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**Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Selected North Central States of Nigeria:
Implications for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management**

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Abstract

This paper examines the farmers-herders conflicts in parts of North-central Nigeria and its implications for disaster risk reduction and management. In recent times, States in the North-central region of Nigeria especially Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa have experienced clashes between pastoralists and farmers. The study adopted the cross sectional research design while the sample size of the study comprised of 1,200 persons selected from three States of the North Central. The result showed that the causes of conflicts in the areas included encroachment/indiscriminate use of farmlands by herders/nomads; overgrazing of fallow lands; destruction of crops by herders' cattle; and poor communication between farmers and nomads, these conflicts has had socio-economic impacts such as decrease in farming production and output, food shortages, abandonment of crops on the farm, high cost of food and other items, unsafe environment for agricultural production and loss of lives and properties. The strategies applied to reduce and mitigate the effects of this conflict seems to be inadequate and ineffective. The study recommends that Government and all stakeholders must join hands together to reduce or stop these conflicts so as to ensure food security and safety of lives and properties in the North Central states of Nigeria.

Keywords: Farmer-herders conflicts, Disaster risk management, food security.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Crop farmers and cattle herders have been known to live harmoniously over the years and have enjoyed mutual symbiotic relationship. This mutual symbiotic relationship has been very beneficial to the two groups. The cattle herders have often paid to graze on farmlands after harvest or in exchange for cow milk or other dairy products while the cow droppings have often enriched the farmlands with manure. However, increasing human and animal population has led to shortage of cropland and grazing land, thereby resulting into competition over available land resources (Oruonye, 2020). These increased competitions over land have resulted in

encroachment of farmlands into grazing reserves and cattle routes. The cattle rearers have often times intentionally or unintentionally allowed their cattle to graze on croplands, thereby destroying the crops before harvest. This development has brought about conflicts between the cattle herders and crop farmers. Many state governments in Nigeria have come up with anti-open grazing laws which made it illegal to practice nomadic grazing in these states (Okeke 2014; Olusola, 2018; Oruonye, 2020).

Consequently, the Fulani herders in most cases settled in fertile areas to rear their cattle and when the migration continued to be dictated by economic and socio-political factors, increased trends of conflicts between the herders and their host communities (farmers) escalated. Many Nigerians lost their lives, properties/ farmlands or crops every year to Fulani herders. The conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers was escalated due to herders' invasion of farm lands. The herders have clashed with indigenous tribes and local farmers over grazing land over the centuries. The clashes intensified around the time of the 2011 and 2015 elections, and again earlier in the year 2018 (Ewelina, 2018).

Thus, the reduction in available pastureland, have raised herders and farmers conflict over land and water sources, and these clashes have resulted in increased violence. Newspaper reports also highlight the destruction of houses, killing cattle and destroying farmland (Corps, 2015). Given that the conflict is related to access to arable land, we are concerned of the food insecurity situation in the North Central region.

1.1 AIM OF THE STUDY

1. Investigate the causes and socio-economic implications of farmers and herders conflict in affected communities in the study area.
2. Examine the level of effectiveness of adaptive measures employed by communities and determine the limiting factors affecting effectiveness of preparedness, response and recovery.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Causes of Farmers and Herders Conflict in the North

There are a number of factors that combine to escalate the conflict among the identified actors. Some of these include: climate change and environmental degradation, depleting arable land for farming, and lack of political will to tackle the challenges (Conflict and Resilience Monitor, 2018).

Depleting Space for Farming

Constant urbanisation and demographic shifts in the present day world has increased the tendency and likelihood of farmers to move further afield for farming activities. At independence in 1960, the Nigerian population stood at about 35 million people (Bello, 2015). However, 58 years later, it has leaped to over 180 million people and the growth is expected to persist in the near future.⁶ Population increase of this magnitude also means a geometric increase in the demand for food products as a basic human need. This also implies an increase in the quest for farming space for farmers. Conversely, industrialisation and urbanisation have continued to claim all available land, leaving little or nothing for farmers' survival. The continued movement of herdsmen southwards in search of pasture for their animals has pitched them against farmers, eventually leading to conflict and destruction. For example, farming along the Benue River accounts for over 20 000 tons of grain annually (Abah and Petja, 2015). This same area is also fertile ground for herdsmen to feed their cattle. Thus, farmlands within the river bank areas are the most affected by the movement of the herdsmen – resulting in a number of clashes (Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin, 2018).

