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FARMERS-HERDERS' CONFLICT AND FOOD SECURITY IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Conflict between farmers and herders has persisted for a while and has a negative impact on food security globally. Competition between farmers and herders over certain natural resources has been the main cause of this conflict, resulting in frequent destructions of both lives and properties. Food availability and accessibility to the general public has decreased as a result of the increased instability and displacement that have resulted from agricultural activities and food production. It is on this basis that this paper examined famers/herders conflict and food security in Plateau State, Nigeria. The study adopted mixed method research design. Eco-violence theory served as its theoretical framework. The study found that conflict between farmer and herders in Plateau State has resulted in the destruction of farmlands and livestock, adversely affecting farmer's productivity and income. It also found out that loss of lives and displacement of people have also been experienced as a result of the incessant farmer herders' crisis which has posed a significant threat to food security in Plateau state. In view of the findings, the study therefore recommended an urgent need for effective collaboration between farmers, herders, and the government for sustainable peace in the area. It equally recommended the provision of human security, as well as compensation for damaged resources by the government to avert future conflicts.

Keywords: Farmer, herders, conflict, food security, threat.

INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges of the states in recent years is security, which has become increasingly important in the modern system, continent, region, and states. Unavoidably, security poses a significant policy problem to decision-makers, communities, and groups worldwide. It relates to the protection of lives, properties, and citizens of a state. Security acknowledges priority attention by governments of various counties of the world, be it democratic, military or monarchical system of government, it is so because of an atmosphere devoid of fear, anxiety, threat, and harm to citizens. It is generally accepted that when faced with persistent security challenges, a nation cannot develop. These challenges have an impact on many different facets of a state's security, including the safety of its citizens' health, food, environment, people, and politics, as well as their personal safety. Insurgencies, Gunmen activities, Niger Delta insurgency, Boko Haram, and other extremist groups are among the extraordinary wave of security issues that several countries are currently dealing with especially Nigeria.

Security attacks and threats has in recent times been on the rise in the Northern region of Nigeria, it started in a low key but now has become a major issue raging from banditry, kidnapping, land grabbling, cattle rustlers,

and killing of farmers by Fulani herdsmen. All of these security issues have had an impact on a variety of facets of society, including religion, culture, agriculture (food production), and education. The conflict between herders and farmers is one of Nigeria's current insurgency-related issues. The farmers-herders conflict is a disagreement about how to use the land's resources between the local farmers and the male herders. According to Fasona and Omajola's (2005) he argues that 35% of the conflict cases reported in Nigerian are between farmers and herders. The nation as a whole and its unity are seriously threatened by the conflict between the two factions. It extends beyond any particular nation or geopolitical region. Nigerian farmer-herder conflict has endured and continues to pose a risk to food security, livestock output, and the fight against poverty, which farmers frequently view as the most susceptible (Dimule, Salifu, Enwelu & Igbokwe, 2017). The conflict's consequences in Nigeria were insecurity, displacement, inadequate food production, widespread hunger, malnutrition, and death. Throughout the dawn of time, farmers and herders have coexisted peacefully in the Plateau state. It is clear from their mutual interdependence that both groups were dependent on one another to survive Shettima and Tar (2008). The operations of the herders include moving their cattle to graze on the remnants of cereal crops on agricultural land owned by farmers, while the farmers need the herders' protein in the form of dairy products for daily consumption and manure to fertilize their fields.

The relationship between the farmers and herders turned sour in recent years resulted in the destruction of food crops and farm produce, due to the fact that huge number of the foodstuffs come from the rural area, Moritz (2010). While herders and farmers conflict does not directly affect the lives and livelihoods of those involved, it has disrupted and threatened the sustainability of agricultural and pastoral production. Since plateau state is one of the centers of the nation's food producers, this development portends enormous risk for Nigeria's food output. The unprecedented rise of insecurity has displaced farming communities and hindered cultivation, food security has been seriously threatened in some parts of Nigeria by the conflict between farmers and livestock herders. Agriculture has been impacted by insurgency and insecurity, particularly in some of the primary food-growing regions of the nations. In Plateau state, the regular conflict between herders and farmers in areas that are primarily farming has damaged lives and farm products have posed a danger to increasing food production. The result of these conflicts between the farmers and herders are vaguely creating a drop in farming, resulting in unprecedented food scarcity and famine.

