



**Practical market insights into your product**

# Marula Oil for Cosmetic Use in Europe

Marula oil is becoming more popular in the cosmetic industry. The European market for speciality oils is growing significantly, especially those sources with strong social responsibility characteristics, mostly due to its popularity as an important ingredient in skin and hair care applications. The marula tree is native to the Miombo woodlands of Southern Africa, the Sudano-Sahelian range of West Africa and in Madagascar.

The marula tree fruit, besides the well-established application of marula oil in cosmetics, has a long history of food application in African countries. The high nutritional value can also be found in the fruit pulp of marula, which again is used in the food sector as pulp for jam, jellies and juices, for instance, or the most famous application in the Amarula liqueur.

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## PRODUCT DEFINITION

### MARULA FRUIT AND NUTS, NUTS AND KERNELS, FRUIT PULP



Source: Aurum Africa



Source: American Botanical Council



Source: Aurum Africa

Marula oil is obtained from the kernels of an African indigenous plant – the marula tree (*sclerocarya birrea*). This species is a member of the Anacardiaceae family, which also includes mango, pistachio and cashew.

The marula tree grows to a height of up to 20 metres and bears up to 500kg of fruit per year. Only the female marula trees bear fruits. The marula fruit consists of the marula stone which is surrounded by the green to yellow coloured fruit pulp and has inside fruit kernels or seeds. Marula oil is extracted from the kernels/seeds of the marula fruit. The oil extraction process typically uses cold pressing and filtration. Two main qualities are available: refined (typically refined, bleached and deodorised) and unrefined (typically cold pressed and filtered). The oil itself is clear and of light yellow/golden colour. Its high nutritional value is justified in the extreme richness of linoleic fatty acid, antioxidants and oleic acid that are essential for healthy human skin.

Marula oil contains a large proportion of mono-unsaturated fatty acids and natural antioxidants. It can be classified as a high-oleic acid (70–78%) with relatively low tocopherol content. The exceptional stability is due to its fatty acid composition. Marula oil contains a similar fatty acid composition to olive oil, however, it is 10 times more stable to oxidation (see studies of Burger, AEC on the “Composition of the kernel oil and protein of the marula seed”). Because of its exceptional chemical stability, marula oil is an excellent ingredient to be used in many cosmetic products (see Table 1).

Populations of marula trees increased across Southern Africa via migration of the Bantu people from northern Sahel regions of Africa towards the south (Source: Marula Production Guidelines, Dept of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Govt. of South Africa 2010)

**TABLE 1: FATTY ACID PROFILE OF MARULA OIL**

Please note: These are approximate levels, differing by region.

Type of acid	Content in %
<b>Saturated fatty acids:</b>	
Palmitic acid	9 – 12%
Palmitoleic acid	0.05 – 0.15%
Stearic acid	5.0 – 8.0%
<b>Mono-unsaturated fatty acids:</b>	
Oleic acid	70 – 78%
<b>Polyunsaturated fatty acids:</b>	
Linoleic acid	4.0 – 7.0%
Alpha-linolenic acid	0.1 – 0.7%

Source: According to [Marula Natural Products](#), African Botanics

Besides the cosmetic application of the marula oil, traditionally, the oil – based on marula's high nutritional value – is also used as cooking oil in African countries, owing to its high oxidative stability. However, for human consumption in the European Union, marula oil would fall under the Novel Food Regulation. Due to the amendments as of 1 January 2018, the new Regulation offers new opportunities to ease the market entry of marula oil in the food sector. For more information refer to the CBI study on [vegetable oils](#) and moreover, to the study on [tropical fruit purees](#), as the marula fruit pulp (contains four times more valuable vitamin C than oranges) is used for juices and to produce jelly and jams. Amarula liqueur is the most known application on the European market. The seeds as such (fresh or roasted), as well as the oil cake and the pressed oil could possibly find application as dietary supplements. In this context again, for the European market, check with the most recent development of regulations before introducing it to the European market.

The statistics used in this document are based on Combined Nomenclature (CN) codes. The CN classification uses Harmonised System (HS) codes to classify products. There is no specific HS or CN code for marula oil.

***This product fact sheet focuses on the use of marula oil for cosmetic applications.***

**TABLE 2: CN COMMODITY CODE IN WHICH MARULA OIL IS INCLUDED**

Source	Classification
Chemical Abstract Service (CAS) Registry Number	68956-68-3 (generic number for all vegetable oils)
Harmonised System (HS) codes (trade)	Vegetable oil: 151590 Other fixed vegetable oils and fats, refined or not, not chemically modified
International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients (INCI)	SCLEROCARYA BIRREA SEED OIL

Source: Eurostat

**TIPS:**

- Please observe that there could be minor differences in the fatty acid profile between varieties, origins, extraction processes and purification methods of marula oil.
- The regulations applicable to marula oil import depend on its use. Clarify first, whether the oil would be imported for cosmetic or food purposes.

## WHICH EUROPEAN MARKETS OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPORTERS OF MARULA OIL?

### MARULA OIL IS A POPULAR INGREDIENT IN THE COSMETIC AND BEAUTY INDUSTRY

Marula oil has been used as an important ingredient in international cosmetic products for more than 15 years. Nowadays, the oil itself experiences an increasing popularity and its market is growing significantly worldwide. Marula oil is sold in local, regional and international markets as crude and refined oil. An increasing number of manufacturers are launching marula oil in the beauty and personal care industry. This is expected to stimulate the sales prospects of the overall market for marula oil in the coming years. The European market and value-adding opportunities for new products include potentially offering refined marula oil from the country of origin, subject to technical and economic considerations, rather than having the refining done in the destination market.

On the European market, marula oil is demanded as a speciality vegetable oil/fruit seed oil, due to its cosmetic properties. The competitive position of this oil depends on factors like price, quality, supply capacity and certification. The principal bottleneck is supply capacity. The wild harvested fruits are sparsely located and there are also challenges regarding the extraction of marula oil of a suitable quality for use in cosmetics.