Lack of Political Will

The government at all levels has demonstrated near absence of needed political will to proffer lasting solutions to the conflicting claims of different actors in the ongoing conflict between the herdsmen and farmers. Political leaders have failed to invoke appropriate legislations to be

backed by action that would define rules and limits for parties involved in the conflict (Premium Times, 2018). At the regional level, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has a Protocol on Trans-human Movement, though the framework is yet to be fully implemented at national levels. Lack of political will remains a hindering factor among member states. Political will to implement this protocol and other frameworks remains an enabler to the conflict (Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin, 2018). The Federal government, in the past, has made efforts to regulate and control pastoral activities, but it appears that adequate political will is needed to enforce laws. For instance, the government is perceived from some quarters, especially by opposition parties, as being sympathetic to the activities of the herdsmen (Ameh, 2018). This perception is likely due to the fact that the President is Fulani, the same ethnic group that dominates the cattle business. Citizens, especially from the most affected states expected the federal government to deal with the herdsmen-farmer conflicts in all parts of the state with the same vigour and determination it showed in similar internal security issues in other parts of the country (Abah and Petja, 2015).

2.2. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Adelakun et al., (2015) researched on the socioeconomic effects of Farmer-Pastoralist Conflict on Agricultural Extension Service Delivery in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study was on the standpoint that an important but somewhat overlooked challenge facing agriculture and rural development in Nigeria is the problem associated with farmer-pastoralist conflicts for arable land. Increasing frustration and impoverishment of farmers occasioned by perennial and extensive farm plot destruction and the ensuing bitter conflicts are eroding the gains of agricultural and rural development interventions. This becomes a problem for extension because the ultimate objective of extension to enhance the living condition of rural households is being threatened.

Bello (2013) in his study on herdsmen and farmers conflicts in north - eastern nigeria: causes, repercussions and resolutions. The study reported that the implication of this development is

that both farmers and herdsmen suffered several negative socio-psychological consequences relating to their respective family lives. Consequently, it becomes evidently clear that whatever happens at work could affect what happens at home. These effects were, however, found to be more pronounced among the farmers than herdsmen, probably due to the fact that farmers suffered more losses than herdsmen.

In a research conducted by Apenda (2011) on the assessment of the impact of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue State observed that these conflicts possess a great threat to food security. Following the data collected and analysed on socio-economic variables, the study found that the conflicts have negative impact on agricultural production activities in Benue State. It has affected the farmer's output in the study area. The research showed the agricultural output of the sampled respondents before and during Fulani herdsmen attack on Tiv farmers in Benue state. It is evident from the study that majority (87.5%) of the respondents have agricultural output of less than or equal to N100 000 during the Fulani herdsmen attack on Tiv farmers while 12.5% of the respondents have agricultural output of between N100 001 and N200 000 but no percentage of the respondents that have agricultural output of neither between N200 001 and N300 000 nor above N300 000 during the Fulani attack. Before the Fulani attack, the agricultural output of the sampled respondents showed 51.6% of the sampled respondents agricultural output of above N300 000 as compared to the 0% when the respondents had been attacked by Fulani herdsmen. The percentage of those who have agricultural output of between N200 001 and N300 000 rose from 0% to 25% while the percentage of those with agricultural output of below N100,000 has increased during the Fulani herdsmen attack which indicate an increase in the agricultural output of the respondents during the times of no conflict.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study employed the cross sectional research design. A cross-sectional study measures both the exposure and the outcome of interest at the same point in time (Lee and Watts, 2006). Thus,

data will be gathered in relation to the subject matter of study. The study areas are Kogi, Benue and Nassarawa states in Nigeria. The population of the study involved all residents in affected LGAs in Benue, Kogi and Nassarawa states within the North central parts of Nigeria. The sample size was determined by selecting nine local Government Areas from the three states, the individual population figures of 3 LGAs in each state; that is: 779,400 (3 LGAs in Benue state), 798,400 (3 LGAs in Kogi state), and 530,900 (3 LGAs in Nassarawa state) which totaled 210, 8700 for the study was therefore subjected to the Taro Yamane formula (1967) to obtain a manageable size for the study. Thus, a sample size of 1,200 was obtained for the study. This sample size of 1,200 was proportionally distributed among selected LGAs for the study. The primary data involved the use of a semi-structured questionnaire to elicit first hand information from residents in affected local government areas in the study are. The questionnaire administration were carried out randomly in the study area. The secondary data sources were obtained from the internet, newspaper headlines, magazines, textbooks and archival sources in relation to the study objectives. The topographical maps of study areas were obtained from the LGAs which aided the study in baseline data for the delineation and spatial representation of risks levels and vulnerabilities of affected LGAs in the selected state. The data obtained for the study were presented using the descriptive statistics which involved the use of Tables, frequencies, percentages, charts and maps.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1: Causes of Farmer-Header's Conflict