In addition to having a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those concerned, conflict between herders and farmers has impeded and compromised the sustainability of pastoral and agricultural production. Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps occasionally serve as a haven for these farmers, a large number of people have lost their employment, while many are unable to provide for their families, and in some cases have turned to criminals in the society, resulting in a vicious circle of insecurity and poverty. Due to the disturbance in the agricultural supply, agricultural produce has become expensive. In light of this, this study set out to investigate how farmer's herder insurrection effects on food security, realizing that failure to do so could result into more crises in Barkin Ladi local government, Plateau state in particular and Nigeria in general.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the qualitative and quantitative research methods. The population size is inclusive of the farmers, herders and market women in Barkin-Ladi Local Government of Plateau state, while stratified sampling technique was adopted for the study, this gave each sub-group (farmers, herders and market women) adequate representation in the study. Due to the sensitivity of the study, six (6) farmers who have stayed in the study area for not less than 10-30 years were interviewed using focus group discussion. Two (2) herders were also involved in the study, as other herders rejected being interviewed for security implications. Also, nine marketers who have stayed for 5-10 years from Gashish Market, located in Barkin Ladi Local Government participated in the two sessions of the focus group discussions. The instrument for data collection was through primary and secondary sources. The primary source adopted was focus group discussion, while the secondary data was based on literature review. The data acquired were analyzed in tabular form according to recurrent themes which make the study's findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Food Security

Food security is one of the seven elements of human security (UNDP, 2014). Hence, human security cannot be properly established if food security is jeopardized. Food security, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), is the condition in which everyone consistently has physical, social, and economic access to enough wholesome food to satisfy their dietary requirements and preferences and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The study's primary area of interest is food production.

There are four essential components of food security: availability, sufficiency, accessibility, and sustainability of access (Burchi & De Muro, 2012). The research makes the assumption that direct violence tends to decrease food supply by disrupting the channel of production and distribution, in keeping with the viewpoint of (Simmons, 2013). Food may also become less available and the supply may become unsustainable as a result of this circumstance. It is anticipated that a number of factors may interact to make food insecurity more difficult, with particular reference to Nigeria. Examples of such variables include population expansion, government laws on food importation, and a shift in emphasis away from agriculture. The majority of violent occurrences took place in farming communities in rural areas, which is very worrying since it could have impacted the food supply. (Godwin 2018) claimed that over 1600 deaths had been recorded from 2013 to March 2018 while internally displaced people were estimated at 176,070 in eight camps, specifically referring to herdsmen and native farmers' violence in Benue State alone. Despite different reports of deaths and IDP camps, the level of violence is evident from the records available..

Farmers and Herders in Africa

Pastoralism and agriculture have long coexisted in the bulk of West and East African regions, allowing farmers and herders to live side by side. Herders frequently establish and build their homes on the settlement's outskirts, while farmers typically live inside or in the middle of the metropolis, farmers and

herders found it challenging to communicate as successfully as most traditional African communities do due to distance and cultural differences (Tonah, 2016).

Despite this, a co-dependent relationship between the two groups known as the host-stranger relationship has been created. Farmers are often the hosts in this relationship, with herders being the foreigners because they regularly travel to areas with abundant pasture to feed their animal. Beginning with cooperation and mutual gain, the symbiotic relationship later involves the exchange of land and animals as well as cow milk for crops. According to (Moritz, 2010), this host-stranger relationship is a great way to practice integrating migrant/transhumant herders into farming communities so that there are less obstacles, which will improve livestock husbandry and benefit crop farming as well. Tonah (2013) claims that in order to enhance beef production and end farmer-herder conflict because there were still some areas where the two sides were at odds, the Ivory Coast government pursued the policy of integrating Fulani herders in the early 1960s. From 1950 through the end of 1960, the partnership between Fulani herders and farmers in Ghana and the Ivory Coast was characterized by cooperation and mutual economic gains, according to. Local farmers hired Fulani herders to look after their herds, and the herders occasionally sold their animals to the neighborhood for celebrations, weddings, and other occasions. Also, Fulani herders use their animals to till and fertilize farmers' fields while the cattle feed on crop remains.

