



It is with deep regret and great sadness that we announce the passing of Michael (Mickey) Strauss (86), premier Israeli and international industrialist, leader and businessman

Michael Strauss was among the founders and pioneers of the Israeli food industry, son of the founders of Strauss Group, and a man who, alongside his great love for industry, devoted the last decades of his life to public and social activity, including the advancement of the city of Acre rooted in a profound commitment to building coexistence in Israel

Michael Strauss served as chairman of Strauss Holdings until several years ago and is the controlling shareholder of Strauss Group

Strauss Group bows its head to honor his passing

Michael Strauss was among the most important, significant founders and pioneers of Israeli industry in general, and the food industry in particular. His work represents a unique contribution to the development and prosperity of the State of Israel, and helped generate the healthy, sustainable growth of the Israeli economy.

His indefatigable drive to improve and excel, his curiosity to discover people's needs and his desire to always be at the forefront of food technology, as well as his entrepreneurial spirit and innovativeness in business, introduced a fresh, healthy competitive and creative spirit to Israel industry, transforming it into an advanced industry, even by world standards. Michael Strauss played an important part in elevating the status of Israeli industry and the country's progress everywhere in the world. During the entire course of his career he saw fit not only to promote the Strauss company, but its business environment as well, in the belief that a fertile business environment would create genuine value for the State of Israel. This perspective led him at all times to strive for the wellbeing of farmers, suppliers, employees and the entire community.

Under his leadership and management, Strauss Group grew to become Israel's second largest food manufacturer and a leader in the Israeli marketplace. Thanks to Michael's vision, the Group broke into international markets and became an innovative global food and beverage company with businesses in some 20 countries, while continuing to operate out of its home base in Israel in line with world-class standards and principles, employing 6,500 people in Israel and 15,000 worldwide. The infrastructure Michael built in the company, along with its values, culture and spirit, are and will continue to be a meaningful component as Strauss continues on its path toward the future.

Throughout all his years of work in the company, and more so after his retirement, Michael was prominent in his social engagement, which focused mainly on the development of Israel's peripheral regions in general, and northern Israel and the Galilee, where he grew up, in particular. Until his death, he continued to work, passionately and vigorously, for the development and advancement of the city of Acre, which neighbors on the city of Nahariya, where Strauss Group was founded some eighty years ago. He took action to improve the quality of life of Acre's residents, enlisted the help of businessmen in investing in the city, initiated the establishment of manufacturing sites to create jobs for residents of the area, and cultivated cultural and musical institutions and other services for the wellbeing of residents.

Michael Strauss was a great believer in the human spirit, in coexistence and in peace, and we believe that his spiritual testament is to continue to tirelessly strive to impart the values of tolerance and equality.

Michael is the father of three: Ofra Strauss – chairperson of Strauss Group, Irit Strauss-Koffler and Adi Strauss, who for the past few years has served as chairman of Strauss Holdings. He has twelve grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Michael Strauss – Background

Michael Peter Strauss was born in 1934 in the city of Ulm, Germany, to Dr. Richard Strauss and his wife Hilde. In 1936, with the rising persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany, he immigrated with his parents to Israel, then Palestine, where they settled in the northern town of Nahariya. It was in this home that Michael absorbed the values of hard work and Zionism. The small dairy farm his parents set up in their back yard marked the modest beginning of Strauss Group, which, under his leadership and management, would become Israel's second largest food manufacturer and a flourishing international corporation. In 1939 his parents decided to sell the cowshed, which by then already comprised twenty cows, and to establish the Strauss Nahariya Dairy. It was one of the forerunners of Israeli industry.

As a teenager, Michael took part in the struggle against British rule in Mandatory Palestine, helping to sneak immigrants off boats and smuggle them ashore. After graduating from the Naval Academy in Haifa, Michael served in the merchant navy, and in 1951 was drafted into the IDF, where he served in the Israeli Navy. Since childhood, Michael had always loved the sea, but after completing his military service he chose to help his parents in the dairy, which was experiencing financial difficulties, setting aside his dream of becoming a seaman. He enrolled in a milk technician's course at the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, where he discovered a new, exciting love – the dairy world. Despite the family's economic situation, in 1956 Michael went to Switzerland to study as a milk technician. From Switzerland, he continued to Ulm, Germany, where he was born, for his internship at Unilever's Milkana plant, and later studied business administration at Harvard.

