

Improving Diets and Nutrition

FOOD-BASED APPROACHES

Edited by
Brian Thompson and Leslie Amoroso



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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

and

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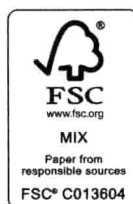
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Improving Diets and Nutrition

Food-based Approaches



In memoriam Michael Latham

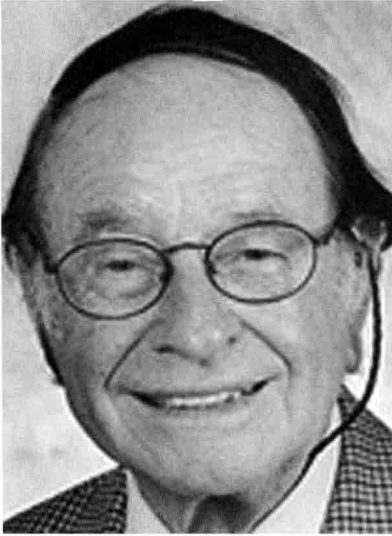


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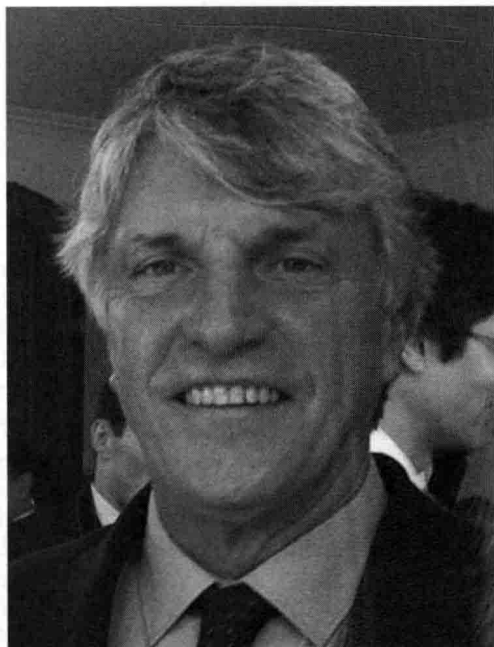
Michael Latham, who died on 1 April 2011 aged 82, was one of the founders of the field of international nutrition that deals with the nutrition problems of low-income countries. Born and raised in Tanganyika of British parents – his father was a colonial doctor in the 1920s and 1930s – he obtained a medical degree from Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, before returning to Tanganyika in 1955 to work first as a ‘bush doctor’ and later as leader of the Nutrition Unit in the Ministry of Health of the new country of Tanzania. In 1965, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire for these efforts. He then obtained postgraduate degrees from London and Harvard and began teaching at Cornell University in 1969, heading its International Nutrition Department for 25 years and maintaining a substantial workload – even as Emeritus Professor – until his death.

Latham was a lifelong champion of the underprivileged and marginalized and an advocate of the right to food and nutrition, tirelessly calling for measures to redress inequities in global resource allocation and poverty. Generations of the students he both trained and inspired went on to be scientists, academics or technocrats, but also pursued careers dedicated to doing something practical to redress the injustices of this world.

Professor Latham did important research (authoring or co-authoring some 450 articles, including two FAO books (*Human Nutrition in Tropical Africa*, first published in 1965 and revised in 1979; and *Human Nutrition in the Developing World*, published in 1997 and reprinted in 2004) that changed programme and policy orientation related to infant feeding, the control of parasitic diseases in humans, and combating micronutrient malnutrition, particularly food-based approaches. His final articles, including commentaries in *World Nutrition* and his last presentation in this Symposium, focused on the risks associated with ‘magic bullet’ approaches such as vitamin A capsule distribution (questioning whether in the real world this is actually reducing young child mortality) and the utilization of ready-to-use supplemental foods to prevent malnutrition. In 2008, he received the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition Order of Merit in recognition of his outstanding lifelong contributions and service to nutrition.

He is survived by his life partner, Lani Stephenson, retired Cornell Associate Professor of Nutritional Sciences, and two sons.

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