The relationship turns sour when herders and farmers argue and fight, the explanation is that when hired Fulani herders claimed that their cattle had disappeared or had been attacked by predators in the woods, they were charged with livestock theft. Farmers killed cattle because they damaged their crops; this frequently led to violent conflicts between the two groups, ruining their friendly relationship. According to Moritz (2010) another reason causing the collapse of the symbiotic relationship is farmers encroaching on grazing pastures and routes as a result of population growth. Scholars have demonstrated how the once-friendly and peaceful relationship has deteriorated into one that is strained by issues like competition for land, cattle rustling, crop destruction, robberies, rapes, and other crimes, among others.

Agriculture and Insurgency in Northern Nigeria

The northern-east region of the nation has recently seen an increase in insurgency. It all began on a small scale and quickly grew out of control. Banditry, kidnapping, stealing land, cattle rustling, and killing of farmers by Fulani herdsmen are now commonplace. All of these social evils have an impact on a variety of facets of life, including education, agriculture, religion, and culture. The following incidents explain the different scourges of insurgency inflicted on the people, some attacks on the educational institutions such as Kankara school, college of forestry, etc. on agriculture:

> **Killing of farmers:** On November 29, 2020, an incident in Nigeria's northeast that the president of the country refers to as "mad" claimed the lives of more than 43 people. According to reports, the attackers tired out laborers in the rice field adjacent to Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, and then hacked off their throats. No one has yet taken responsibility in a religion where Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa are active.

Cattle rustling: In communities in the Gubio local government region, at least 81 persons were killed, according to Nigerian and International media. Following the visit to the area by the governor of Borno State, the first reported figure of 69 was revised up to this amount. In addition to the village chief, seven other people were kidnapped. Additionally between 400 and 1200 livestock were reportedly stolen, which is a sizeable amount.

Farmers-Herders Conflicts and Food Security in Nigeria

The relationship between farmer herder is not new in African continent, most especially in the Sub-Saharan African. The Fulani clans, who have been peacefully coexisting with farming groups and grazing their cattle for generations across the Sahelian African region, migrated inside to Nigeria, and their pastoral activities date back to that time (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2017). However, scholars like Seddon and Sumberg (2017) and Ahmed and Muhammad (2021) explain why farmers/herders disputes have risen sharply in Nigeria in recent year. First of all they opined, more nomadic herders are relocating from northern Nigeria to the center and southern regions of the country as a result of climate change-related stressors including droughts and desertification. (Benjaminsen 2012; Buhaug, 2015) further explained that because of the climate and ecology in this region, herders are moving their animals' major grazing pastures farther south and away from it. As a result, (Eke, 2020).Posits that farmers and nomadic herders clash and compete more fiercely for limited land resources with farmers in the central and southern regions These nomadic Fulani herders are predominantly Muslim, and the Christian sedentary farming populations they deal with likewise exhibit ethno-religious enmity (Usman, 2019).Conflicts between non-sedentary herders (mostly Muslim Fulani population) and sedentary farming communities (largely mainly Christian and non-Fulani ethnic groups) over land claims, the distribution of communal resources, and control of local administrative institutions have gotten worse.

The current land tenure system is exemplified by communal access to land, ambiguous private property rights, expensive land administration costs, and the resulting lack of access to official land titles. Aggravating the problem (Vanger & Nwosu, 2020) opined that invariably result in insufficient land resources due to the increasing strain they exert on scarce resources. As a result, there are disputes between farming communities and nomadic herders in the country's central and southern regions (Ojo, 2020). Furthermore, the marginalization of pastoralists who rely on the land is exacerbated by the inadequate enforcement of current land restrictions governing open grazing and grazing routes. However, due to the government's unwillingness to enforce the regulation, part of the land designated under this rule has been taken over by non-herders for uses other than grazing (Ojo, 2020). Less than one-fourth of the herders' initial designated grazing reserves are currently being utilized for grazing (ICG, 2017). To provide herders with access to land resources, the grazing reserve statute was created in 1965.