S/N	Causes	SA	A	D	SD	UND
1	Encroachment/Indiscriminate use of farmlands by herders	52 5.6%	635 68.6%	79 8.5%	113 12.2%	47 5.1%
2	Overgrazing of fallow lands	60 6.5%	614 66.3%	78 8.4%	119 12.9%	55 5.9%
3	Destruction of crops by herdsmen	58 6.3%	684 73.9%	38 4.1%	49 5.3%	97 10.5%
4	Farmers are harassed by Nomads	20 2.2%	195 21.1	511 55.2%	144 15.6%	56 6.0%
5	Nomads are harassed by farmers/community youths	54 5.8%	28 3.0%	68 7.3%	723 78.1%	53 5.7%

6	Disregarding community authority before use	22 2.4%	115 12.4%	71 7.7%	612 66.1%	106 11.4%
7	Poor communication between farmers and Nomads	61 6.6%	786 84.9%	64 6.9%	14 1.5%	1 0.1%
8	Nomads conspire with Bandits to chase farmers out farmlands	174 18.8%	265 28.6%	57 6.2%	391 42.2%	39 4.2%
9	Sexual harassment of women by Nomads	58 6.3%	15 1.6%	65 7.0%	749 80.9%	39 4.2%
10	Theft of cattle by farmers/community youths	43 4.6%	13 1.4%	64 6.9%	786 84.9%	20 2.2%

This result shows that the causes of conflicts in the study area are: the encroachment/indiscriminate use of farmlands by herders/nomads; overgrazing of fallow lands; destruction of crops by herders' cattle; and poor communication between farmers and nomads.

4.2: Socio-economic Implications of the Farmer-Herder Conflicts

Table 4.2: Socio-economic Implications of the Farmer-Herder Conflicts

S/N	Socio-economic Implications	SA	A	D	SD	UND
1	Loss of lives and properties	49 5.3%	748 80.8%	24 2.6%	83 9.0%	22 2.4%
2	Decrease in farming production and output	1 0.1%	797 86.1%	24 2.6%	43 4.6%	9 1.0%
3	Food shortages	52 5.6%	779 84.1%	25 2.7%	46 5.0%	24 2.6%
4	Unsafe environment for agricultural production	48 5.2%	759 82.0%	64 6.9%	35 3.8%	20 2.2%
5	Forced migration of farmers	50 5.4%	663 71.6%	38 4.1%	106 11.4%	69 7.5%
6	Abandonment of crops on the farm	51 5.5%	771 83.3%	27 2.9%	50 5.4%	27 2.9%
7	High cost of food and other items	52 5.6%	769 83.0%	27 2.9%	53 5.7%	25 2.7%

SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Agree; Und – Undecided

The table above shows that the greatest socio-economic impact of Farmers-Herders conflict is decrease in farming production and output followed by food shortages, abandonment of crops on the farm, high cost of food and other items, unsafe environment for agricultural production and loss of lives and properties.

4.3: Frequency of Attacks of Farmer and Herder Conflicts

Table 4.3: Frequency of attacks of farmer and herder conflicts across sampled LGAs

States	LGAs		Frequency					Total	
			Less than 10 times	Between 10 and 20 times	Between 20 and 30 times	Between 30 and 40 times	Between 40 and 50 times		Above 50 times
Benue	Agatu	Count	3	22	11	10	9	6	61
		% of Total	0.3%	2.4%	1.2%	1.1%	1.0%	0.6%	6.6%
	Kwande	Count	3	37	18	18	51	19	146
		% of Total	0.3%	4.0%	1.9%	1.9%	5.5%	2.1%	15.8%
	Okpokwu	Count	3	30	15	15	33	13	109
		% of Total	0.3%	3.2%	1.6%	1.6%	3.6%	1.4%	11.8%
	Dekina	Count	3	44	22	41	19	6	135
		% of Total	0.3%	4.8%	2.4%	4.4%	2.1%	0.6%	14.6%
	Ofu	Count	3	36	17	39	13	3	111
		% of Total	0.3%	3.9%	1.8%	4.2%	1.4%	0.3%	12.0%
	Yagba West	Count	2	23	13	25	9	2	74
		% of Total	0.2%	2.5%	1.4%	2.7%	1.0%	0.2%	8.0%
Awe	Count	2	39	18	25	19	1	104	
	% of Total	0.2%	4.2%	1.9%	2.7%	2.1%	0.1%	11.2%	
Keana	Count	0	22	14	20	11	0	67	
	% of Total	0.0%	2.4%	1.5%	2.2%	1.2%	0.0%	7.2%	
Obi	Count	1	42	28	31	17	0	119	
	% of Total	0.1%	4.5%	3.0%	3.3%	1.8%	0.0%	12.9%	
Total	Count	20	295	156	224	181	50	926	
	% of Total	2.2%	31.9%	16.8%	24.2%	19.5%	5.4%	100.0%	

