**Digital Food Sharing and Food Insecurity in the Covid-19 Era**

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**Abstract**

In recent years, the sharing economy—as implemented via decentralized, peer-to-peer (P2P) networks of mobile apps and users—has become increasingly popular. Owing to technological developments and the ubiquity of GPS-enabled smart devices, platforms such as Airbnb have created alternative markets by efficiently matching agents with excess asset stocks (e.g., cars and apartments) with potential consumers. Although sharing underutilized assets (with or without pay) is a longstanding practice, the low transaction costs and barriers-to-entry of digital platforms have made sharing cheaper and easier than ever and therefore possible on a much larger scale.  In particular, the scalability, flexibility, and potential for high-speed exchange make digital sharing platforms well-suited for the exchange of perishable food items.

Sharing food waste and surplus via the digital sharing economy is often discussed as a promising strategy to reduce food waste and mitigate food insecurity at the same time. Yet whether this is indeed the case remains unclear**.**To address this research gap, we analyze data provided by OLIO, a popular P2P food-sharing platform with over 6.3 million users worldwide. We examine the types, weights, and retail value of foods offered and shared, quantify the associated environmental impacts, and investigate how food flows between users of varying sociodemographic characteristics. Examining activity before and during the pandemic, we conclude that while food sharing can help reduce environmental burdens, one potential benefit of a food sharing platform—to redistribute food across income categories—appears to not have been realized during the pandemic.