

China changes its rules again on the export of medical supplies.



Checking masks last week at Naton Medical Group, a company in Beijing that makes medical equipment. Wang Zhao/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

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China has again changed its regulations on the export of N95 respirators, surgical masks, ventilators, infrared thermometers and other medical supplies, making it slightly easier to sell them overseas but also putting on importers more of the burden for quality checks.

Millions of coronavirus testing kits, as well as smaller numbers of respirators and other equipment, have been piling up at factories and airports in China as companies and Beijing regulators try to sort out unclear Chinese customs rules. The new rules resolve some but not all of the confusion.

Beijing officials have been [struggling for a month to strike the right balance](#) between preventing the export of unsafe products and not impeding the delivery of better-quality supplies to overseas hospitals. European countries and Canada have [complained of shoddy goods](#), especially respirators and test kits.

China ordered nearly a month ago that medical supplies could be exported only if they met Chinese technical standards for quality. That posed a problem: many supplies had been manufactured for years in China to meet the technical standards of foreign countries, which are often different.

The new Chinese customs agency rules issued late Saturday night say that goods may meet either Chinese or foreign quality standards. But for the first time, the rules require that not only the exporter but also the importer overseas must attest that the goods meet quality standards before the items are allowed to leave China.

Beijing officials “don’t want to take any responsibility or liability for counterfeit or defective products,” said Omar Allam, the chief executive of a trade consulting firm based in Ottawa.

China on Sunday reported 11 new coronavirus cases in the mainland for the previous day. The latest official tally recorded a total of 82,827 confirmed cases of the virus, including 4,632 deaths.