Conflicts negatively impact people's ability to receive food on a physical and financial level, which has an impact on the accessibility component of food security. Conflicts, for instance, may cause infrastructural deficiencies, such as roads, markets, and farms, to be destroyed (Kah, 2017). The instability of food prices

and the value of food imports, which make up the third component of the food stabilization dimension, appear to best convey the negative effects of war (George, Adelaja, Weatherspoon, 2020). Conflict between farmers and herders generally has negative socioeconomic impacts, including property loss, decreased output, population displacement, and school dropouts, among others. The key areas under which the conflict's repercussions may be classified are humanitarian, economic, sociological, and security effects. First, there are terrible humanitarian consequences of the violence, including deaths, injuries, and evictions. Recent farmer-herder conflicts reportedly entail violence and physical force. This frequently results in death and serious injury (Olaniyan, 2015). The conflict also poses a threat to the safety and well-being of the locals or inhabitants of the host communities, where it regularly occurs. Young people and local farmers have organized a number of agitations, marches, and protests in Agogo against traditional leaders and certain local government officials because they feel the Fulani herders are still present in their villages as a result of their help. Security personnel and demonstrators have been known to brawl, causing a disturbance.

Effect of Farmers-Herders Conflict on Food Security in Plateau State

Herding and farming disputes not only directly affect the lives and livelihoods of those involved, but they also disrupt and jeopardize the sustainability of pastoral and agricultural output, and by extension, the sustainability of rural populations' means of subsistence (Ukamaka, 2017). Threats and risks to farmers' livelihoods, food security, and well-being contribute to poverty, food insecurity, poor nutrition, ill health, and conflict escalation in farming communities. Food shortages for people that depend on subsistence farming would almost probably come from the instability brought on by continuous hostilities (Moritz, 2010).

Due to crop loss brought on by the conflict between herders and farmers, farmers' outputs as well as income have decreased. In the villages of Bassa, Bokkos, Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Mangu, and Jos South local government areas, food crops like maize, guinea corn, millet, hungry rice (acha), yam, rice, and potatoes were either destroyed, looted, or burned down; farmlands were either seized or food crops were destroyed by herders, while cattle were either rustled or killed by farmers. Both parties have contributed to the state's and the nation's food supply shortages. Plateau State provides a significant amount of food to the rest of Nigeria as a country. With the farmer/herders conflict, prices of essential commodities and food products have skyrocketed as a result of the conflict and its negative effects, making them unaffordable to the common man. Farmers view livestock routes and grazing reserves as public lands that are open to unrestricted encroachment as a result. Conflicts between the opposing parties have arisen as a result of the herders' belief that feeding their livestock is a higher and unwavering privilege bestowed upon him by nature. Therefore, the conflict between herders and farmers has led to food insecurity in the state; this is a significant issue that needs to be handled with all seriousness on a national level.

Food Security

Food security is one of the seven elements of human security (United Nations Development Programme, 2014). Hence, human security cannot be properly established if food security is jeopardized. Food security, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), is the condition in which everyone consistently