The frequency of attacks of farmer and herders' conflict is displayed on above. The distribution across sampled LGAs revealed that respondents have observed the attacks within range of figures of between less than 10times to above 50 times in the last 5 years. It was revealed that

2.2% of respondents indicated less than 10 times; 31.9% of respondents have experienced the attacks between 10 and 20 times in the last 5 years; 16.8% of respondents have experienced it between 20 and 30 times; 24.2% of respondents have experienced it between 30 and 40 times; 19.5% of respondents have experienced it between 40 and 50 times; while lastly, 5.4% of respondents indicated more than 50 times in the study area. The results therefore justified the fact that there have been several attacks as a result of farmer and herder conflicts in the study area.

Table 4.4: Frequency of Conflicts has impacted on Food Security

State	LGAs	Response					Total
		UND	SD	D	A	SA	
Benue	Agatu	0	13	4	29	15	61
		0.0%	1.4%	0.4%	3.1%	1.6%	6.6%
	Kwande	18	27	11	73	17	146
	Okpokwu	1.9%	2.9%	1.2%	7.9%	1.8%	15.8%
		21	13	3	59	13	109
		2.3%	1.4%	0.3%	6.4%	1.4%	11.8%
Kogi	Dekina	20	22	10	70	13	135
		2.2%	2.4%	1.1%	7.6%	1.4%	14.6%
	Ofu	17	22	7	55	10	111
	Yagba West	1.8%	2.4%	0.8%	5.9%	1.1%	12.0%
		4	16	6	30	18	74
		0.4%	1.7%	0.6%	3.2%	1.9%	8.0%
Nassarawa	Awe	16	12	6	56	14	104
		1.7%	1.3%	0.6%	6.0%	1.5%	11.2%
	Keana	10	14	5	33	5	67
	Obi	1.1%	1.5%	0.5%	3.6%	0.5%	7.2%
		14	16	5	69	15	119
		1.5%	1.7%	0.5%	7.5%	1.6%	12.9%
Total		120	155	57	474	120	926
		13.0%	16.7%	6.2%	51.2%	13.0%	100.0%

The information displayed on Table 4.4 is for frequency of attacks and food security in the study area. It was discovered that in each LGA majority of sampled respondents agreed that frequency of occurrences of conflicts have impacted on food security in the study area. Thus, in all sampled LGAs, the study discovered that 13.0% of respondents were undecided about this; 22.9% of respondents disagreed to this; while the remaining majority of respondents of

64.2% agreed that frequency of occurrences of conflicts/attacks have impacted on food security in the study area. The result affirms that the frequency of conflicts between farmers and herders have impacted on food security in the study area states.

4.5: Adaptive Capacities towards Preparedness, Response & Recovery of Conflict hazards

Table 4.5: Adaptive Responses in the face of Farmer-Herder Conflicts

Adaptive responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Relocation of farmlands	140	15.1	15.1	15.1
Seeking help from relatives, friends etc.	114	12.3	12.3	27.4
Diversification of income sources	66	7.1	7.1	34.6
Fencing of farmlands	138	14.9	14.9	49.5
Use of charms around farmlands	125	13.5	13.5	63.0
Employment of securities	49	5.3	5.3	68.3
Reduction in current food	58	6.3	6.3	74.5
Reduction in expenditure	104	11.2	11.2	85.7
Liaise with community authorities	77	8.3	8.3	94.1
Do nothing-leave to fate	55	5.9	5.9	100.0
Total	926	100.0	100.0	

The information on Table 4.5 reveals the adaptive responses as indicated by residents in the face of conflict disasters by farmer-herder conflict in the study area. The distribution showed that 15.1% of respondents have relocated their farmlands; 112.3% of respondents sought help from relatives; 7.1% of respondents have diversified their income sources; 14.9% of respondents have engaged in the fencing of their farmlands; 13.5% of respondents claimed they have planted charms around their farmlands; 5.3% of respondents have employed securities around their farmlands/residents; 6.3% have reduced their current food consumption; 11.2% of respondents

have reduced expenditure; 8.3% of respondents have liaised with authorities; while 5.9% of respondents indicated that they have left it to fate by doing nothing.

