

April 10, 2020

Kenya Notification: KEN/999 1.

Date issued: 4/8/2020

Agency responsible: Kenya Bureau of Standards, Standards Information Resource Centre (KEBS)

Notified under Article: 5.7.1 5.

Products covered: Clothes, Footwear 6. ICS Codes: 61.020, 61.060 7

Title: Public Notice to importers of used/second-hand garments and used shoes

Like so many others around the world, SMART and its members are engaged in the world-wide fight against a common enemy, COVID-19. SMART and its members are committed to working with governments, businesses and individuals to slow the progression of this disease and to protect the most vulnerable among us.

While there is still a great deal that is unknown about this virus, SMART strenuously objects to the Kenya Bureau of Standards' move to opportunistically seize upon this crisis to impose import restrictions on secondhand clothing. Based on Kenya's earlier attempts to ban the importation of secondhand clothing, this recent maneuver is not based on science and appears to be nothing more than a means to skirt existing agreements that Kenya has with the United States about allowing the importation of secondhand clothing.

Numerous studies including those published in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) and [The Lancet](#) have shown that COVID-19 may be detectable on hard, non-porous surfaces like plastics and metals for hours and potentially up to 2 to 3 days. The virus, however, is far less likely to survive on soft, porous surface like textiles including rugs, carpets and clothing, new or used. [As recently issued guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) on COVID-19](#) notes, mitigating whatever small risk might be present on soft, porous surfaces like textiles is easily addressed by laundering the textile/garment according to manufacturer instructions in warm water. This advice is supported by the fact that countless hospitals and other medical facilities are utilizing reusable linens and personal protective equipment/hospital apparel to protect healthcare workers that are treating patients infected with COVID-19. Notably, the CDC has not made any changes to existing guidance on how these textiles should be handled and processed since the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States.

Used clothing that is shipped from the United States to Kenya is typically in transit for six to eight weeks. In the meantime, European shipments going to Kenya typically take three to five weeks to arrive while shipments from the Indian-subcontinent are typically in transit at least two weeks. In all of these instances, these containers of secondhand clothing are in transit far longer than the virus has ever been shown to survive, even on the most hospitable non-porous, hard surfaces. Further, [the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes](#) "Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods and there have not been any cases of COVID-19 in the United States associated with imported goods."

As noted previously, attempts to limit these imports appear to be a disingenuous attempt to choke off secondhand clothing trade. Unfortunately, those who will suffer the most under these draconian



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restrictions are the Kenyan people who rely upon access to high-quality, inexpensive secondhand apparel as well as those who base their livelihood on domestic industries that support its sale and distribution.

Given that KEBS did not base their import restriction on secondhand clothing on any kind of known science, SMART is working closely with U.S. government officials to see that this unnecessary restriction is lifted as quickly as possible.

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