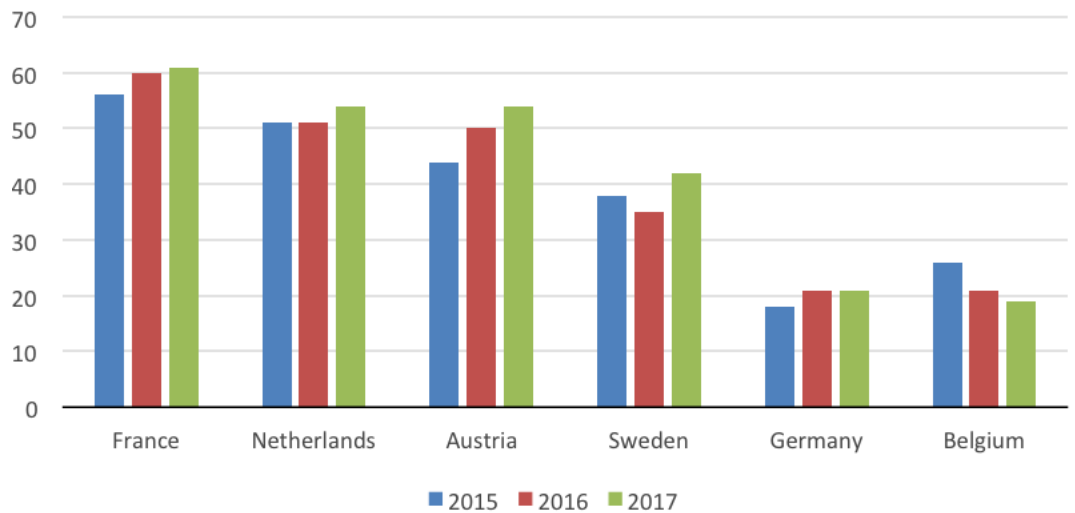
Marula oil production will have to grow beyond the relatively small existing production centres in sub-Saharan African countries, like South Africa, Kenya and Namibia, to meet future demand. An option might be the cultivation of the marula tree in suitable regions. However, up to now, there is little known success on sustainable cultivation of the marula trees and the access to the resource is limited by the scarcity of the tree populations.

According to ITC, European imports of vegetable oils (for all industries) grew by almost 16% from 2015 to 2017 in terms of volume. In 2017, the imports amounted to 374,448 tonnes at € 804 million or an average of € 2,147 per tonne.

Vegetable oils are used in a wide range of industries and speciality vegetable oils are predominantly used in cosmetics due to their higher prices and lower availability. However, data on the share of imports used in cosmetic products is not readily available.

No European trade is recorded for imports of marula oil specifically. Instead, imports of the oil are part of a larger product group with other fixed vegetable oils and fats, and the information below is based on the imports of the larger product group.

**FIGURE 1: LEADING EUROPEAN IMPORTERS OF VEGETABLE OILS – 2015–2017 IN 1,000 TONNES**



Source: ITC

Figure 1 gives an overview of the six leading European importers of speciality vegetable oils:

France is an interesting market for speciality vegetable oils used in cosmetics. However, only 15% of the country's imports in 2017 directly originated from developing countries. France's main suppliers are European vegetable oil producers (Spain) as well as traders and processors in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium.

The Netherlands is the largest importer of vegetable oils from developing countries. In 2017, 49% of the country's total imports of speciality oils originated from developing countries. The Netherlands houses several large oil refineries and traders. Its main suppliers of all vegetable oils outside of Europe include Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso and China.

Austria's imports from 2015 to 2017 grew more quickly than the European average (by 25%). However, direct imports from developing countries are negligible (less than 6%). In 2017, Austria's main suppliers included Germany, Italy, Poland and the Netherlands.

Swedish imports increased by 12% over the last three years. Over 98% of Swedish imports of speciality oils originate in Denmark. Denmark is home to large vegetable oil producers and refineries, such as AAK.

Germany is an important trade hub for high-value vegetable oils. In the last three years, the country's imports of vegetable oil increased by 17%. Germany's main suppliers in 2017 included the Netherlands, Italy and Austria.

While Belgium's total imports of speciality vegetable oils decreased by 25 % from 2015–2017, Belgian imports of such oils from developing countries increased by 33 % over the last three years. This is much higher than the European average. Belgium's main suppliers outside of Europe are Ghana and India.

Although Italy, the United Kingdom and Switzerland are smaller importers of speciality vegetable oils, these countries might be interesting markets for marula oil. Italy and the United Kingdom imported a relatively large share directly from developing countries, between 25 and 29 % in 2017. Swiss imports from developing countries experienced a strong growth in the last three years (by 74 %).

#### **TIPS:**

- Target countries with high or growing imports of speciality vegetable oils from developing countries, such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, the United Kingdom and Switzerland. These countries also serve as trade hubs for other countries in Europe.
- Target EU suppliers of vegetable oils who do not already sell marula oil, or other African vegetable oils.
- Approach French importers to determine their interest in importing directly from developing countries. This option might be a valid strategy for speciality oils traded in larger volumes.
- Conduct additional market research for more insight into the differences between the countries mentioned above. Use free statistical databases such as [ITC Trade Map](#) or the [EU Trade Helpdesk](#). Look for trends on websites such as [Cosmetics Design Europe](#).
- Visit or participate in trade fairs to test whether the market is open to your product, to obtain market information and to find potential buyers. Relevant trade fairs in Europe are Vivaness and in particular In-Cosmetics.

## **WHAT TRENDS OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR MARULA OIL?**

### **EUROPEAN COSMETIC INDUSTRY FINDS INSPIRATION IN FOOD INGREDIENTS**

The cosmetic industry trends are focused around natural, social responsibility, interesting origin and traceability. Cosmetic product manufacturers are continually looking to include ingredients with these attributes.

At the same time there are some overlaps with the food industry with trends in foods being picked up by cosmetic companies, especially natural food ingredients in their formulations that are closely associated with foods. Moreover, European consumers associate fruits with freshness, natural food and health benefits. In a society that is increasingly aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles, fruit seed oils offer great opportunities for cosmetic brands to stand out from the competition. Cosmetic ingredients derived from superfoods are also interesting for use in cosmetics. Marula is a so-called superfruit.

Vegetable oils are one of the most important ingredients used in natural cosmetics. They play a critical role in skin conditioning and moisturisation. Cosmetic formulators like to choose from a range of different oils to stand out from their competition.

**TIPS:**

- If you produce an oil from a so-called superfruit, do not market your product as a superfruit. This can be categorised as an unauthorised claim. Link the benefits to the composition of your marula oil. This information can improve the durability of your marula oil on the market. In other cases, you might be able to use data from public sources.
- Attract the attention of your buyers by showing what claims they could make with your ingredients. Always substantiate these claims and ensure that they conform to cosmetic legislation. Very often, such claims are related to the fatty acid composition of your marula oil and the story (e.g. the migration of Bantu people, taking with them marula seeds to plant, e.g. community involvement or the role of the tree in indigenous society). Cosmetic brands decide which claims they make on final products. See the chapter on competition for more information on how to stand out on the market.

