

South African citrus coalition launches SummerStar Ruby campaign to transform European grapefruit market

By [Carl Collen](#) | 1 July 2025

Collaborative marketing initiative aims to reposition grapefruit as an essential summer lifestyle ingredient rather than just a winter health food, with initial launch in Germany followed by expansion across Europe



A coalition of South African citrus growers are joining forces this summer to promote the Star Ruby variety in European markets as they look to reinvent the fruit's image and drive new growth in the category.

The group forms part of the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) of Southern Africa and contributes voluntarily to a collaborative marketing budget.

This has led to the creation of a new brand – SummerStar Ruby Grapefruit – and a unified message designed to elevate the commodity, shift consumer perceptions and ultimately increase demand across Europe.

According to ITC Trade Map, grapefruit exports to the European Union only grew by 10 per cent in the last ten years.

“The CGA’s Grapefruit Variety Focus Group recognised the urgent need to change how grapefruit is viewed,” said Barry Landman, chairman of the Grapefruit Variety Focus Group (GVFG).

“They’ve historically been seen as bitter and old fashioned. But SummerStar Rubies are sweet, tangy and versatile and will help elevate food and cocktail menus if given the opportunity,”

Combined efforts

Growers realised that shifting perceptions would require a substantial marketing effort and that collaboration was key.

Instead of promoting their individual brands, they agreed to pool their efforts to uplift the entire grapefruit category.

“By working together, we are building a stronger future for the industry,” Landman continued.

“South Africa is one of the major suppliers of Star Ruby Grapefruits globally, which presents huge growth potential.

“It made good business sense to rebrand and position it as a healthy and affordable summer fruit, capitalising on the warm European months when consumers are looking for fresh and easy foods.

“Elevating the category in this way will have far-reaching implications because it will lead to export growth and job creation, benefitting the broader South African economy,” he outlined.

Legacy market

Europe was chosen as the target market for this campaign because there is a legacy of long-standing trade relations with South Africa and a consistent track record of demand for citrus.

It also offers a reliable network of buyers and well-established supply chains, making it a natural launchpad for market expansion and grapefruit brand building, the GVFG said.

Nicci Stewart, SummerStar Ruby campaign manager, explained that the group is not introducing a brand-new product to an unfamiliar market.

EUROFRUIT consumers already know and appreciate SummerStar Ruby Grapefruits for their vibrant colour, sweetness, and quality,” said Stewart.

“Our focus is on winning over consumers who only associate grapefruit with bitterness — or with something eaten when they’re feeling sick or visiting their grandparents.”

The campaign is happening in European summertime and focuses on how to use the fruit as a refreshing and versatile addition to cocktails, salads and beach picnics.

The fact that SummerStar Rubies are grown and exported in the South African winter gives it the perfect seasonal advantage, noted the GVFG.

Stewart explained the move away from being seen as a winter health food, to an essential ingredient on all menus – hence the name change.

“SummerStar Rubies are already known for their numerous health benefits,” she confirmed. “But they’re delicious too and the gorgeous colour adds vibrancy to any dish or cocktail.

“We’re trying to position it as part of a summer lifestyle, rather than something you only eat when you have the flu.”

German launch

Germany was selected to launch the campaign because of its openness to new categories and strong appetite for health-forward, sustainably produced foods.

According to the group, Germans value sustainability, quality, and ethical production – but they also expect affordability.

“SummerStar Rubies tick all of these boxes,” said Landman. “They are produced in world-class growing conditions in South Africa, meet strict EU import standards, and thanks to advanced cold-chain technology, they arrive fresh and flavourful.”

SummerStar Ruby Grapefruits will primarily be promoted in Germany in summer 2025, and will expand to other European markets in 2026.

“This is just the beginning of grapefruit’s reinvention,” added Stewart.

“This marketing initiative is vital to the industry’s long-term success, and thanks to the efforts of this group of growers, SummerStar Ruby Grapefruits are about to have their day in the sun.”