Chinese Pharma Going Global: How China's Drugmakers Are Expanding into the Middle East and Africa — and How the HERMS AI Model Accelerates Market Access

Chinese pharmaceutical companies — Fosun Pharma, Henlius, Sinopharm, Sinovac, Walvax and others — are expanding into the Middle East and Africa. See who is already exporting, why the region matters, and how the HERMS AI model supports faster, governed market entry.

Introduction: Why Chinese Pharma Is Turning to the Middle East and Africa

Chinese pharmaceutical companies are no longer exporting mainly active pharmaceutical ingredients and intermediates. Today they are taking finished medicines, vaccines, biosimilars and innovative drugs to new regions. According to MolecularCloud, export destinations are becoming more diverse, with Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America emerging as major growth markets. Scrip (Informa Pharma Intelligence) likewise reports that emerging markets such as Africa, Russia and South America now account for a quarter of total exports from Chinese drug and device makers.

The Middle East and Africa stand out for two reasons. Yicai Global reports that a growing number of Chinese innovative drugmakers are allying with Middle Eastern and North African companies, because local buyers have stronger paying capability and the region depends heavily on imported drugs. In Africa, Caixin Global notes that the continent imports over 90% of its medicines and that Chinese companies are investing in African manufacturing to reach a US$259 billion healthcare market.

Which Chinese Pharma Companies Are Already Active in the Middle East and Africa?

Fosun Pharma

- BioSpectrum Asia reports that Fosun Pharma opened its Middle East office and the Fosunhenlius Middle East United Company in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and that the company has an overseas commercial team of approximately 1,000 people across the United States, Europe, Africa, India and Southeast Asia.
- PharmaBoardroom reports that Fosun supplies its antimalarial Artesun to the Global Fund, UNICEF, WHO and national drug procurement centres in sub-Saharan Africa, and created a regional distribution hub through its Tridem Pharma subsidiary.
- Caixin Global reports that Fosun is building a new plant in Ivory Coast designed to be the largest antimalarial and antibiotic facility in West Africa; South China Morning Post reports the project will bring nearly 1,000 jobs to the Grand-Bassam area near Abidjan.

Henlius

- Henlius, a Fosun subsidiary, has commercially supplied its trastuzumab biosimilar to the Middle East and North Africa for the first time, positioning it as the first Chinese-origin monoclonal antibody biosimilar in the Middle East, through its collaboration with Intas and Accord — see Echemi.

Sinopharm

- China Daily / SSE reports that Sinopharm Group exports products to over 70 countries and regions, with Belt and Road markets a focus.

Sinovac

- Sinovac's senior director of international business for Africa and the Middle East says the company is seeking local partners in Egypt and aims to introduce more Chinese pharmaceutical products, including vaccines, to Egypt and other African and Middle Eastern countries — see The Star (Xinhua).

Walvax Biotechnology, Coben Pharma and Conba

- Caixin Global reports that Walvax Biotechnology is setting up a vaccine production facility in Egypt.
- Coben Pharma's chairman says the company seeks expansion in Egypt because of its position as a portal to Africa and the Middle East — see Capital FM Africa and Xinhua via Belt and Road Portal.
- Zhejiang Jinhua Conba Bio-Pharm and Cairo-based EVA Pharma announced a strategic agreement to improve the security and accessibility of pharmaceutical supply chains between China and the Middle East and Africa — see Labmate Online.

Other leading exporters

- Hengrui Pharma, CSPC Pharma Group and Fosun Pharma are among the Chinese innovative-drug exporters profiled by MolecularCloud, which reports that Fosun's Hanquyou (trastuzumab) has reached more than 50 countries.

Policy Tailwinds: The Health Silk Road and Local Manufacturing

The South China Morning Post reports that Chinese companies are setting up offshore plants in Africa under the so-called "health silk road", and that President Xi Jinping promised at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation to promote pharmaceutical production and the medical equipment industry in Africa. Caixin Global adds that Chinese drugmakers are making multibillion-yuan investments in local drugmaking facilities, drawn by the unmet healthcare needs of the world's fastest-growing continent. The KrASIA analysis highlights the same opportunity in the Middle East, where healthcare spending and the burden of chronic diseases are rising.

Why Entry Is Still Hard: Fragmented Rules, Tenders, Pricing and Supply

Dozens of Chinese companies now exhibit at regional events such as Pharmaconex in Cairo (Xinhua via Belt and Road Portal), yet visibility does not equal market access. Each country in the Middle East and Africa applies its

own registration requirements, pricing rules, tender procedures, import conditions and pharmacovigilance obligations. Many of these rules are unwritten — they live in precedent, regulator behaviour and local execution experience.

- Registration: dossier expectations, query patterns and review cycles differ by authority.
- Market access and pricing: reimbursement, pricing references and tender behaviour vary by market.
- Tenders: eligibility rules and buyer behaviour determine who can bid and win.
- Supply and compliance: import readiness, quality, pharmacovigilance and promotional compliance must work together.

How the HERMS AI Model Supports Chinese Pharma Expansion

HERMS is a Dubai-based healthcare and life sciences intelligence company. The HERMS AI model is architected from the 25 HERMS assets, with launch planned for 2027, and is designed to help companies — including Chinese pharmaceutical and medical device companies — enter and grow in new markets faster and with more certainty. HERMS addresses the fragmentation across marketing, market access, regulatory, supply and logistics, pharmacovigilance, compliance and cross-functional quality.

- Decodes unwritten local rules: turns each market's regulatory, pricing and tender rules into machine-readable logic, so a company sees what is required before it enters.
- Faster registration readiness: checks submissions against local requirements to reduce dossier rework and query cycles.
- Market-access and pricing intelligence: shows how tenders, reimbursement and pricing behave market by market, so entry strategy rests on local precedent.
- Tender intelligence: tracks government and institutional tenders and their eligibility rules to target the right buyers early.
- Supply and compliance in one flow: import readiness, quality, pharmacovigilance and promotional compliance governed together.
- Governed AI you can audit: the model proposes, the rules engine decides, and the audit trail records both.
- Complements your existing systems: HERMS reads and never overwrites your systems of record. Data residency is the client's choice — on the client's own servers or on HERMS servers.
- Local judgment from Dubai: a single point of entry for the region, built on 28 years of regional execution experience.

Conclusion

Chinese pharma is moving from exporting products to building supply chains, partnerships and factories across the Middle East and Africa. The winners will be the companies that master local rules, tenders, pricing and

supply faster than their competitors. To explore how the HERMS AI model can support your market entry, visit hermsglobal.com.

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