has physical, social, and economic access to enough wholesome food to satisfy their dietary requirements and preferences and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The study's primary area of interest is food production. There are four essential components of food security: availability, sufficiency, accessibility, and sustainability of access (Burchi & De Muro, 2012). Also, direct violence tends to decrease food supply by disrupting the channel of production and distribution, in keeping with the viewpoint of (Simmons, 2013). Food may also become less available and the supply may become unsustainable as a result of this circumstance. It is anticipated that a number of factors may interact to make food insecurity more difficult, with particular reference to Nigeria. Examples of such variables include population expansion, government laws on food importation, and a shift in emphasis away from agriculture. The majority of violent occurrences took place in farming communities in rural areas, which is very worrying since it could have impacted the food supply. For instance, (Godwin, 2018) claimed that over 1600 deaths had been recorded from 2013 to March 2018, while internally displaced people were estimated at 176,070 in eight camps, specifically referring to herdsmen and native farmers' violence in Benue State alone. Despite different reports of deaths and IDP, the level of violence is evident from the records that are now accessible. The World Food Program (WFP) (2016) may have been correct that violence is jeopardizing food safety as Nigeria, which has a food crisis, is Africa's top rice importer. Hence, food insecurity is a major issue in Nigeria, in other words, people experience food insecurity when they do not have appropriate physical, social, or financial access to food (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2013).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Eco-violence theory is adopted for this study; the theory aims to explain how violent conflict and environmental concerns are related. The idea which was created by Homer Dixon (1999) states that crop-land, water, woods, and fish are becoming scarce for some population groups due to factors such as population expansion, resource access, and decreased quality and quantity of renewable resources. The foundation of the eco-violence theory is the notion that conflict results from competition for finite ecological resources. As a result of the effects of climate change, which have increased ecological scarcity internationally, this tendency has gotten worse in modern times (Blench, 2004; Onuoha, 2007). The core idea of the concept of Eco-violence is that violent conflict is likely to begin as a result of a group's desire to survive in an ecological context that is competitive and resource constrained. Natural scarcity increases a resource's market worth as well as any premium that different social grouping may be willing to pay for. Conflicts that turn violent are commonly caused by this situation. The dynamics and character of the farmer-herder disputes in Nigeria are clarified when the idea of eco-violence is introduced to the present global debate. It's important to keep in mind that the impacted groups have fuelled the conflict, in this regard, desperate attempts to defend and advance their right to subsistence in a declining biological environment marked by resource competition. Pastoralists who moved to Nigeria's north-central area in quest of grazing lands have made the situation in Plateau state worse (Blench, 2004).

According to this study, conflicts between farmers and herders are sparked by lack of available land and competitiveness amongst the males of the two groups over the right to occupy the region. Land is getting

harder to come by as a result of resource exhaustion, destruction of natural habitats, and population decline. As a result, whereas farmers require land for farming, herders need a location to graze and raise their livestock. Though, critics of this theory opined that conflict between farmers and herders is probably not due to a lack of natural resources, but rather as a result of greed and selfish desires. This has been the main cause of violence in plateau state, rather than a lack of renewable resources, which leads to violence and a lower level of economic, human, and institutional development. The Gap which this work uncovered was that, though scholars have written much about farmer-herders conflict and its implications of food security, but not much has been heard of Barkin-Ladi Local government of Plateau State and mostly for scholarsto interview the major players which include the herders as they hardly come out to express their feeling to the public except on radio, newspapers etc, which is always third party information.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This sub-section presents the findings from interviews/Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted on the farmer-herder conflict and food security in Plateau State, Nigeria. It comprises three sessions: on farmers, herders, and market women being major actors in the study, all of which were held in Barkin Ladi local government area in Plateau State, Nigeria. Barkin Local Government Area comprises the following communities: Barkin Ladi, Tafan, Zabot, Gassa, Sho, Gindin Akwati, Helpane, Gashishi, Kapwis, Lobiving, Marit, Mazat, Kura Falls, Fan, and Foron. The aim of the FGD carried out in the Barkin Ladi LGA was to obtain insights and opinions from the participant on the subject matter and to proffer possible solutions as set out for the study.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Gender		
Male	7	41.18%
Female	10	58.82%
Age		
Below 18	1	5.88%
18-30	2	11.76%
31-50	8	47.06%
51 and above	6	35.29%
Educational level		
Secondary school	10	58.82%
Tertiary education	7	41.18%
Occupation		
Farmer	6	35.30%
Herder	2	11.76%
Marketers	9	52.94%

FGD with Six farmers, below are the various discussions with the farmers.

Question One: *How long have you lived in Plateau State (Barkin Ladi local Government)?*

> ***Farmer 1:*** *My name is Aliyu Musa and I have lived in Barkin Ladi local government area of Plateau State for over 30 years. I moved here with my family when I was a child, and I have been farming in this area for most of my life.* ***Farmer 2:*** *My name is Josephine Bako, and I have lived in Barkin Ladi for about 20 years. I moved here with my spouse after we got married, and we have been farming together ever since.* ***Farmer 3:*** *My name is John Silas, and I have lived in Barkin Ladi for about 15 years. I relocated to this area when I got a job at a local farm, and I have been farming here ever since.* ***Farmer 4:*** *My name is Joseph Nanven Garba, and I have lived in Barkin Ladi for about 25 years. I moved here with my family when I was a young adult, and I have been farming in this area ever since.* ***Farmer 5:*** *My name is Kenneth Gyang, and I have lived in Barkin Ladi for about 10 years. I moved here with my family after my spouse got a job at a local school, and I started farming to support our family.* ***Farmer 6:*** *My name is Mohammed Yisa, and I have lived in Barkin Ladi for over 30 years. I was born and raised in this area, and I have been farming here since I was a young adult.*

