Factors influencing the flexibility of farming systems
Case study of the Flemish beef farming sector
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**CONTEXT**
Specialized agriculture is technically optimized and efficient
But suffering ecological, social and economic difficulties
Shift in focus to resilience and adaptive capacity

**WHY FLEXIBILITY?**
- Important aspect of a farm’s resilience
- Room for change or “degrees of freedom”
- Mostly theoretical knowledge, need for practical knowledge

**RESEARCH QUESTION**
What factors are influencing a farmer’s choice set or flexibility?

**METHODOLOGY**
- Literature review
- Semi-structured interviews
- Transcribing & coding

**CASE STUDY**
Flemish beef farming sector
- Heterogenic characteristics
- Diverse range of flexibility strategies

**PRELIMINARY RESULTS**
Factors are interrelated → analysis through cognitive maps?
- Depending on the breed, animals are more robust, less susceptible to diseases & require less supervision & feeding concentrates
- Loans from bank imply large amounts for one type of investments, own financial resources provides more decision freedom

**DISCUSSION**
- Factors are interrelated → analysis through cognitive maps?
- Not straightforward reducing or enhancing resilience → how do farmers deal with these factors?

**CONCLUSION / FURTHER RESEARCH**
- Interrelated factors → need for systems approach
- Characterization of livestock farming systems by strategies and coping mechanisms

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