



Wafaa El Khoury

Wafaa El Khoury is a plant pathologist at the Plant Production and Protection Division of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome, Italy. After her initial studies in agriculture at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, she was awarded a PhD in plant disease epidemiology at the Justus-Liebig University of Giessen, Germany. She has over 20 years of experience in university teaching, research, and agricultural development projects with the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and USAID working directly with both poor farming and rural communities and agrofood producers in the Near East. Her present work at FAO involves providing plant protection expertise for various projects and programmes in Africa, the Near East, and Central and South Asia, mainly focusing on transboundary plant diseases affecting staple crops in developing countries. Advice and technical support is provided to governments to draw up and implement contingency plans and systems to improve their preparedness to face potential food security threats due to plant disease epidemics. Activities in the countries target policy makers, technicians, researchers, extension agents and farmers mainly in a participatory approach. Key features of preparedness include strengthening national field surveillance of diseases and emerging pathogens, regional and global information sharing mechanisms, national seed systems and vegetatively propagated planting material, national landscape management and gene deployment strategies, and field management of diseases by farmers and farming communities. She is the coordinator of FAO's Wheat Rust Global Programme and is involved in the development of similar programmes to tackle banana, cassava and potato diseases in close cooperation with national and international partner institutions including International Agricultural Research Centres. She is presently the Vice President of the International Plant Pathology Society (ISPP), and she has previously served as the President of the Arab Society for Plant Protection and was for several years its Vice-President and Secretary Treasurer.