Michael returned to Nahariya filled with enthusiasm, eager to apply the knowledge he had acquired in Switzerland at Strauss Dairy, including the knowhow needed to manufacture Gervais cheese. Two years later, this led to the signing of a knowhow and royalty agreement with the French company, Gervais. In 1969 Michael signed an international partnership agreement between Strauss and Gervais-Danone, which acquired a 28% stake in Strauss Dairy. In 1972 he established a modern plant in Nahariya for the production of yogurt and dairy desserts, under joint ownership with Gervais-Danone. The new plant's pièce de résistance was the dairy dessert "Dany", which was marketed under the slogan, "Because to him it's Dany, and to you – it's milk".

In 1974 Michael introduced Danone yogurt to Israel, thereby bringing the latest international health news to the country and achieving a revolutionary breakthrough in a category as yet unknown in Israel. Several years later, Strauss manufactured a new dessert, "Milky", which even today is considered the most successful dairy dessert in Israel.

In 1975, after his father's death, Michael was appointed chairman of Strauss Dairy. Under his management, the company became a major source of employment in northern Israel, and later, countrywide as well. In 1991 Michael was appointed president and chairman of Strauss Group. Under his leadership, the company created a new product category – refrigerated salads, dips and spreads for home consumption. In 1997 a modern manufacturing facility, the only one of its kind in the world, was established in Karmiel, for the manufacture of hummus on continuous production lines. Strauss was to establish its next production sites for hummus, dips and spreads in the US thanks to a network of connections Michael had created and cultivated, thus realizing his vision by using the infrastructure he had built to penetrate the North American market, a vision that enabled Strauss to become the owner of an international fresh dips and spreads business which is today active in the US, Canada, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand, Holland and Germany.

In 1997 Michael chose the coffee and confectionery manufacturer, Elite, as Strauss's partner for the future. This strategic move – partnership with Elite and acquisition of the controlling interest in the company – granted Strauss Group a foothold in international markets via the roast coffee segment, and today, Strauss Group is the fifth largest coffee producer in the world in terms of green coffee procurement.

One of the biggest and most significant moves undertaken by Michael Strauss as chairman before he retired from active management was made in 1999, when Strauss entered into an equal partnership in salty snacks with international giant PepsiCo-Frito Lay. The partnership was later expanded by Ofra Strauss as chairman of the Group to include dips and spreads through the companies Sabra and Obela, which are active in the US, Canada, Europe and Australia. In 2001 Michael passed the management baton to his daughter Ofra, but not before he had made a gift to the Group of what he considered his "lifetime achievement" – the biggest and most advanced dairy in the Middle East, which he had built in Achihud in the Galilee.

In 2004, under Ofra Strauss's leadership, the merger between Strauss and Elite was completed, and together, they continue the tradition of Israeli industry, achieving impressive successes in Israel and internationally, in five businesses: Strauss Israel, Strauss Coffee, the international dips and spreads companies Sabra and Obela, Strauss Water, and the Innovation Division, which oversees the activity of The Kitchen FoodTech incubator and Alpha Strauss.

Over the years, Michael Strauss served as a member of numerous public councils, including the inner management of the Israel Dairy Board; chairman of Hamil – the Israel Management Center; chairman of the Israel Advertising Association; and chairman of the Food Industries Association, chairman of the audit committee and member of the presidency of the Manufacturers Association of Israel.

Michael was the recipient of numerous awards and prizes honoring his achievements, mainly for management excellence and his significant, many-year-long contribution to the development of Israel's industry and economy, the economic development of the Galilee and the advancement of the city of Acre.

In the past few years, although already well into his eighties, Michael Strauss continued to speak publicly on the subject of leadership in dozens of forums, before students and military personnel, and to devote his efforts and experience to the furtherance of social and humane projects.

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