

SYRIA

Safaa Kumari

Plant virology

Dr. Safaa Kumari is Syrian a plant virologist who heads the Seed Health Lab at ICARDA, a non-profit research center that offers innovative agricultural solutions to dryland family farmers affected by crippling climate change.

Dr. Kumari is known for developing ‘super seeds’ resistant to the region’s most devastating crop viruses of faba beans, chickpeas, and lentils - all vitally important crops for food security and farmers’ livelihoods. After discovering a variety of faba bean immune to a devastating virus wiping out Mediterranean farmers’ harvests, she cross bred it with a high yielding variety to obtain a resilient, nutritious and sustainable faba crop.

During the unrest in Syria, Dr. Kumari risked a perilous journey from Addis Ababa, through Damascus all the way to Aleppo to recover bags of improved seeds that she managed to bring back to safety in her laboratory in Lebanon.