**NATURAL COSMETICS SALES CONTINUE GOING STRONGLY**

European sales of natural cosmetics grew more rapidly than the sales of conventional cosmetics. This development offers opportunities for natural ingredients including marula oil. There continues to be a strong public perception in Europe that natural ingredients are safer and healthier than synthetic substitutes such as silicones, even though consumer safety in Europe from use of cosmetics is assured and closely monitored by the European Commission. Nonetheless, the trend for natural is a trend that suppliers of natural ingredients can take advantage of.

According to the Kline group, the global market for so-called natural cosmetics amounted to \$ 33 billion in 2015 (€ 29 billion). This figure is 13 % of the total cosmetics market (Brands with a Conscience, Ind & Horlings, 2016). The market is predicted to grow to \$ 50 billion (€ 44 billion) in 2019. Certified natural cosmetics make up 45 % of this market, while the remaining 55 % consists of near-natural cosmetics.

Germany, France and the United Kingdom have the highest number of natural product launches and a strong focus on innovation. Switzerland and Italy are also important markets for natural cosmetics.

In this connection, African fruit seed oils, such as marula oil, are trendy. The demand for marula oil has increased sharply, as it is used in mainstream hair care products such as The Body Shop, Tresemmé and Paul Mitchell products.

**TIPS:**

- Find additional information on natural and organic cosmetics in our study of Trends for natural ingredients for cosmetics.
- See our study of [buyer requirements for natural ingredients for cosmetics](#) for more information on certifications for natural ingredients. Always discuss these options with your buyers. It only makes sense to certify your marula oil according to natural organic standards if the final product is also certified.
- Keep up to date with developments in fruit seed oils; for example, by checking the websites of Cosmetics-Design and in-cosmetics. Make sure that the oils which you want to export are in demand on the European market. Check our study on [exporting fruit seed oils to Europe](#).

### GROWING IMPORTANCE OF MARKETING STORIES

European consumers are increasingly interested in the story behind the cosmetic products that they use. At the same time, cosmetic companies want their products to stand out from the competition. In addition to developing products that stand out, they use marketing stories to achieve this goal.

Cosmetic brands commonly add these oils for their marketing value as well as their cosmetic benefits.

Consumers are especially keen on ingredients with an interesting provenance. For example, there are oils that:

- come from a fascinating, exotic or mystical origin (e.g. Marula oil with its fascinating story of how it was made available across sub-Saharan Africa due to human migration).
- are produced with traditional or specific local production processes; are associated with traditional use or local beauty rituals;
- are associated with health, such as fruits (see the trend that the European cosmetic industry finds inspiration in food ingredients);
- are ethically sourced. Ethical claims are increasingly important to consumers, who are also becoming more demanding. Cosmetic brands need to get the story behind these ethical claims right. Wild-collected fruit seed oils are especially interesting in this respect, such as marula. In their marketing, cosmetic brands emphasise the benefits to local communities of collectors.

Cosmetic producers communicate their best ingredient stories in different ways:

- showing pictures of the ingredient or its origin on the end product or in marketing materials
- adding short stories on the end product;
- using stories to build their corporate image, reputation or brand.

Certification of your marula oil can be added to your marketing story. Organic certification in particular can be interesting for it. You could use this certification to target organic cosmetics.

Fair Trade certification is currently less relevant for marula oil as the market for it is very small. However, you can use this certification to support your ethical claim. In addition, if buyers do not require Fair Trade certification right away, specialised buyers may ask you to become certified to support your claims.

#### TIPS:

- Work out a marketing story for your marula oil. What sets your oil or your company apart from competitors? For example, does it come from an exotic origin? Can you link it to a traditional use in cosmetics? Is it used in local beauty rituals? What benefits do you provide to local communities? Determine which story is the most attractive for your targeted market segment (see our study of [market channels and segments for natural ingredients for cosmetics](#)).
- Provide your buyers with good-quality pictures or videos to support your marketing story; for example, pictures of the exotic origin of your marula oil and traditional or local production processes.
- If you make an ethical claim for your marula oil, support this claim with evidence. Which benefits does your product offer to local communities, how many communities are you helping? Provide your buyers with specific information and figures. Be honest about your impact.
- Be prepared to support statements that you make with documentation. You also need to prove your policies on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).



### **SUSTAINABLE USES AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION EXPERIENCE INCREASING IMPORTANCE**

Growing awareness for sustainable use as well as environmental and human protection might challenge the marula oil production. Apart from the raw material shortage, there is a new focus on the pre- and post-harvest production methods. European consumers are asking more and more for sustainable products, which are produced in a conscientious way.

The commercialisation of marula brings a suite of opportunities for rural development and social upliftment, but also several challenges and threats – for subsistence users, for the resource base, and for traditional cultures and customs. Not only in Africa, trees are at risk of extinction due to increasing deforestation implemented in search of land for agricultural use or to use it as fire wood. Not only to sustain marula oil's growing demand, but to sustain the high value of the tree in the context of rural income generation, erosion and other environmental aspects, the planting of new trees offers great potential for the rural population (especially women) and for the conservation of biodiversity.

#### **TIPS:**

- Check on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Work Instructions (WIN), which are important tools to ensure sustainable sourcing of natural ingredients from different perspectives. Implementing SOPs also help companies to comply with legal requirements.
- Establish a sustainable wild collection system.

## **WHAT REQUIREMENTS MUST MARULA OIL COMPLY WITH?**

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR COSMETIC INGREDIENTS**

You can only export your marula oil to the European cosmetics market if you comply with the legal requirements for natural ingredients for cosmetics. These requirements include:

- relevant European cosmetics legislation (Regulation (EC) 1223/2009);
- well-structured product (technical aspects) and company documentation to supply to your buyers;
- if relevant: Organic legislation (Regulation (EC) 834/2007)
- Classification, Labelling and Packaging of chemicals (CLP). You can also discuss this requirement with the freight forwarder or transport company, who will usually be happy to advise you.

#### **TIPS:**

- See our [tips for doing business](#) for additional information.
- See our [workbook on preparing a technical dossier for cosmetic ingredients](#) for more information and tips.

### **ALLERGEN INFORMATION**

There are several ingredients that are known allergens that, when incorporated in a food, must be highlighted on the label. Whilst the cosmetics industry is concerned about skin contact allergens, typically found in fragrances, similar legislation relating to labelling of food allergens does not exist for cosmetics. Still cosmetic manufacturers are concerned that ingredients derived from food allergens such as nuts and seeds represent zero or negligible risk for those consumers who are susceptible to allergies when those ingredients are incorporated in cosmetics. For this reason, suppliers of nut oils in particular, are required to prepare an allergen declaration when they are confident about declaring no allergic risk. The allergy is caused by the presence of protein in the case of nut oils. Hence, zero or negligible presence of protein is required. In the case of marula, marula seeds are not an approved food in the EU and therefore their allergenic potential has not been evaluated. However, even though there are not yet reported cases of allergic reactions to marula seeds, it is recommended in the supply of marula oil for use in cosmetics that during oil processing the presence of protein is reduced by filtration, or refining to negligible levels. Discuss with your customer also.