Table 4.6: Conflict Disaster Preparedness Measures

S/N	Preparedness measures	SA	A	D	SD	UND
1	My community ensures that farmers and herders adhere to laid down rules	0 0.0%	54 5.8%	385 41.6%	450 48.6%	37 4.0%
2	My community have an on-ground security measures to raise early warning signs	24 2.6%	45 4.9%	454 49.0%	318 34.3%	85 9.2%
3	My community has strategically put in place measures to ensure peaceful dialogue against disputes to prevent conflict eruption	14 1.5%	0 0.0%	75 8.1%	837 90.4%	0 0.0%
4	My community has earmarked and secure a grazing land where Nomads can traverse with their cattle	0 0.0%	47 5.1%	0 0.0%	756 81.6%	26 2.8%
5	My community carry out vulnerability assessment to identify areas/locations exposed to farmer-herder conflicts and ensure they prepare and act accordingly	60 6.5%	15 1.6%	64 6.9%	784 84.7%	3 0.3%
6	My community liaise with residents to carry out periodic assessment to ensure adequate security of lives and properties as it concerns the conflicts	0 0.0%	47 5.1%	390 42.1%	460 49.7%	29 3.1%
7	My community has a response/security unit that first responds to issues concerning farmer-herder conflicts	23 2.5%	47 5.1%	453 48.9%	318 34.3%	85 9.2%
8	My community have a strong link with security agencies to ensure adequate preparedness against conflicts	13 1.4%	3 0.3%	77 8.3%	821 88.7%	12 1.3%
9	My community has on-ground effective measure to allay the fears of incessant attacks from the conflict	0 0.0%	14 1.5%	99 10.7%	806 87.0%	7 0.8%
10	There is early warning measures that are being communicated to residents to increase alertness on the dangers of the conflicts	61 6.6%	14 1.5%	66 7.1%	773 83.5%	12 1.3%
11	There is adequate coordination of response activities to minimize effects of conflicts on residents in my community	0 0.0%	49 5.3%	392 42.3%	458 49.5%	27 2.9%
12	Information on effective response activities are being communicated to residents regularly	24 2.6%	45 4.9%	450 48.6%	316 34.1%	91 9.8%
13	There is public enlightenment about the response procedures to conflict hazards/incidents in my community	14 1.5%	0 0.0%	82 8.9%	827 89.3%	3 0.3%
14	The community consistently ensure that the youths/security directives and community authorities work together for a common goal	0 0.0%	16 1.7%	99 10.7%	806 87.0%	5 0.5%
15	The community ensure that security agencies, community securities and youths consistently rehearse and work together for quick response in the face of conflict	61 6.6%	16 1.7%	63 6.8%	767 82.8%	19 2.1%

SA – Strongly Agree; A – Agree; D – Disagree; SD – Strongly Agree; Und – Undecided

The distribution revealed that on-ground conflict disaster preparedness in the sampled LGAs are not adequate as majority of respondents (>50%) disagreed with the statements. For instance, only 5.8% of respondents indicated that their community ensures that farmers and herders adhere to laid down rules; only 7.5% of respondents indicated that their community have on-ground security measures to help in raising early warning signs as regards farmer-herder conflicts; only 7.6% of respondents also indicated that their community have a response unit that first responds to issues concerning farmer-herder conflict. There is no adequate coordination of response activities to minimize effects of conflicts on residents; there is lack of coordinated youth/security directives and community authorities working together for a common goal which is to address the conflicts amongst others. The study further discovered that communities are not up to the task as regards ensuring that security agencies, community securities and community youths work together to aid preparedness and response in the face of farmer-herder conflict.

The result shows that conflict disaster preparedness measures and plans across sampled LGAs are inadequate for farmer-herder conflict disaster risk management in the study area.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Farmer herders conflicts in the North-Central States of Nigeria and become very rampant and pose a great threat to food security and security and safety of lives and properties, it is also a serious disaster threat as scramble for food and farmlands and violent conflicts leading to loss of lives and properties could lead to a humanitarian crisis. The study has revealed that efforts put in to mitigate its occurrence are minimal and largely ineffective. Therefore, government and all stakeholders must join hands together to reduce or stop this conflicts so as to ensure food security and safety of lives and properties in the North Central states of Nigeria.

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