

South African growers launch EU grapefruit campaign

A group of South African citrus growers has launched a joint marketing initiative aimed at promoting the Star Ruby grapefruit variety in European markets. The coalition, formed under the Citrus Growers' Association (CGA) of Southern Africa, has established a dedicated committee and pooled resources into a collective marketing budget to support the effort.

The campaign, launched under the new brand name SummerStar Ruby Grapefruit, seeks to reposition grapefruit among European consumers. The goal is to improve the fruit's image, which has often been associated with bitterness and outdated perceptions, and to increase demand across Europe. According to the CGA's Grapefruit Variety Focus Group, grapefruit exports to the European Union have grown by just 10% over the past decade, prompting the initiative.



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Barry Landman, Chair of the Grapefruit Variety Focus Group, noted that the marketing approach reflects an industry-wide strategy, with growers setting aside competition in favor of collective promotion. "By working together, we aim to

strengthen the future of the category and explore growth opportunities in international markets," Landman said. He added that South Africa remains a major supplier of Star Ruby grapefruit, particularly during the European summer months when citrus from the Southern Hemisphere is in season.

The European Union was selected as the campaign's focus due to its established trade links with South Africa and the reliability of its distribution infrastructure. Germany, in particular, has been chosen as the launch market for the campaign in summer 2025, with plans to expand to other European countries in 2026. The decision reflects Germany's consumer interest in health-conscious, sustainably sourced, and affordable produce.

Nicci Stewart, campaign manager, explained that the effort is not about introducing a new product but repositioning an existing one. "Our goal is to reach consumers who have a limited or outdated perception of grapefruit and present it as a versatile fruit that can be used beyond traditional contexts," she said. The campaign will highlight usage in seasonal dishes, salads, and drinks, positioning the fruit as part of a broader summer lifestyle.

In addition to consumer outreach, the campaign aims to support long-term export growth and job creation in the South African citrus industry. The SummerStar Ruby initiative reflects a wider trend among agricultural sectors seeking to address flat export growth through collaborative brand building and targeted international marketing.

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