For vegetable oils, allergens are related to the protein content of the oil (see labelling and documentation requirements below).

**TIPS:**

- Check the website of the [Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety](#) for updates.
- For changes to the cosmetics legislation, see the [EUR-Lex website](#) of the European Union, where legislation and amendments are published.
- See our study of [buyer requirements for natural ingredients for cosmetics](#) for additional information.

**ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING**

You also need to comply with your country's legislation regarding access to genetic resources.

The Nagoya Protocol, a supplementary agreement to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, contains terms and conditions for companies that want to carry out research and development on genetic resources or to benefit from traditional knowledge. It aims to make sure that the benefits of genetic resources and traditional knowledge are shared in a fair and equitable way. This process is called [Access and Benefit-Sharing \(ABS\)](#).

European companies are legally required to follow those laws that are in force in your country regarding Access and Benefit-Sharing in the same way as you are legally required to follow the same legislation in your country. Gradually, countries are implementing legislation to govern access to genetic resources.

You will need to find out whether the use of the genetic resources falls within the scope of the ABS legislation in your country. If it does, European companies will need evidence that the entire upstream supply chain in the country of origin complies with those national laws.

Anyone who carries out R&D, including the buyer downstream in your supply chain, has ABS obligations under the Nagoya Protocol for the genetic resources derived from a provider country. They will be responsible for compliance with ABS but might ask you for help. The national legislation in the country of origin also defines the specific meaning of R&D or "utilisation" of genetic resources.

**TIPS:**

- See our study of [buyer requirements for natural ingredients for cosmetics](#) for more information.
- Develop a procedure to check whether ABS applies to every new genetic resource or traditional knowledge that you want to develop. This process includes knowing the local context and officials. Have a look at the [CBD website](#) for more information, which also includes country profiles.

**ADDITIONAL BUYER REQUIREMENTS**

Many buyers have additional requirements that go beyond legislation and standards.

These elements are established in buyer specifications and include the following requirements:

- Delivering a good and reliable level of quality by following basic practices such as documented Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points (HACCP), or documented Good Manufacturing Practices.
- Being a sustainable supplier to ensure the future availability of your ingredients. Avoid overharvesting of wild plants, provide living wages to your collectors and ensure that you can deliver a stable quality and quantity of the marula oil. Certification of these sustainable practices is only a requirement for niche markets;
- Having good CSR, such as developing a code of conduct and improving your performance in key areas (for example, ensuring that there is no child labour in your supply chain and limiting damage to the environment).

- Some form of traceability is already a legal requirement in certain sectors in the European Union. But beyond mandatory traceability, more and more industries are voluntarily deploying traceability programs to improve efficiency and to help protect their brands and ensure that their cosmetics are safe. In short: traceability is a vital part of the supply chain.
- Excellent customer service is the intangible that sets you and your company apart from others. It does not matter how low your prices are; if your customer service is poor you will lose out on repeat customers.

#### VOLUNTARY STANDARDS AND CERTIFICATIONS

Standards for cosmetic ingredients include:



- Natural cosmetics, the largest and most important niche market – NaTrue and Cosmos; organic cosmetics – Soil Association (the United Kingdom) and Ecocert (France) also certify according to the Cosmos standard for natural and organic cosmetics. BDIH (Germany) also has its own standard;



- The ISO 16128 standard as an alternative minimum self-certifiable standard, which covers definitions and criteria for natural and organic cosmetic ingredients and products. Buyers of cosmetic ingredients expect that private-sector standards will continue to remain the standard for natural and organic cosmetics in Europe, until Europe introduces legal standards. However, the ISO standards are an option for small producers for whom certification according to a private standard is too expensive or not required;

- The ISO 9001 standard is the globally recognized and most widely used quality management standard. It sets the minimum requirements for a quality management system that companies must meet in order to meet the expectations of internal and external stakeholders (such as employees, customers, government agencies). In case of marula oil production, it can be an advantage compared to competitors. EFFCI has developed a specific GMP standard for cosmetic ingredients based on ISO 9001.



- Fair production, a small niche market in terms of certified cosmetic ingredients – Fairtrade, and FairWild (for wild-collected ingredients).

#### QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

The quality of marula oil depends amongst others on the quality of the seeds, the processing of the seeds and handling and storage of the oil. You need to dry the seeds in order to keep the moisture content low (which aids oil extraction and improves the shelf life) and you need to prevent contamination. European cosmetics manufacturers need oils with a minimum of impurities such as water, mineral matter, gums, and carbohydrate substances including vegetable fibres and protein.

The marula oil's freshness and age strongly impact its quality, as does the proper storage of the oil and raw materials. Proper packaging helps to prevent oxidation, which turns the oil rancid. See the tips for packaging below.

European buyers often test the peroxide level of the marula oil. If these levels are too high, it implies that the oil is old or has been left open.

#### TIPS:

- Keep the moisture content in seeds low to avoid mould growth on the seeds and rancidity during storage.
- Process the marula seeds in a way that matches your buyer's preferences and specifications.
- Keep facilities and equipment clean to prevent contamination with foreign materials. Produce your marula oil with a minimum of impurities.
- Filter your oil to remove press cake particles. Use plate and frame filters for unrefined oils. Make use of other filter systems to achieve an impurity of 2 microns or less for refined oils.
- Do not blend or add additives to the marula oil unless your buyer requests them. Buyers prefer pure oils. They need to know whether any preservatives have been added.
- Create a standardised product with a well-defined product specification. Develop and monitor standard operating processes for harvesting and processing. Use marula seeds or oils from different crops to standardise your product's quality; for example, by combining early and late crops, or by using crops from different slopes or areas.
- See our study of [preparing a technical dossier for cosmetic ingredients](#) for additional information.
- If you produce organic marula oil, dedicate your processing plant or a specific processing line to produce only organic oil. This process helps to avoid contamination from non-organic particles. If you cannot do so, clean your machinery and equipment thoroughly between conventional and organic production.

#### LABELLING AND DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

You need to comply with the following requirements when labelling your marula oil:

- Set up a registration system to identify and trace individual batches of your marula oil, whether they are blends or not, and mark them accordingly to ensure traceability.
- Label your products in English, unless your buyer wants you to use a different language.

