Librería

Bonilla y Asociados

desde 1950





Título:

Autor: Precio: \$375.00

Editorial: Año: 2009

Tema: Edición: 1ª

Sinopsis ISBN: 9781597263993

The future of our food depends on tiny seeds in orchards and fields the world over. In 1943, one of the first to recognize this fact, the great botanist Nikolay Vavilov, lay dying of starvation in a Soviet prison. But in the years before Stalin jailed him as a scapegoat for the country's famines, Vavilov had traveled over five continents, collecting hundreds of thousands of seeds in an effort to outline the ancient centers of agricultural diversity and guard against widespread hunger. Now, another remarkable scientist_and vivid storyteller_has retraced his footsteps.

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