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Antonio G. Chizzoniti, Food and religious rights

The contribution presents the main features and evolutions of the legal protection of religions' food prescriptions in different legal systems, with a special reference to Italian law. The most important religious prescriptions are analyzed by classifying them in relation to food consumption, production, and distribution, and by looking at them in the light of constitutional precepts governing Italian church law. In the last few decades several topics have been shaped by the law, ranging from the right to have food preferences respected for prisoners and institutionalized people, food choices for children in schools, to the regulation of animal slaughtering. Several formal and substantive legal issues emerge that reveal the complexity of the debate and that call for protection of religious freedom to be constitutionally broadened and strengthened through the recognition of religious diversities. In Italy, the path towards religious food-related needs being recognized and implemented is deemed to be long and uneven. A law encompassing all aspects of religious freedom, and connecting substantive and formal requirements, is still lacking. Such provision would represent a major improvement, as it could provide a valid regulatory framework for all religions' food prescriptions that are increasingly perceived as a fundamental aspect of the faithful's human dignity.