Your labels must include:

- Product name/INCI name
- Batch code
- Place of origin
- Name and address of exporter
- Date of manufacture
- Best-before date
- Net weight
- Recommended storage conditions

For organic marula oil, include the name/code of the inspection body and the certification number.

You also need to provide your buyer with the following documentation:

- Technical Data Sheet (TDS)  
(for example please [check](#) the marula oil data sheet and specification of Aurum Africa)
- Safety Data Sheet (SDS)
- GMO certificate (if requested)
- Certificate of origin
- Product information sheet
- 100% composition of the oil
- Fatty Acid Profile – the primary indicator of the composition and properties of marula oil;
- Allergen declaration (protein content; compare examples of a declaration for [apricot kernel](#) and [blackcurrant seed oils](#)). This process is especially important if you are selling directly to a cosmetics manufacturer
- Non-animal Testing declaration (sometimes requested as part of customers due diligence to their customers)

### MARULA OIL IN PUMP FLACON, IN GLASS FLACON WITH PIPETTE, IN BULK



Source: Aurum Africa



Source: The Ordinary



Source: Zatural

#### TIPS:

- See our study of [buyer requirements for natural ingredients for cosmetics](#) for information on classification, labelling and packaging (CLP).
- See our manual on [preparing a technical data sheet](#) for more information (it includes information on preparing a Safety Data Sheet).

#### PACKAGING REQUIREMENTS FOR MARULA OIL

Packaging requirements could differ per buyer. However, there are some general requirements that you have to take into account to preserve the quality of the product. See the tips below.

#### TIPS:

- Always ask your buyer for their specific packaging requirements.
- Use containers of a material that does not react with components of the oil, such as lacquered or lined steel or aluminium. You can also use polythene lined boxes (25 kg).
- Clean and dry the containers before loading the oil.
- Fill the headspace in the container with a gas that does not react with constituents of the oil, such as nitrogen or carbon dioxide.
- Store containers in a dry, cool place to prevent quality deterioration.
- If you produce organic certified marula oil, physically separate them from oils that are not certified.
- See our study of [buyer requirements for natural ingredients for cosmetics](#) for information on classification, labelling and packaging (CLP).

## WHAT COMPETITION DO YOU FACE?

### MARKET ENTRY BARRIERS

Market entry barriers for most fruit seed oils are quite low in terms of the technology that you need and the European legislative requirements. For marula seeds, cold pressing technology should be adequate.

The type of equipment and technical know-how that you need to ensure the right product quality depends on the complexity of the extraction process.

To access the European market, you need to supply stable, regular quantities of marula oil at a consistent quality. Your buyer needs to be totally reassured of the stability of the supply. For small companies, 25 kg a year could be sufficient, whereas large buyers will need higher volumes. You should discuss this aspect with your potential buyer. Under promise and over deliver.

Market entry barriers are much higher in terms of differentiating your marula oil in the market. See the product competition section below for more information.

Fruit seed oils, such as marula oil, also require a strong marketing campaign in addition to high quality. Cosmetics companies use these oils for their marketing benefits (see the trend for growing importance of marketing stories).

You need to show good practices in terms of the supply chain:

- Raw material supply
- Processing
- Storage (seed and oil)
- Use
- Availability
- Traceability

It is very important to have documented processes to understand how you manage risks on all of the above points. Ideally, you will certify some or all processes.

In case, marula oil is not your single product, adding it to your range of products widens your portfolio and boosts profitability. For example, fruit seed oils are interesting by-products of food or beverage production.

If you already produce marula fruit beverages, you can add marula seed oil production to your activities to benefit from market diversification and add value to your waste materials. You need to determine whether marula oil production is feasible:

- Can you produce oils at sufficient quality, quantity and price?
- Can you find enough interest from buyers?
- Which investments do you need to make and can you recover these investments?

#### TIPS:

- Conduct a feasibility study to determine whether your marula oil has sufficient potential on the market and is worth the investment. Through analysing the composition of the oil, examine the oil's functionality or efficacy, safety and market opportunities. Market opportunities should also be based on the price and availability of the raw materials.
- Comply with market access requirements in terms of quality control, traceability and sustainability. You need to show where your oil comes from and where it is processed.
- Determine which extraction method is required for your marula oil and which investment you need to make. If you need a high investment, you can consider sharing the investment costs with other marula oil producers.
- Prepare detailed product documentation on the product, its technical, safety and efficacy data, as well as professional samples. Increase your capacity for safety testing and monitoring to do so.
- Set aside sufficient funds for a marketing campaign. This process may be a costly part of your promotion activities, but it is important to demonstrate the benefits that your product can offer to new potential buyers.
- Determine to what extent you can enter markets for established marula oils. Can you supply sufficient volumes at a stable quantity and an attractive price?
- For more information and tips, see our [tips for doing business](#).

#### PRODUCT COMPETITION

You need to differentiate your marula oil from competing products on the European market, such as:

- Other vegetable oils and fats – these products have similar properties to fruit seed oils, like marula oil. However, marula oil, as speciality oil, can stand out from these oils with their marketing potential.
- Synthetic alternatives – several well-established ingredients are on the market, which are derivatives of palm oil and coconut oil that have a proven effectiveness and have been standardised. Formulators may prefer these due to their consistent quality, high availability and low price. However, there is little marketing value in using these derivatives.

Invest time and money in a marketing campaign. Not all marula oils will succeed.

You have several options to stand out from the competition with your marula oil, such as:

- Developing a good product quality
- Developing interesting marketing stories, based on the oil's origin and marketing appeal
- Certifying your oil, especially organic. These certifications can help you to target high-end and organic cosmetic brands
- Excelling in CSR – because buyers expect you to have some CSR, although it is difficult to get a better price through this process. This aspect is becoming a basic market requirement
- Improving access to resources/sustainability of the resource; producing a marula oil at competitive prices (also in comparison to other fruit seed oils)

If a manufacturer has already included a particular marula oil in a cosmetic product or product range and built up its market, they will not likely switch to another supplier. However, if a manufacturer is developing a new product or product range, they are more willing to buy new ingredients and/or from new suppliers.

**TABLE 2: EXAMPLE OF PRODUCT SUBSTITUTION FOR MARULA OIL**

	<b>Marula seed oil</b>	<b>Passion fruit seed oil</b>
<b>Comparative profiles</b>	Both fruit seed oils, when unrefined, have significant antioxidant activities. Their composition of fatty acids is different: marula seed oil is high in omega-9 fatty acids, whereas passion fruit seed oil contains high levels of omega-6 fatty acids. Oils with a different fatty acid profile can have different skin feel characteristics.  Both oils are used in a similar manner within cosmetic products.	
<b>Competitive advantages</b>	Availability of marula seed oil is lower, thereby increasing the risk of irregular supplies. It is difficult to obtain a stable supply.  Marketing potential for marula seed oil is higher. The oil is iconic to Africa, where the fruits are collected from the wild. The seed oil has a long-standing history of use as a cosmetic ingredient.	Availability of passion fruit seed oil is better. The fruits are cultivated and the oil is traded in large volumes. Oil can be a by-product of the juice industry.  Price of passion fruit seed oil is lower.  Marketing potential for passion fruit seed oil is lower, as it cannot show such an attractive provenance.

