

# E-commerce, consumer-product players seek expansion of essential goods list

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Companies across e-commerce, retail and consumer products sectors believe that the government should expand the list of essential products beyond staples, packaged foods and hygiene products in the extended lockdown period as the evolving needs of consumers need to be met.

On Sunday, the Ministry of Home Affairs clarified that non-essential products will not be allowed to be sold through e-commerce channel during the lockdown period.

A spokesperson for Amazon India said, "The need of the hour is to ensure the safety of our citizens first, serving their needs while they stay at home. The new



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guideline will disappoint not only the consumers whose list of essentials had expanded to work-from-home products but also the thousands of small businesses, sellers and manufacturers across the country, who had geared up in the last 48 hours to provide millions of people with safe

access to products."

"On behalf of consumers and sellers, we hope that this situation is rectified soon so that the urgent need of consumers is met and that there is revival of economic activity. We will continue to follow the guidance and deliver essential products and work closely with all central, state

and local authorities for expedited processes to make safe deliveries of priority products possible," the spokesperson added.

**Technical support needed**  
Srinivas Mothey, Senior Vice-President, Paytm Mall, said the ambit of essential goods should be expanded. "India is mostly working from home at the moment but many are finding it difficult as they are running low on certain items necessary to effectively operate under lockdown. Laptops, mobile phones, and accessories, computer hardware, webcams, all these things should be allowed to be part of essential goods. If the lockdown continues, lack of proper technical support would hinder the efficiency of em-

ployees which in turn would affect a company's operations," Mothey added.

The Retailers Association of India said: "The rules of direct consumer delivery should be broad-based" and include all types of retailers, including neighbourhood stores. But even the retailers' body believes that mobiles, laptops, infant garments and household supplies should be considered as essential products. "Neighbourhood stores and large essential products chain retailers have done a great service to the nation thus far and widening of the essential products categories will help us support the government's steps to ensure the safety of people while also enabling movement of goods required for

economic activity," RAI added.

**Counter-productive move**  
Sanjay Sethi, CEO & Co-founder, ShopClues, believes that not expanding the list of essential goods could be counterproductive at a time when the lockdown period has been extended. "While the entire nation is forced indoors and working from home for extended period, it is important that besides food, groceries and medicine, we also ensure supply of other critical items like kitchenware and small kitchen appliances, personal hygiene items, inner wear, work from home essentials like phones, laptops and accessories etc," he added.

A senior executive with a

leading consumer durables firm added, "This is the peak season for cooling products like air-conditioners. As consumers stay at home, they are looking to buy AC products with rising temperatures and are also looking to get their ACs serviced and repaired."

Mike Chen, General Manager, TCL India, said, "We understand the necessity behind the revision of the norms related to e-commerce. Having said so, we also need to understand that e-commerce provides a great deal of revenue support to the non-essentials." He added that the company is fully prepared with strategies to amplify TV and AC business via e-commerce platforms but will wait for future decisions of the government.