



Call for papers for a special issue of the journal *Proposte e ricerche. An Italian Journal of Social and Economic History*

“Technology, Knowledge and Markets in the Italian Agri-Food Sector: Processes of Innovation and Transformation (19th–20th Centuries)”, edited by Rita D’Errico (University of Roma Tre) and Silvia A. Conca Messina (University of Milan).

The current challenges linked to the globalisation of food markets, the environmental sustainability of production models, and food safety and quality, make it particularly important to take a historical look at the processes that have transformed the agri-food sector between the modern and contemporary eras.

In recent decades, this field has been the subject of numerous studies, some of which have focused on the excellence of ‘Made in Italy’ products, such as those with protected designation of origin. However, studies focusing on the technological changes that have transformed the agri-food industry into one of the most technologically advanced sectors of the national economy are either lacking or sporadic.

This special issue aims to encourage reflection on the role of technological innovations in the transformation of the sector, with the aim of offering new interpretations of the relationship between agri-food technology and the history of economic and social development between the 19th and 20th centuries. The introduction of new production techniques and machinery in agriculture and primary processing, the development of industrial activities within the food sector, the dissemination of technical and scientific knowledge, and the evolution of transport and storage infrastructure all contributed to a profound redefinition of production structures, markets and food consumption. These processes operated on a local, national and international scale. At the same time, growing demands regarding food safety, driven by the spread of fraudulent practices and food adulteration as well as public health concerns, led to the introduction of increasing regulation and greater institutional intervention, which in turn influenced the technological transformation underway. Finally, the growing demand for food that is not only safe but also sustainable and of high quality has further

encouraged the agri-food industry to expand in terms of both quantity and quality through the adoption of more advanced technologies.

Topics of particular, though not exclusive, interest include:

- changes in production chains, from agriculture and primary processing through to the development of industrial process innovations in the food industry;
- the role of institutions and regulations, including international ones, in promoting and guiding the adoption of innovations;
- the effects of preservation technologies, the cold chain, and the distribution and transport of food products;
- the links between market globalisation and technological changes in the sector;
- the relationship between food science, consumption patterns, and industrial and technological development;
- synergies between the agri-food industry and other sectors, in particular (but not exclusively) the mechanical and chemical sectors;
- the Schumpeterian factor: companies manufacturing machinery for the food industry.

We particularly welcome contributions that draw on unpublished sources, adopt comparative approaches and offer critical reinterpretations of the relationship between technological innovation, the agri-food sector and economic development, highlighting both continuity and discontinuity in the processes.

Proposals for unpublished articles in Italian, English, or French should include an abstract of no more than 2,000 characters and a brief biographical note. Proposals should be sent to the editors, Rita D'Errico (rita.derrico@uniroma3.it) and Silvia Conca (silvia.conca@unimi.it), as well as to the editorial office (l.andreoni@univpm.it).

The deadline for the submission of abstracts is 1 September 2026. Authors will be notified of the outcome by 15 September 2026. Articles selected for publication must not exceed 50,000 characters (including spaces, tables, and footnotes) and should be submitted in their final version by 15 March 2027. Articles, written in Italian, English, or French, will undergo anonymous double-blind peer review.

The publication of the special issue of *Proposte e ricerche: An Italian Journal of Social and Economic History* is expected by the end of 2027.