**TIPS:**

- Determine the chances of substitution for your product. Find out which competing ingredients you should include in your market analysis. Have a look at Table 2, which gives some considerations for product substitution by comparing the competitive advantages of two fruit seed oils: marula oil and passion fruit seed oil.
- Investigate whether and show how your marula oil can substitute other oils and butters. Compare the properties of your oil and the fatty acid composition with those of the oil's alternatives. Communicate this information in a clear and attractive way.
- Use your promotional campaign to explain the benefits of your marula oil compared to competing vegetable oils. For instance, focus on its origin or its more attractive properties. You can also stand out as an exporter; for example, by offering additional services, more attractive payment terms and price, or providing better delivery options.

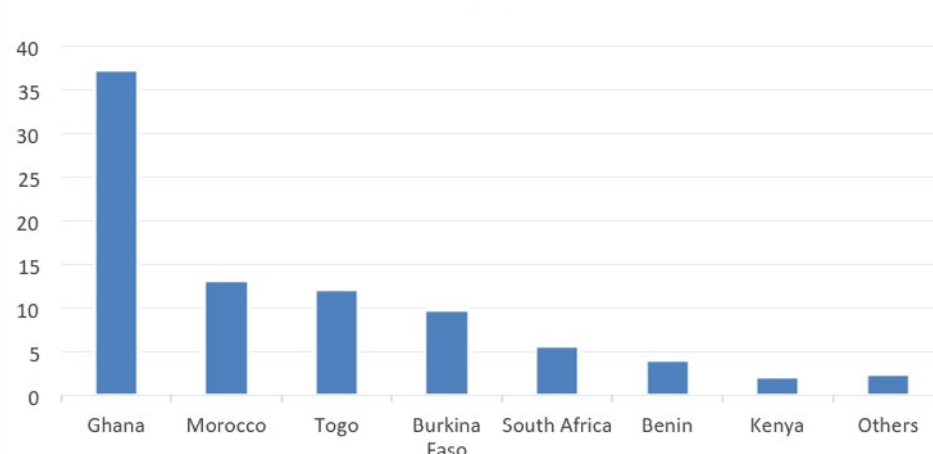
**COMPANY COMPETITION**

In most cases, other suppliers can deliver the same product as you. To differentiate your marula oil from rivals on the market, you need to find your unique selling point. You can find more information under the chapter on product competition above.

Along with finding a unique selling point for your product, you should also build your company reputation to stand out from your rivals. Industry stakeholders indicate that companies increasingly use their reputation to stand out from the competition, instead of focusing on the individual products which they produce.

Additionally, ensure an impeccable level of customer service and product delivery (follow the saying "Under promise and over deliver!").

Having a strong company reputation based on trust may make it easier to stand out from the competition and improve your negotiation position. Buyers are less likely to switch to another supplier if they trust your company. This process also means that if you damage the relationship which you have with your buyers, they will be more susceptible to new suppliers.

**FIGURE 2: LEADING SUPPLIERS OF AFRICAN VEGETABLE OILS – VOLUMES IN 1,000 TONNES – 2017**

Source: ITC

The countries mentioned in Figure 2 produce several speciality vegetable oils, not all of which are used in cosmetics or can be classified as fruit seed oils. However, as these oils can be used as substitutes, the countries and respective companies that produce them are potential sources of competition. Examples of speciality oils from these countries include:

- Marula oil
- Argan oil
- Melonseed oil
- Baobab oil

Expect strong competition from established suppliers.

**TIPS:**

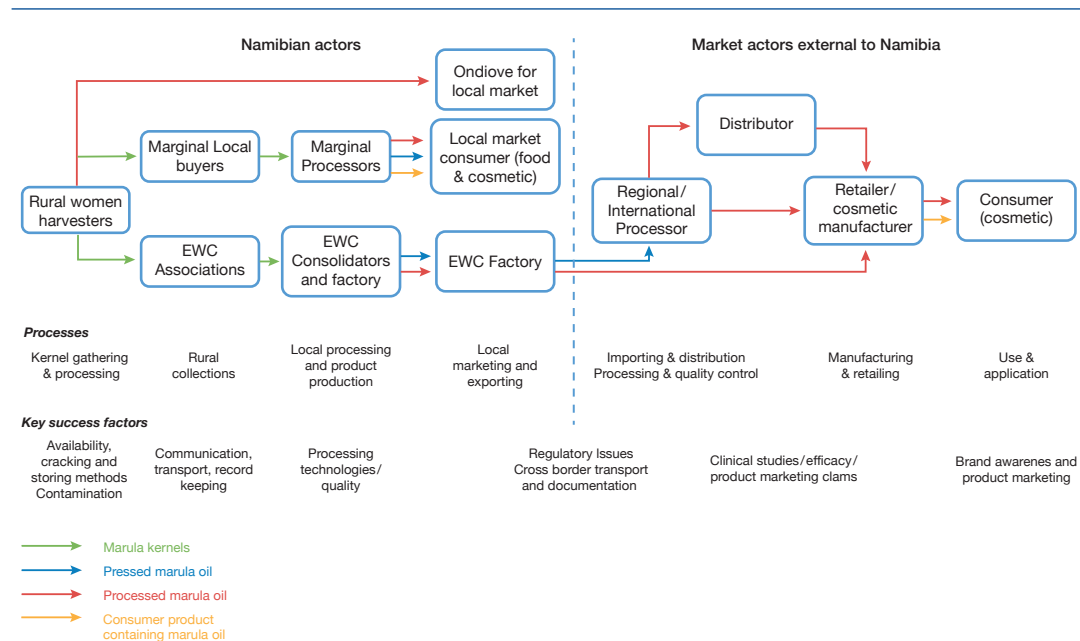
- Promptly answer questions and requests from your potential buyers. Be open and honest in your communications. Keep your promises and be transparent about non-compliance.
- Demonstrate that you are a reliable supplier in terms of quality consistency, delivery, packaging, service delivery and supply security.
- Organise your supply chain to differentiate your company on the market. Make sure that your supplies are traceable, sustainable and well documented.
- If you work with suppliers, give them clear standards on the collection and/or processing of seeds that you buy from them in your own specifications. If your suppliers lack technical or human resources capacities, include pictures in your specifications and train them on how to comply with these standards.
- Establish clear agreements on the amount and quality of seeds that you buy from your suppliers. Build trust and be consistent in your purchases of raw materials.
- See our [tips for doing business](#) and our study of [competition for natural ingredients for cosmetics](#) for additional information.



