

Global Glove manufacturing Industry: the need for an urgent reset.

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In all probability, the first material, a baby comes into contact with will be a pair of gloves. Likewise, during mankind's lowest ebb in its fight against a deadly virus, this same glove came into a significant play.

In the last 4 decades, global Glove Industry, pioneered through industrial innovations, capacity building and overcame global challenges while answering to humanitarian calls producing essential PPE. The glove journey that began in the late 70s, was given a quantum leap with the onset of the AIDs scare brought about by the HiV virus. Henceforth at every other virus breakout, in particular, NiV, SARS, Ebola, MERS and the most recent Covid-19 virus, glove has been at the forefront , as a critical PPE

The global demand for gloves is estimated to be 330 billion pieces in 2024. Demand grows by 10% per annum. Per capita usage of gloves is still low, in highly populated regions of the world, hence, the demand growth pattern will continue. Drivers of growth continues to be increased Regulatory requirements, Healthcare awareness, ageing population and population growth.

Besides the traditional exam and surgical gloves, discerning requirements based on occupational functionalities has led to a proliferation of speciality and niche gloves that , now makes, up to 25% of all gloves.

As profitable as it is, the Industry is not without its challenges, principally the increasing cost of process water and energy, currency volatility , shortage of workers , trade barriers and extraordinary increased costs to ensure compliance to ESG as imposed by the global buyers. To mitigate this, current R&D is focussed on water recovery economy, green energy, automation and IR4.0, besides product innovation as well as to be prepared for thin margins over the next 5 years.

The industry itself evolved through 4 stages of rampant uncontrolled growth, followed by a Meltdown phase. During Covid , it saw tremendous capacity increase, by existing as well as new players, in the believe that the demand for such gloves will remain bullish. A post scenario is one of overstock in the supply chain, oversupply by the producing nations, low average selling prices and stricter enforcement of ESG by the buying nations.....challenging times indeed for glove manufacturers! The Global industry needs a reset, to remain vibrant and relevant.