

## Coronavirus profiteers – SWI swissinfo.ch

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Disinfectant gel in an almost empty radius

The rush for disinfectant gel has made this product rare and therefore expensive.

*(Post Register No Sales No Mags)*

Since the world is world, each crisis sees unfortunately appear vultures which, trampling on any ethical consideration, take advantage of the circumstances to make money. In the context of the coronavirus, it is above all the trade in protective masks and disinfectant gels that can cause outrage.

It's the law of the free market. The more demand a product has and the limited supply, the more its price skyrockets. In normal times, this doesn't really cause any scandal, even if the defenders of liberalism can find reason to complain.

(1)

report on the rush on protective masks and disinfectant gel

But currently, times are anything but normal. It is true that we are not at war, contrary to what many have emphatically declared. War – even if the author of these lines never personally experienced it – must be something else entirely.

However, the war has something in common with the current health crisis. If a crisis awakens what is most noble in man – with many expressions of solidarity – it unfortunately also reveals more unworthy behavior. Indeed, what other adjective should be used to qualify those who, as in time of war, seek by all possible means to enrich themselves on the back of those who are in need or, in this case, those who are taken by anxiety?

### Overpriced masks

On a small scale, there are, for example, clever little ones who seek to fill their pockets by selling protective masks at prices that are completely overrated on online sales sites. In recent days in German-speaking Switzerland, police have arrested three people on the grounds of usury. A young woman, for example, offered ten masks for 100 francs (or 10 francs per mask), while the basic price is around 50 cents per unit.

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takes advantage of the weakness of others to derive “obvious disproportionate financial benefits” from the service provided is punishable.

### Coronafraud.ch

The Institute for Combating Economic Crime of the Haute École de l’Arc Jurassien Arc recently created a platform to identify cases of fraud and economic abuse linked to the pandemic.

Anyone can send their testimony anonymously. “The objective is to collect information to improve prevention and – when necessary – to transmit it to the authorities,” explains Olivier Beaudet-Labrecque, assistant professor at HE-Arc.

End of the infobox

But there are larger fish that seek to keep this “obvious disproportion” within a certain limit, which will likely allow them to escape the cracks of justice. To find out, all it takes is a few clicks or a quick glance at the various sponsored content on its Facebook page.

For example, these days we have repeatedly seen sponsored messages from a Swiss online store that offers masks instead of its traditional fashion and cosmetic products. Again, the price is a problem: 90 francs for 50 simple masks, while almost the same item is available for less than 25 francs on the site of a chain of pharmacies.

On another site, we discovered a 300 ml bottle of hydroalcoholic gel at the price of 70 francs. After a quick search, we managed to find the exact same product for 10 francs.

Sometimes also, in addition to the excessive price (30 francs for 5 masks), the quality of protection leaves more than desired, as evidenced by a person who reported a case on the site coronafraud.chExternal link (see box) and who sent us the photo of the “at least” original confection of the product received.

Protection's mask.

A simple photo makes it possible to understand that the quality is not there.

(tvsvizzera)

It should also be noted that some pharmacies have been the focus of criticism in recent weeks, due to the sharp rise in the price of disinfectants.

## No regulation

In an articleExternal link Dedicated to this topic, the Fédération romande des consommateurs (FRC) emphasizes that apart from a few pharmacies that have not “played the game”, the responsibility for the increase lies with the entire production chain. “Behind the sellers is a chain of actors, all of whom are likely to influence volumes and prices. Even more so when it comes to goods whose price is subject to the law of supply and demand,” writes the FRC.

And that’s the problem, says Yannis Papadaniel of the FRC. “Since masks and disinfectant gel are not currently considered essential goods, freedom of trade prevails. These products are not regulated like drugs are,” he explains.

a hospital room

records

## The coronavirus in Switzerland

The coronavirus is advancing in Switzerland, the authorities have taken exceptional measures that are life-changing in the country.

In other words, unless the overcharging is such that it falls under the offense of wear and tear, there is a lot of room for maneuver.

The FRC is studying the possibility of asking that these products, in particular hydroalcoholic gel and less masks (whose usefulness for those who do not work in the treatment sector is still subject to discussion), be subject to another statute. This would allow on the one hand to regulate their prices and on the other hand to create compulsory stocks, as for basic medicines.

## Price monitoring

The price supervisor confirmed to us by email that his services are currently receiving reports of "particularly worrying cases". Stefan Meierhans clarified that "some of the increases are due to a surge in demand which translates into higher purchase prices for resellers. However, there are people looking to take advantage of this emergency. "

Price monitoringExternal link However, his arms are a little tied because the lawExternal link only allows it to intervene in a few specific areas, such as public transport, telecommunications and water and gas prices. "We therefore seek to contact the suppliers concerned and to act as mediator," specifies Mr. Prix.

The Federal Competition Commission, for its part, indicated that it received "various information questions concerning usurious prices". However, it specifies in a press releaseExternal link that "the possibilities for intervention based on cartel law only exist when illegal price agreements are concluded or when a company abuses its dominant position".

*(Translation from Italian: Olivier Pauchard)*

## Neuer Inhalt

Horizontal Line

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