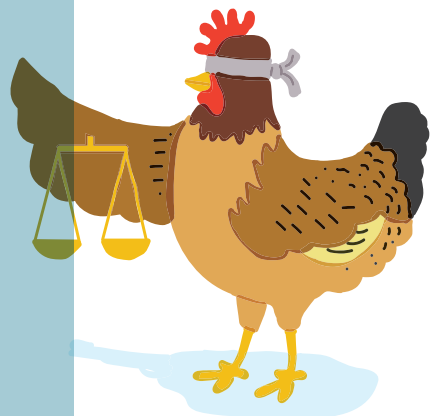


# big think



## OLD MACDONALD HAD A LAWSUIT

A kickass tractor, a tough pair of boots and ... a lawyer? Many farmers don't realize that a good attorney is just as important as good soil until something very bad (and expensive) happens. That's where Jason Foscolo comes in. He wanted to study law but, initially, hadn't homed in on his niche. "I love to eat — I can't grow anything, but I can definitely eat," he says. Thus, he settled on a food-focused law program at the University of Arkansas and founded the Food Law Firm in 2011. The firm now helps everyone from

producers navigating the regulatory maze of labeling laws to farmers dealing with irate neighbors. To find clients — including farmers, restaurants and food distributors, among others — Foscolo crisscrosses the country attending agriculture conferences. He wants farmers to realize that great contracts are as important as great crops. "I'm just trying to get the idea in their head that this is just one more tool among many that you can use to pump out the volume of your business," says Foscolo. — *MF foodlawfirm.com*

## TRICKLE DOWN ARCHITECTURE

A revolutionary new soccer stadium opened in Kenya in August 2014. But its most unique feature has nothing to do with sports — it's the water-harvesting roof. Waterbanks is a simple but bold idea from British architects Jane Harrison and David Turnbull.

Their stadium holds up to 1,500 people and nearly 370,000 gallons of rainwater.

In countries where access to clean water is limited, time spent tracking down a potable source takes away from say, time at school. So what about a school that collects the water for you?

The first Waterbanks school was built in 2012 in Laikipia, Kenya, with a rooftop system that feeds water through a series of ceramic filters, which purify the water by removing pathogens, then deposits the clean water in an underground cistern. This system provides a little over a gallon of water a day to 300 children and their families. "Water has a role in so many aspects of community transformation," says Harrison.

The stadium will provide many times that — and a little fun along the way. — *Panicha Imsomboon waterbanks.org*



*Farming is dirty business, and some messes can only be cleaned up with a lawyer.*



## OYSTERS WITH A DAY JOB

Oysters were once a vital part of New York Harbor's ecosystem, but, by 1906, every last one had been eaten. Now, bivalves are back. While not for eating, these oysters have a mission: ecological restoration.

The Billion Oyster Project is an ambitious, volunteer-driven initiative manned largely by NYC middle school students. Why oysters? They can filter toxins from up to 30 gallons of water a day, helping restore the harbor's ecosystem, which includes crabs, sea squirts and other aquatic wildlife. Project manager Samuel Janis says when kids "see the restorative power of oysters, they're blown away."

Today, BOP estimates 11 million oysters are alive and well in the old harbor. They plan to reach 1 billion by 2030, thus reclaiming the harbor's former title: oyster capital of the world.

— *Adrian Shirk billionoysterproject.org*

ILLUSTRATIONS: MIKEY BURTON



## GEIGER COUNTER, MEET KITCHEN COUNTER

More than three years after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the World Health Organization has changed its tune on food from Japan's northern provinces: Rather than warning against milk and produce, the organization now assures most products'

safety. But many local residents are still opting for imports.

That problem inspired five design students at Umeå Institute of Design in Sweden to model a radiation scanner for a kitchen countertop. It isn't functional yet, but the concept explores how a device could help the devastated area reclaim its local food economy. "Part of the challenge is we found some level of radiation in all products," says Kevin Gaunt, one of the student collaborators. "Bananas are [naturally] quite radioactive."

Almost all of that radiation is benign. So, rather than alarm its users, the device would limit information. Get a chime and a smile? Eat away. Get a groan and a frown? Better toss that nuclear salmon. — *Sam Brasch*



## LANCE FARMSTRONG

Farming is a workout — except for the long hours spent on a tractor. It's a problem Tim Cooke has solved with his bicycle/tractor hybrid. Cooke, who runs a 2-acre CSA farm in Milton, Massachusetts, says tractor time was taking a toll on his body. "You're hunched over and very tense," he says. His Culticycle combines a bicycle's pedals, seat, handlebar and chain with ATV tires on the back and lawn tractor parts in the frame. He says it can till, seed and do all the work of a small tractor — giving you a taxing but manageable workout in the process.

Cooke plans to mass-produce the Culticycle soon. Until then, he's put design info online for any handy farmer to replicate. — *MF farmhack.net/tools/culticycle*

## THROWING SHADE

According to a recent USDA report, climate change is stressing out our cows, which could drive up the price of milk. Farmer Vince Hundt has found a way to relieve his cows from the broiling Wisconsin sun: a large, pop-up canopy that shades up to 75 animals.

The Shade Haven looks like a large, chic, black umbrella. It takes about five minutes to set up and can be pulled behind a truck, car or horse. New designs can be ordered with a fly-control system, weather stations and a remote opening and closing option to quickly shutter the shade in high winds.

Hundt's next big idea is to help out his fellow humans. He recently saw Shade Haven deployed over field workers picking grapes. "Instead of being out in 90 degrees in the summer light, they were working in the shade," says Hundt. "And it looks beautiful, let me tell you."

— *MF shadehaven.net*

