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The 'home restaurant' phenomenon in Italy: application of a multidisciplinary approach aimed at increasing hosts' awareness of food risks

Project coordinator: Licia Ravarotto

The sharing economy is grounded on shared production or consumption of goods and services. This approach, led by the idea of shared access rather than private ownership, is also known as peer to peer (P2P) or collaborative consumption. In few years the sharing economy has become established in many different business sectors: peer to peer lending, crowd funding, shared Wi-Fi, community supported agriculture, skill barter banks, car repair, child care, food and catering services.

Regarding food business, the phenomenon of 'home restaurant' also known as 'home food' is spreading rapidly in Italy as well as in the rest of the world. The home restaurant activities provide a catering service paid by guests and run by people within their private homes. Generally speaking customers have to make reservation in advance and a limited number of seats are provided. The promotion of the events organized by the hosts occurs by word of mouth or by the Internet also through dedicated web platforms. To date, legislation on fiscal and legal aspects for these activities is missing and especially issues related to food handling and serving in the domestic environment are not regulated.

In order to protect the health and safety of the consumer, the aim of the project is twofold: on the one hand to know and map the home restaurant phenomenon at national level; on the other hand to provide home restaurant hosts enrolled in web platforms with useful information on food risks fostering the adoption of responsible hygienic practices during food management at home and of strategies for reducing microbiological risk.

In case an ad hoc legislation will come into force during the course of the research, the activities planned in the project, adapting to the changing needs of the context, could be a valuable support not only for the understanding of the phenomenon in Italy but also for the reinforcement of knowledge about sanitary risks and best practices for their reduction with the goal of protecting consumers health.