Question Two: *Have you ever experienced or been involved in a conflict with herders' men in Barkin Ladi local government?*

> ***Farmer 1:*** *I doubt there are farmers with my years of experience who have not experienced unreasonable herdsmen! Yes, I have experienced conflicts with herders' men several times. They often allow their cattle to graze our farmland, which destroys our crops, and when we complain, they become aggressive and threaten us.* ***Farmer 2:*** *Unfortunately, we have also experienced conflicts with herders' men. We have lost some of our livestock to their cattle, and we have also had our crops destroyed by their animals.* ***Farmer 3:*** *Yes, I have been involved in several conflicts with herders' men. They are usually very hostile and aggressive, even when they are trespassing on another man's land. They carry arms to scare us, the farmers, into silence as their cows destroy our crops. It's so shameful and infuriating.* ***Farmer 4:*** *I have also experienced conflicts with herders' men. They come without permission, and when we ask them to leave, they become violent and threaten us. There was a time they hit me so bad I had to be hospitalized for days.* ***Farmer 5:*** *I don't like talking about all this kind of thing because it's just too saddening, and it doesn't seem like it will end anytime soon. I have also experienced conflicts with herders' men. They are aggressive and selfish vagabonds.* ***Farmer 6:*** *I have lived in Barkin Ladi for a long time, and unfortunately, I have seen many conflicts between farmers and herders' men over the years.*

Question Three*:* *In what way has this conflict affected you as a farmer?*

> ***Farmer 1:*** *The conflicts with herders' men have had a significant impact on our farm productivity. We have lost a lot of crops to their cattle, which mean we have less to sell at the market and less to feed our families.* ***Farmer 2:*** *The conflicts have affected us in many ways. We have lost some of our livestock, have also had our crops destroyed, which affects our income and food security. Sometimes we land in the hospital all because of these herders' men.* ***Farmer 3:*** *The conflicts have had a significant impact on our harvesting. We have lost a lot of crops to their cattle, which also mean we have less to sell at the market and less to feed our families. We have also had to spend good money on fencing our farmland to prevent their cattle from grazing on it.* ***Farmer 4:*** *The conflicts have had affected us badly. We have lost crops and livestock, which has affected our income and food security; my family has suffered because of this people. We have also had to spend money on repairs and security measures to protect our farmland from their cattle.* ***Farmer 5:*** *I really can't start on this matter; they have done too much, from destroying our farm land to putting many of us in the hospital, all of which affects our family and the many people that are depending on us. I would say the worst thing these men have done is put fear in our hearts.* ***Farmer 6:*** *Just as they have said, it's true. The conflicts with herders' men have had a significant impact on our farm productivity and livelihoods. We have lost crops and livestock, which affect our income and*

food security. We have also had to spend money on repairs on security measures to protect our farmland from their cattle. Additionally, the conflicts have created a sense of fear and insecurity among farmers, which affects our mental health and well-being.

Focus Group Discussions with the Herders

Two friendly-looking herders participated in the FGD. They were both approached at Zabot in Barkin Ladi LGA. Herder one was not willing to provide a name; however, Herder two said his name is 'Jibril'. Below are the various discussions with the herders.

