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Taiwan Leapfrogs Biomedicine Growth

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Biomedicine is a top priority for Taiwan, with the government aiming to position the country as a leading hub for biomedical research and development in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2016, Taiwan set ambitious goals to develop 20 new medicines, bring 80 high-value medical devices to market, and grow its biomedicine industry into a NT$1 trillion (approximately $32 billion) sector by 2025. To achieve these objectives, the government introduced a range of policy reforms, established biomedical clusters, and expanded support for research, innovation, and commercialization. Now in 2026, the question is: Have these efforts delivered the desired results? More importantly, what lies ahead for Taiwan's biotech industry in its next phase of growth? Letâ??s find out.



Taiwan's 5+2 Industrial Innovation Plan was launched as a national initiative to transform the country from an efficiency-driven manufacturing economy into an innovation-led economy. Introduced in 2016, the strategy identified biomedicine as one of its key pillars.

A decade later, the question is whether this ambitious bet on biomedicine has paid off. The answer is largely yes. “Taiwan has made significant progress towards the targets it set for 2025. According to government data, the biomedicine industry generated NT$774.5 billion in revenue in 2024, moving steadily towards the NT$1 trillion milestone. The medical device sector has emerged as one of the programme's strongest performers, recording 65 internationally approved high-value medical devices by 2024. Progress has also been notable in drug innovation, with 16 new medicines approved by 2024, bringing Taiwan close to its goal of developing 20 novel drugs,” said **Dr Wallace Lin, Secretary General of Taiwan BIO.**

Beyond the numbers, Taiwan has succeeded in building a robust biotechnology ecosystem. Strategic investments in research infrastructure, biomedical clusters, talent development, regulatory reforms, and industry-academia collaboration have strengthened the country's position as one of the leading biomedical innovation hubs in the Asia-Pacific region.

However, experts are cautious about calling it a complete success. “In my view, the 5+2 plan should be assessed as a successful ecosystem-building policy, but not yet as a complete global-commercialisation success. It created stronger foundations: clusters, talent awareness, regulatory upgrading, investor participation, and cross-sector collaboration. The next stage must focus less on counting start-ups, patents, or early clinical projects, and more on global product revenue, successful overseas licensing, international regulatory approvals, and the emergence of Taiwan-headquartered companies with sustainable regional or global commercial footprints,” **Alan Cheng, CEO of IUSEA Consulting Co., Ltd**. and a senior biotechnology industry consultant.

Becoming Biomedical Hub as Target

Having laid the foundations of a robust biotechnology ecosystem through the 5+2 Industrial Innovation Plan, Taiwan is now looking to align biomedical innovation more closely with national health priorities.

“Building on the foundation created by the 5+2 Industrial Innovation Plan, Taiwan is now pursuing a more ambitious vision centred on precision medicine, regenerative therapies, artificial intelligence-driven healthcare, and the Healthy Taiwan initiative, with the goal of extending healthy life expectancy and reducing the burden of major diseases such as cancer,” said Dr Lin.

The government has also announced a NT$24 billion (US$767 million) programme aimed at strengthening the country's medical resilience by supporting the local production of at least 50 pharmaceutical products between 2026 and 2029. The initiative will support the manufacture of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), generic medicines, biopharmaceuticals, and radiopharmaceuticals, while also funding domestic manufacturing research and the development of a smart logistics network to ensure a stable and reliable supply of medicines.

Cancer prevention and treatment have emerged as another key pillar of the Healthy Taiwan vision. The government also announced plans to establish a NT$10 billion fund for new cancer medicines and expand access to innovative cancer therapies. The initiative forms part of President Lai Ching-te's strategy to reduce cancer deaths by one-third by 2030 through enhanced cancer screening programmes, wider adoption of genetic testing and precision medicine, and improved access to novel treatments.

As Taiwan looks beyond the 2025 milestones, the focus is shifting towards the next phase of growth and the steps needed to strengthen the country's position as a leading biomedical hub in the Asia-Pacific region. Alan Cheng highlights several priorities:

Taiwan can remain ambitious, but it must also be realistic to encounter the current environment. The Asia-Pacific biomedical landscape has changed significantly since the 5+2 plan was launched. China has rapidly upgraded its drug regulatory system after joining the International Council for Harmonisation in 2017, expanded its clinical-trial capacity, and created stronger capital-market pathways for pre-revenue biotech companies. Singapore continues to play a powerful role in regional headquarters, global clinical operations, and advanced manufacturing, i.e. Research, Innovation and Enterprise 2025 (RIE2025). Korea has built scale in biologics manufacturing and global biosimilars, i.e. Samsung Biologics. Japan remains a major pharmaceutical and medical-device market with deep regulatory and clinical expertise. Japan is always the third Biomedical country next to the USA and EU.

Against this competitive background, Taiwan should not define success as becoming the single biomedical hub of Asia-Pacific. A more realistic and stronger positioning is to become a high-trust, innovation-validation and specialty-commercialisation platform for Asia-Pacific in a place where high-quality clinical research, Bio-ICT integration, precision health, specialty manufacturing, and cross-border partnering can be executed efficiently.

Taiwan should focus on areas where its medical centres, clinical investigators, data quality, and patient trust create genuine advantages: oncology, rare diseases, metabolic diseases, regenerative medicine, precision diagnostics, and AI-enabled healthcare validation. Taiwan is not the most cost-effective location for large Phase III multinational trials, but it can be highly competitive in early clinical development, proof-of-concept studies, biomarker-rich trials, and Asia-relevant clinical evidence generation.

Another issue, Taiwanese biotech companies should be encouraged to pursue earlier international partnering, including co-development with Japan, the United States, Europe, Southeast Asia, and selectively with China where regulatory, IP, and geopolitical risks can be managed. Taiwan can contribute early clinical development, translational science, manufacturing quality, and Asia-Pacific market access intelligence. The goal should be to participate in global value chains without losing strategic control of core assets.

Last point, Taiwan’s biomedical resources are often fragmented across ministries, hospitals, universities, science parks, start-ups, and investors. The next policy phase should emphasise coordination: shared clinical-trial infrastructure, integrated health-data governance, national-level BD platforms, global talent recruitment, reimbursement-policy linkage, and late-stage financing mechanisms. Subsidy alone is not enough. After all, the development of the biomedical industry is a long-time journey, like innovative drug development, which needs a long-term plan and is fully supported by the Government. In a word, Taiwan needs system integration.

While Taiwan fell short of some of its numerical targets, it has made substantial progress across all key indicators. More importantly, it has established the infrastructure, policy framework, and innovation ecosystem needed to support the next phase of growth under the Healthy Taiwan vision.

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