

Valneva suspends Covid vaccine production as EU shrinks order

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COVID vaccine producer Valneva suspended production on Wednesday after the European Commission massively ramped down a planned order of millions of doses.

The French biotech firm announced the decision after the commission decided to scratch an initial order unveiled last year for 60 million doses and cut that to just 1.25 million.

The vaccine was the first in France and the sixth endorsed for protecting against COVID-19 in the bloc. EU states were to have bought some 27 million doses for this year with 33 million to follow in 2023.

However, the commission said in May it intended to pull out of the advance purchase agreement given high levels of global vaccine production.

Wednesday saw the commission finally agree to have EU states buy 1.25 million doses of a [vaccine](#) authorised across the bloc in June for adults aged 18 to 50, leaving the company to suspend further production.

Five countries are now to receive those doses—Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland and Germany, but not France—in August and September, the commission said.

"We do not understand this decision. All the more so given there are four million people who are not vaccinated in France," Valneva director

general Franck Grimaud told AFP.

The company indicated it will now look to obtain new orders over the coming weeks before determining the future of its programme.

Valneva's VLA2001 serum is the first to use the traditional inactive whole virus technology, which the biotech firm believes could bring those reticent to get jabbed to change their minds.

Last September saw Britain also pull out of a deal for 100 million doses, terminating what had been its first supply agreement.

The serum remains authorised in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

European health commissioner Stella Kyriakides said Valneva remained an option for repeat vaccines in the months ahead.

The five other EU-approved vaccines are the US-German Pfizer-BioNTech (2.4 billion doses either bought or reserved), US group Moderna (460 million), Swedish-British lab AstraZeneca (400 million), US firm Johnson & Johnson (400 million) and Novavax (200 million).

Unlike the others, the Novavax jab contains the spike protein of the coronavirus itself and tricks the body's cells into creating virus elements able to trigger the immune system.

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