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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

## Risk Perception of Cattle Keepers in Southern Mali

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### Abstract

In southern Mali, cattle play an important role to the livelihoods of many rural households. This study explores farmers' perceptions of risk related to raising cattle considering different breeds and different seasons, and analyses whether household and farmer characteristics relate to these perceptions.

A survey with 160 households keeping N'Dama, Zebu and/or crossbred cattle was carried out between November and December 2012 in the communes Garalo and Sibirila in southern Mali. Household heads were asked to identify important risks to their cattle husbandry. Subsequently they were asked to rank the stated risks for each of the breeds they have knowledge about, as well as for the dry and rainy season. Perceived risks were analysed using an exploded logit model (PHREG procedure).

Lack of water, theft and lack of pasture were perceived as the most important risks during the dry season, while cattle disease, farmer-herder conflict and theft were the most important risks during the rainy season. The main differences between the cattle breeds regarding perceived risk were that cattle disease was ranked higher for Zebu, while theft and farmer-herder conflict were ranked higher for N'Dama. Risk perceptions were affected to varying extent by diverse household and farmer characteristics. Cattle keepers in Garalo were more concerned by lack of water and theft and less concerned by low prices for cattle than cattle keepers in Sibirila. Bambara ethnic group perceived theft as bigger threat than the Fulani. Cattle keepers whose main activity was cropping were less concerned by lack of pasture and lower selling price for their cattle compared to those involved mainly in raising cattle.

Assessment of risks based on farmer perception, offer good opportunity for development researchers and policymakers to formulate adequate measure to help mitigating the risk these farmers are facing.

**Keywords:** Mali, N'Dama, risk perceptions, risk ranking, Zebu