systems (SBS) and associated equipment and accessories for the healthcare industry.

All members must be a manufacturer of sterilisation products or provide relevant services and provide these products and services to the European Healthcare Industry.

SBA Members*:

Ahlstrom-Munksjö Group	La-Co Tempil
All-Flex	M-Pack
Amcor Europe	Neenah Coldenhove
Arvand Fan Pars	Nelipak
Billerud Korsnas	Oliver
Bolsaplast	Paxxus
Coveris Flexibles	PMS
Dupont de Nemours	Sterimed
Encaplast	Südpack Medica
Ghatway Medical Supplies	Westfield Medical
Halyard Health	Wipak
Hawo	VP
Healthmark Industries	4A Medikal
Key Surgical	

* - Many of the members have multiple manufacturing facilities across the Member States from Ireland in the West to virtually all Member States in the central zone including Scandinavia, through to Eastern states such as Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria. This means the free movement of goods across borders is vital.