South African grapefruit set to take United States by storm

The first South African grapefruit ever to be exported to the United States arrived in the port of Philadelphia on the American East Coast on June the 10th. The South African grapefruit is expected to bring a whole new eating experience for the American consumers and experts agree that the category has very exciting opportunities in this market.

The arrival of the first grapefruit also marks the beginning of a new export market for citrus growers in the Orange River region of the Northern Cape.

The Star Ruby grapefruit is part of the first shipment of South African citrus fruit to the United States this year. The shipment of more than 2 500 pallets, which is expected to arrive in Philadelphia on board the Seatrade vessel, Tama Hope, next Tuesday, also includes Clementines and Navels.

“The Star Ruby grapefruit grown in the Orange River offers a new eating experience which will change the way American consumers perceive the product,” says Kennith Dial, one of two inspectors from the United States Department of Agriculture.

KULTIVARDAG: ESSELEN KWEKERY

‘n Uiters suksesvolle kultivardag is gedurende Julie 2010 by Esselen kwekery in Malelane gehou.

Citrusprodusente van so ver as Pongola, Swaziland en Ohrigstad het dit bygewoon. Leon Esselen van Esselen Kwekery en Johan Joubert, kultivarspesialis van CRI het die verskillende kultivars se eienskappe aan die produsente verduidelik.

Onder die Valencias wat belangstelling uitgelok het is Henriëtta, Skilderkrans, Alpha (voorheen bekend as Rietsruit), Ben-

Bo: Leon Esselen verduidelik hoekom dit belangrik is dat produsente op die uitkyk moet wees vir mutasies wat in hulle boorde kan voorkom. Heel bo: Johan Joubert besig om sekere kultivareienskappe aan produsente oor te dra.

ny II, Moosrivier Late I, die McClean saadloos, Louisa en Bend 8A II. Hierdie kultivars is almal saadloos of lae saad kultivars met goeie set en vruggrootte.

Die McClean saadloos is 100% saadloos, set beter as die oorspronklike McClean, het beter vruggrootte en minder kraakskil. Die Ruby pomep lmous, die Flamingo en die Sunrise Surprise (in veredeling van die ou Jackson pomelo) was ook gewild. H Besoeker vanaf M&S in Engeland was veral beïndruk met die Sunrise Surprise.
US consumers of grapefruit were in for a real treat with the arrival of the first South African grapefruit on American soil.

(USDA) who are presently in South Africa to do the pre-shipment inspections of all citrus fruit being exported to the USA in order to ensure that they comply with the US regulations.

“American consumers are used to round, yellow grapefruit and the red dish coloured, oval shaped South African Star Ruby’s will be new to them. The South African fruit, with the red flesh, is also very sweet and this will also fit in well with the palate of US consumers,” says Mr Dial.

The opening of the United States market for citrus fruit from the Orange River is a result of a decision by the USDA earlier this year to increase the number of areas in South Africa recognised as pest-free areas for citrus black spot disease. The new deal means that Valencia types from this region will now also be available much earlier to the US market than in the past.

“Crops in the Orange River are much earlier so this enhances our basket of products,” says Joretha Geldenhuys, CEO of Western Cape Citrus Producers’ Forum (WCCPF). The first Midknight Valencias from the Orange River will be available from the beginning of August and it is hoped that it could even be earlier in future years.

Whilst South Africa has an excellent citrus crop and the early navels and Clementines are proving to be of exceptional quality, it is the introduction of the grapefruit that is expected to make the most impact. The region where it originates from offers a climate conducive to sweet and juicy products. It is South Africa’s desert region, with the mighty Orange River bringing the water which is the life-line to kilometre upon kilometre of fruit orchards along its banks, stretching over more than 250 kilometres from Upington in the east to Pofadder in the west.

The Orange River is South Africa’s biggest river, crossing the country from east to west from its origins in the mountains of Lesotho, and eventually running into the sea on the West Coast where it forms the border between South Africa and Namibia. The lower part of this river is where a new fledgling citrus industry is now being established in what is primarily table grape country.

Amongst the first grapefruit exported from the region are organically certified fruit grown by the Spangenberg family, who farms Swartbooisberg between the towns of Keimoes and Kakamas. “We have been farming here for 18 years and all our citrus orchards and vineyards are organic certified,” says Santa Spangenberg. Santa is also responsible for marketing the crop and for this purpose a grower owned export company, Orex Export Ltd, has been established.

In the rest of the Orange River there is equally great interest in supplying the US market with citrus fruit. South Africa’s leading table grape grower, the Karsten Group, who has farms along a distance of 250 kilometers from Klein Pella in the west to Kanon-Eiland in the west, is busy with a rapid expansion programme at Mosplaas near Keimoes.

Mosplaas Citrus is an empowerment project which will eventually be partly-owned by the Group’s workers. More than 50 hectares of citrus are already in production and a further 300 hectares have been planted.

André van Blommestein, Managing Director of WP Fresh, says the South African export community is excited about the prospects that Star Ruby grapefruit offers to the South African programme in the United States. “The fruit is truly exceptional, in terms of appearance and taste. It is sweet and refreshing and nothing like what the US market experienced in the past.”