

## Prognosis

# Novartis Seeks Partners to Make More Covid-19 Vaccines, Therapies

By [Naomi Kresge](#) and [Francine Lacqua](#)28 de enero de 2021 6:49 GMT-3 *Updated on 28 de enero de 2021 8:36 GMT-3*

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## Novartis CEO Says Firm Can Help Other Companies Make Vaccines

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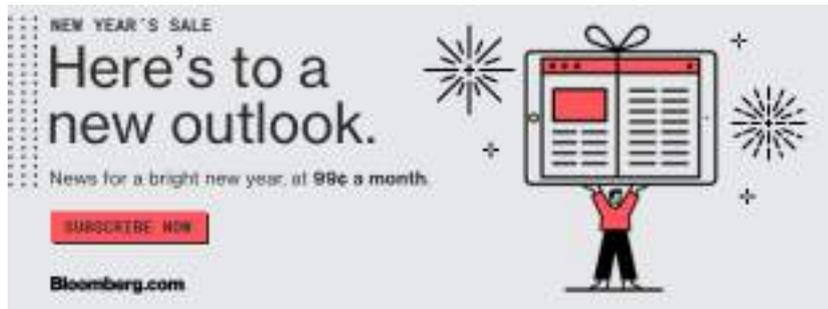
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[Novartis AG](#) is in talks to help produce other companies' coronavirus vaccines or treatments as the industry mobilizes to boost supply amid fights over access.

The company is “in conversations with a range of different players,” Chief Executive Officer Vas Narasimhan said on Bloomberg TV, with an agreement possible in the coming days or weeks. “We have production capacity across our network that we’re willing to make available,” he said, for everything from monoclonal antibodies to vaccine production.

The talks come amid a global scramble for vaccines that’s raised [tensions](#) as countries seek to nab supplies in the hope of securing a way out of the one-year-old pandemic. [Sanofi](#) threw its manufacturing weight behind Pfizer Inc.’s and BioNTech SE’s vaccine on Wednesday, saying it would give access to a production facility in Frankfurt after its own research stumbled.

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Merck KGaA is also considering several ways to help BioNTech increase capacity, including in the so-called “fill and finish” stage of vaccine production, a spokesman said. The company already supplies raw materials and research products to more than 50 coronavirus vaccine developers, including BioNTech.

Germany’s Health Ministry has been talking with companies about increasing production, a spokesman said in an e-mail earlier this month. A spokeswoman for BioNTech declined to comment on potential partnerships.

### Tension Over Supplies

Pfizer and BioNTech cut shipments of their vaccine, which was the first to market at the end of last year, to some governments this month due to renovations at a factory in Belgium. Then AstraZeneca Plc -- which may get EU approval for its shot on Friday -- announced delays to previously scheduled deliveries to the continent.

The supply crunch has raised political tension between the European Union and Astra, which rejected demands that it take supplies from its U.K. factories to increase doses going to the bloc.

Novartis’s Narasimhan, a physician who once led the company’s vaccines unit, has some personal experience being in the hot seat over pandemic shots. He oversaw the Novartis response to the H1N1 swine flu pandemic in 2009 and was called to testify before the House Oversight Committee about why vaccines weren’t ready on time.

### Road Bumps

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“The early stages of scaling up from a few tens of thousands of doses to hundreds of millions of doses in general is a challenging scale-up,” he said in a separate interview. “It’s not surprising that we have some bumps in the road. What’s important right now is that we manage public expectations appropriately, and then I think the supplies will start to come through.”

The fact that there are several shots available so soon into the pandemic is already a feat, he said.

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Unlike Sanofi, Novartis isn't working on developing its own pandemic vaccine. The company sold its vaccines unit to [GlaxoSmithKline Plc](#) -- Sanofi's partner for the shot that's suffered delays -- several years ago.

But Novartis makes more than 70 billion doses of medicines each year across 50 facilities, and the Swiss drugmaker is investigating how best to deploy that capacity, according to Narasimhan.

"We have the capabilities to make many of these different technologies available," he said.

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Novartis shares traded about 1% lower in Zurich amid a general stock market retreat.

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– *With assistance by Raymond Colitt*

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