## THROUGH WHICH CHANNELS CAN YOU GET YOUR MARULA OIL ON THE EUROPEAN MARKET?

This section provides some information about the marketing channels through which marula oil can be marketed. Figure 3 provides a broad overview of the routes to the international market using marula oil supplied by an actual example of a cooperative in Namibia (Eudafano Women's Cooperative, EWC).

FIGURE 3: NAMIBIAN MARULA OIL VALUE CHAIN 2017



Source: PhytoTrade Africa, Marula oil value chain analysis, 2012

### WHICH MARKET SEGMENTS TO TARGET?

In order to determine which market segment you should target with your marula oil, you need to answer the following questions.

#### 1. WHAT DOES YOUR MARULA OIL DO?

You need to determine how the functionality of your marula oil compares to the general functional properties of vegetable oils and fats. Does it have a similar function? In CosIng, various fruit seed oils are registered with emollient (skin softening) and skin/hair conditioning properties. Whereas all vegetable oils have the same basic properties (cosmetic benefits) of emolliency, hydration (by preventing water loss), and conditioning) there are more subtle differences due to the fatty acid composition. The fatty acid composition affects stability, viscosity and melting point.

In addition, similar to other vegetable oils, marula oil is used for its claim of moisturising effects, provided that the levels of use in a finished product justify the claim.

#### 2. FOR WHICH INDUSTRY SEGMENT IS MARULA OIL USEFUL?

Marula oil can be used in practically all segments of the cosmetic industry:

- Skin care products
- Antiaging products
- Baby care products
- Hair care products
- Moisturisers (face and body)
- Balms and salves
- Massage oils
- Eye creams

If the marula oil is used as base oil, it will make up a large part of the product. Percentages of marula oil in a final product can reach up to 100% (such as massage oils). Most skin and hair care products contain lower percentages to achieve the optimum performance-claim-price ratio.

### 3. FOR WHICH KIND OF COSMETIC COMPANY IS YOUR MARULA OIL INTERESTING?

Both natural and conventional cosmetic brands are interested in marula oil. Examples include the small producer Aurum Africa (Germany) and the large brand The Body Shop (the United Kingdom). Marula oil is already used in a wide range of products.

If you can ensure stable quantities and qualities, large cosmetic brands offer good opportunities as well as smaller natural and organic cosmetic brands.

### 4. WHAT IS YOUR UNIQUE SELLING POINT?

As marula oil is used for its marketing appeal as well as its cosmetic properties, you need to find out how your product stands out from this competition in terms of its marketing story. What makes it different or special? For example, is it used in traditional beauty rituals? See the trend for growing importance of marketing stories for more information.

Your marula oil can also stand out because of its interesting composition, like being high in omega fatty acids or having good stability. Thus, formulators can use fewer preservatives in their final product.

#### TIPS:

- Use the properties of your marula oil as registered in CosIng or as listed on websites of European manufacturers of cosmetics products in your promotional materials. Do not use terminology that is not used on the market.
- Collaborate with a local university department or laboratory to determine the composition of your marula oil, as well as the fatty acid profile, for a 100%. You need to include this information in your product documentation.
- Have a look at websites such as [cosmetic analysis](#), where you can find cosmetic products that use marula oil. This information can help you to determine what your oil is used for and by what type of cosmetic producers.
- See our study of [doing business in natural ingredients for cosmetics](#) for additional information.
- See our study of [market channels and segments for natural ingredients for cosmetics](#) for an overview of market channels, segments, trends and developments.

Fruit seed oils, such as marula oil, are mostly exported to Europe as cold pressed and filtered oil. European importers are your most important entry point into the market. They will supply the oil to refiners or processors or directly to cosmetic manufacturers for certain products.

Most cosmetic producers prefer to use refined oil. However, some will accept oils that have undergone a good filtration process. Refining decreases the shelf life of an oil, as natural antioxidants are removed. Crude marula oil goes to the refining industry to remove odour and colour and free fatty acids. This process is commonly done in Europe. You can also research whether you can refine your marula oil yourself.

However, some cosmetic manufacturers prefer to use crude oil directly. The reason is that the refining process can also take away attractive characteristics of an oil, such as active properties.

Keep in mind that the vast majority require some refining. At some point along the chain, one of the intermediaries will refine the oil before it is used in cosmetic manufacture. Small companies may use unrefined but there is a risk of batch to batch variation (e.g. regarding odour, colour, etc.)

It is recommended to do oil filtering at the source. Whether or not further processing steps, such as refining, are feasible in the country of origin depends on the following points:

- Can you afford to install a refining operation?
- Does the demand justify the investment?
- Can you assure suitable oil quality?
- Do you have sufficient volumes available in order to make refining profitable?
- What are your buyer's needs?
- Can you arrange the logistics?
- Is there enough demand for your refined oil?

It is rare for small exporters from developing countries to supply processors and manufacturers directly. Reasons for this situation include the following:

- Small exporters cannot provide sufficient volumes.
- Small exporters do not supply refined oil.
- A high number of suppliers is an unattractive prospect to these buyers. Their delivery times are too long.
- The quality is too low to be used in cosmetic products directly.

#### TIPS:

- Supply, if possible, a combination of fruit seed oils (e.g. marula, baobab). This strategy can make you more interesting to potential buyers.
- If you cannot produce sufficient quantity and quality of marula oil yourself, link up with other producers.
- Do a feasibility study to find out whether you could set up installations to refine the marula oil yourself. Find out which installations you would need to meet your buyer's requirements for refined oil and determine whether you can earn a return on your investment.
- Benefit from the experience and knowledge of European importers instead of approaching end-users directly.
- If you produce certified marula oil, check the websites of buyers to find out whether they work with certified ingredients. Buyers that do not do so are unlikely to pay a premium for your certification.
- Visit and participate in trade fairs to test market receptivity, to obtain market information and to find potential business partners. The most relevant trade fair in Europe for exporters of marula oil is in-cosmetics. Other options include Beyond Beauty (Paris, France), SANA (Bologna, Italy) or Vivanness for organic producers (Nuremberg, Germany).
- Find potential buyers by identifying finished products on the market that already use marula oil. For example, check websites such as [cosmetics analysis](#).
- See our studies of [finding buyers](#) and [market channels and segments](#) for additional information.

