

MEDIA RELEASE

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A WIDE RANGE OF GOODS WILL BE AVAILABLE THROUGH E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS, WITH HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS NOW IN PLACE

The Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Ebrahim Patel, has gazetted the directions providing for a wide range of goods to be available to consumers through e-Commerce platforms from today. This follows the announcement by President Ramaphosa last night that e-Commerce would be expanded beyond what has been announced previously.

The Regulations setting out economic activities that can reopen, provided for directions to be published on increasing the scope of goods which could be sold through e-Commerce platforms.

Effective today, and subject to all applicable laws, all goods will be available for transaction through e-Commerce platforms with the exception of liquor and tobacco, which have been expressively prohibited for sale to the public during Alert Level 4. These products would be reconsidered in future when the Regulations permit their sale.

These gazetted directions enable the sale of products through e-Commerce platforms and delivery-systems that are currently not available at retail outlets, including household appliances, electronic goods, furniture, books, music, gym products, the full range of clothing and footwear products, household utensils and others.

The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic) has been working on a plan for e-Commerce to be safely rolled out since the Alert Level 4 regulations came into effect on 1 May. The key focus of the e-Commerce directions are on the health, safety and other protocols that need to be followed by retailers, delivery personnel and customers.

"We strongly believe in the value of e-Commerce as a critical enabler to opening the economy through contactless transactions. This can reduce the movement of consumers, and the density of shoppers in retail spaces. Further it can accelerate innovation, support local manufacturing and increase access by the informal market and poorer South Africans," Minister Patel said today.

"We are in the middle of a global pandemic that has taken hundreds of thousands of lives across the world. Protecting the lives of workers and consumers is critical as we open up the economy. We have consulted with stakeholders to get the proper health and safety protocols in place which can allow the full e-Commerce supply chain to

operate safely while mitigating the risk of it becoming a vector for transmission of the coronavirus," said Minister Patel.

The directions outline the need for hygienic workplace conditions, social distancing, the wearing of masks, regular monitoring of workers' health and the need for sanitisation, among other health protocols.

To limit the social and economic hardship caused by the pandemic on local industries and enable consumer choice to support local producers, the directions encourage retailers to give prominence to goods manufactured in South Africa.

The directions call on retailers to provide for as many payment options as possible for consumers, especially for low income earners, so that a greater number of South Africans can take advantage of online platforms.

The directions also recognise the opportunity for spaza shops and informal traders to leverage e-Commerce as a means of selling goods.

"e-Commerce has great potential as a safe retail platform during the pandemic. We need to work together with the sector to make digital platforms an avenue which can be used by a greater number of local manufacturers, retailers and consumers to transact. We have consulted with companies in e-Commerce who have committed to give prominence to South African-made goods on their sites. This is an important step in order to limit the social and economic hardship caused by the pandemic on local industries. We encourage all consumers to buy local and support the recovery of South African manufacturing during this global pandemic," Minister Patel said.

"Beyond the pandemic, we are likely to see a shift from traditional retailing to e-Commerce platforms. We look forward to future engagement with the sector to address how to create more jobs in the sector and retrain workers displaced by the shift to e-Commerce and to ensure that there is space for local small businesses and youth-owned enterprises as suppliers of goods and providers of digital platforms and delivery services," he said.

The full directions can be found at:

http://www.thedtic.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/43321_14-5.pdf

Enquiries:

Sidwell Medupe-Departmental Spokesperson

Tel: (012) 394 1650

Mobile: 079 492 1774

E-mail: MSMedupe@thedtic.gov.za

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