Ten years ago, the world was shocked to learn that MI5, Britain’s security agency, operates on the assumption that we’re (well, Britain is) just four meals away from anarchy. Did they over-egg the threat? Learn more in The Sunday Times of October 10, 2004.

P2E: swine waste to energy
AgPower Partners opens Storms Hog Power energy plant in North Carolina in Clean Technology Business Review, June 30, 2014. According to the article, anaerobic digesters reduce greenhouse gas emissions from stored and land-distributed farm wastes by roughly 90%, and pathogens are almost undetectable. As well, new nutrient recovery technologies allow the practical removal of phosphorus and ammonia nitrogen.

Open-source food: patenting broccoli
Oregon State University professors trying to develop a broccoli that’s easier to harvest shared their information and germplasm (seeds), thinking that the more people who worked on the problem, the better. Through the channels of corporate consolidation, some of that germplasm ended up with world’s largest seed company. In 2011, that company was granted a patent - but more than a third of the original plant material behind the invention was germplasm that Baggett had shared in 1983. Learn more in Revolutionizing American agribusiness from the ground up, one seed at a time, VQR, Summer 2014.

Good and Cheap: eating well on $4 a day
As part of her MBA project at NYU, Leanne Brown created a cookbook for the 47 million Americans who live on the $4 per day food-stamps budget. When she posted it online, 90,000 people downloaded it in the first week. Now she’s crowdfunding a buy-one-give-one print version to reach people who don’t have computers. Find out more in this Global News story from July 7, 2014.

“Agriculture may be at the epicentre of climate change’s social impacts,” according to the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions news scan of July 3, 2014 (see the Society tab). “Climate change will fundamentally shift what, where, and how we farm. A collection of papers in the June 25 issue of Nature Climate Change looked at what we know and where the knowledge gaps are, all in the context of future trends. Agriculture generates up to a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions. It is also one of the biggest sectors where climate change will have a social impact…”

Marketing, emotion, and the real world of a cow
Why it’s time to stop romanticising where our food comes from, in The Guardian, June 30, 2014. A buffalo walks slowly through a shower area while others vie for position under giant roller massagers. Their diet is organic, grown on Tenuta Vanullo Organic Farm’s 100 hectares. They eat when they want, are milked when they want, and 15,000 visitors a year come to see this epitome of farming practice. But the 600 buffalo are also milked in robotic boxes and stay for nine months in a concrete-lined facility...