## WHAT ARE THE END MARKET PRICES FOR MARULA OIL?

Like other vegetable oils, the price of marula oil generally depends on:

- Exclusivity and novelty of the oil vs. availability – popular oils with a limited availability can sell for a higher price;
- Price of the raw material vs. oil yield – if the price of your raw material is high, it would increase the price of your oil. However, if the oil yield is high, this fact could allow you to improve your margins or decrease your price if needed;
- Certifications – certified marula oil could sell for a higher price, as long as you are able to find customers willing to pay for the certificate.

Quality also impacts the price, but it is a subjective factor. You need to comply with legal requirements as a minimum quality. Beyond that aspect, your buyer will decide how they define “high quality”; for example, in terms of the composition or properties for which they are looking. You need to find a buyer who values what you can offer and who is willing to pay more than other importers.

However, the market for marula oil is less sensitive to price when compared to commodity vegetable oils. In this sector, high quality and marketing potential are also important to European buyers and can merit a higher price. The higher the price, the less it is used in the final product.

Prices for marula oil range between € 30 and € 60 per kg at the point of sale to the manufacturer in EU, depending on the volume sold. However, prices can increase substantially for an exclusive and highly demanded oil that is in low supply. The high prices are a natural limitation on the volumes because expensive oils will only be used at low concentrations in a final product. As the price decreases so demand will naturally increase. The most important aspect is to make sure that all your costs are covered with a reasonable margin and then “go to market” to find out who is interested in your product at that price.

#### **TIPS:**

- For your marula oil, monitor harvests in major production countries to anticipate price developments.
- Calculate your production costs by using a detailed cost breakdown from raw material to market. Do not forget additional costs such as certification, marketing and chemical analysis. After the cost breakdown, add a profit margin to create your selling price.
- Enhance your price competitiveness by improving production yields; for example, by drying the seeds before extraction, improving the efficiency of extraction techniques, or increasing the scale of production and transporting larger volumes.

## **USEFUL SOURCES**

Check the various links provided throughout this document, but here are some other useful references:

#### **EXPORT AND MARKET ENTRY SUPPORT:**

CBI – market studies [www.cbi.eu](http://www.cbi.eu) or specifically for cosmetic ingredients [www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-cosmetics](http://www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-cosmetics)

EU Trade Helpdesk <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/tradehelp>

ITC – International Trade Centre [www.intracen.org](http://www.intracen.org)

#### **MARULA OIL:**

The German Association of Wholesalers in Fats & Oils [www.grofor.de/en](http://www.grofor.de/en)

The German Association of Oilseeds Processors [www.ovid-verband.de](http://www.ovid-verband.de)

Fedoil is the Federation that represents the vegetable oils and fats industry in the European Union [www.fediol.eu](http://www.fediol.eu)

NATRUE [www.natrue.org](http://www.natrue.org)

Information on the EU Food Industry [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/food\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/food_en)

#### **RELEVANT TRADE FAIRS:**

Biofach/Vivaness [www.biofach.de/en](http://www.biofach.de/en)

In-Cosmetics [www.in-cosmetics.com](http://www.in-cosmetics.com)

#### **SOME WHOLESALERS AND IMPORTERS:**

Aurum Africa [www.aurumafrika.eu/en](http://www.aurumafrika.eu/en)

Terra Elements [www.terraelements.net/en/home](http://www.terraelements.net/en/home)

Spinnrad [www.spinnrad.de](http://www.spinnrad.de)

Henry Lamotte Oils [www.lamotte-oils.de/en.html](http://www.lamotte-oils.de/en.html)

The Body Shop [www.thebodyshop.com](http://www.thebodyshop.com)

John Paul Mitchell [www.paulmitchell.com/marulaoil](http://www.paulmitchell.com/marulaoil)

#### **TRADE PRESS:**

Oil World provides a forecasting service for oilseeds and oils [www.oilworld.de](http://www.oilworld.de)

Cosmetics Business is the leading portal for the cosmetics and beauty industry  
[www.cosmeticsbusiness.com](http://www.cosmeticsbusiness.com)

Naturkosmetik Branchenreport with a [link](#) to the latest published annual report.

Naturkosmetik Jahrbuch is published annually by [www.naturkosmetik-verlag.de](http://www.naturkosmetik-verlag.de)

bio verlag [www.bioverlag.de](http://www.bioverlag.de)

#### **MORE INFORMATION AND TRADE STATISTICS:**

Aurum Africa Data Sheet and Specification – <https://www.aurumafrika.eu/wp-content/uploads/Data-sheet-and-specifications-AURUM-Africa-Marula-Oil.pdf>

CBI Market Information 'Vegetable Oils' – <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/vegetable-oils>

CBI Market Information 'Tropical Fruit Purees' – <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/processed-fruit-vegetables-edible-nuts/tropical-fruit-purées>

CBI Market Information 'What requirements must your product comply with' –  
<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-cosmetics/buyer-requirements>

CBI Market Information 'Exporting fruit seed oils to Europe' –  
<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-cosmetics/fruit-seed-oils>

CBI Market Information 'Through what channels can you get your product onto the European market' –  
<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-cosmetics/channels-segments>

CBI Market Information '12 tips to do business' –  
<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-cosmetics/doing-business>

CBI Market Information 'How to prepare a technical dossier for cosmetic ingredients' –  
<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-cosmetics/how-prepare-technical-dossier-cosmetic-ingredient>

CBI Market Information 'What requirements must your product comply with' –  
<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-cosmetics/buyer-requirements>

CBI Market Information 'What competition do you face' –  
<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-cosmetics/competition>

CBI Market Information '10 tips to find buyers' –  
<https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/natural-ingredients-cosmetics/finding-buyers>

Convention on Biological Diversity 'Access and Benefit Sharing' – <https://www.cbd.int/abs>

Cosmetic Analysis – <http://www.cosmeticanalysis.com>

Cosmetic Design Europe – <https://www.cosmeticsdesign-europe.com>

EU Expanding Exports Helpdesk – <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/tradehelp> – go to 'trade statistics'.

EUR-Lex Access to European Union Law – <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>

ITC Trade Map – [https://www.trademap.org/\(X\(1\)S\(wufpnu45zchxaqes5tg2rd45\)\)/Index.aspx](https://www.trademap.org/(X(1)S(wufpnu45zchxaqes5tg2rd45))/Index.aspx)

Marula Natural Products – <http://www.marula.org.za/techoil.htm>

Scientific Committees – [https://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific\\_committees/consumer\\_safety\\_de](https://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/consumer_safety_de)

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