Question One: *How long have you lived in Plateau State (Barkin Ladi local Government)?*

> ***Herder 1:*** *I have lived in Barkin Ladi local government for over 30 years. I was born and raised here and have been engaged in cattle rearing ever since.* ***Herder 2:*** *I have been in Barkin Ladi for many years. I migrated here with my family from Katsina State to engage in cattle rearing.*

Question Two: *Have you ever experienced farmers-herders conflict in Plateau state Barkin Ladi local government?*

> ***Herder 1:*** *Yes, I have experienced the conflict firsthand. In fact, I have lost several of my cattle to the conflict.* ***Herder 2:*** *Unfortunately, yes. The conflict has affected us greatly.*

Question Three: *Do you think the conflict has made any direct impact on the people of Barkin Ladi local government of Plateau state? If yes state the damages that have been made.*

> ***Herder 1****: The conflict has made a direct impact on those affected. It has caused the loss of lives, destruction of properties, and displacement of people. It has also affected the economy of the area, as many farmers and herders are no longer able to carry out their activities.* ***Herder Two****: The damages caused by the conflict include the loss of lives, destruction of properties such as houses, farms, and markets, and the displacement of people. The conflict has also affected the education of children in the area as many schools have been shut down due to the conflict.*

Question Four*: In your opinion, what do you think has been the major cause of the farmers-herders conflict in Plateau State?*

> ***Herder 1****: In my opinion, the major cause of the farmers-herders conflict in Plateau State is the issue of land ownership. The farmers claim that the land belongs to them and that the herders are encroaching on their land, while we believe that the land belongs to everyone and that they have the right to graze their cattle on any land. This has led to clashes between the farmers and us herders, which sometimes result in loss of lives and properties.* ***Herder 2:*** *I agree with my brother. Another major cause of the conflict is intolerance of farmers and the issue of water scarcity. The herders need water for their cattle to drink and bathe, and sometimes we have to move our cattle to rivers and streams on farmlands, which always lead to clashes with the farmers.*

Focus Group Discussions with the Marketers

Nine marketers from Gashish Market, located in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State, participated in the FGD. There were two sessions with the marketers. The first group session had four participants namely Bitrus, Aunty Laraba, Nandom, and Mallam Yakubu. The second group session included five traders, namely: Mama Talatu, Dauda, Sister Nanpan, Jummai, and Mr. Damulak. Below are the various discussions with the marketers.

Question One: *How long have you lived in Plateau State (Barkin Ladi local Government)?*

> ***Answer****: Out of the nine traders in both sessions, seven of them have lived in Plateau State (Barkin Ladi local government) for over 10 years, while two traders have lived in the area for less than 5 years. This shows that majority of the traders has lived in the area for a long time, and are familiar with the challenges of the community.*

Question Two: *How long have you been selling goods or foodstuff in the market?* ***Answer****: All nine traders in this had been selling goods or foodstuff in the market for over 5 years. This implies that the traders have a wealth of experience in trading and understand the market dynamics in the area.*

Question Three*: Have you experienced any of the farmers-herders conflict in Barkin Ladi?*

Answer*: All nine traders in both group sessions had experienced the farmers-herders conflict in Barkin Ladi. They explained that the conflict has been a recurring issue in the community for several years.*

Question Four*: How has the Farmers Herders conflict affected you and your business in term of price of the product you sell?*

Answer*: The traders explained that the farmers-herders conflict has affected their businesses in terms of the price of their products. According to them, the conflict has led to an increase in the price of foodstuffs due to the destruction of farmlands and the loss of crops. Some traders have also lost their goods during the crisis, leading to a significant loss in revenue.*

Question Five: *Do you think the farmers-herders conflict has become a threat to food security in Plateau state Barkin Ladi local government?*

Answer*: All the traders believe that the farmers-herders conflict has become a significant threat to food security in Plateau state Barkin Ladi local government. They explained that the conflict has led to a reduction in food production due to the destruction of farmlands and the displacement of farmers. This has resulted in an increase in the price of foodstuffs, making it difficult for the average person to afford food.*

Question Six*: In your opinion, what do you think has been the major cause of the farmers-herders' conflict in Plateau state?*

Answer*: The traders believe that the major cause of the farmers-herders' conflict in Plateau state and majorly at Birkin Ladi is the struggle for land and resources. According to them, both farmers and herders depend on the same resources for their livelihood, which has led to competition for resources. The traders also believe that political interests and the proliferation of small arms have exacerbated the conflict in the area.*

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Study revealed that, the major issues faced by farmers in Barkin Ladi local government area of Plateau State, Nigeria, are conflicts with herders' men, which have resulted in the destruction of their crops and livestock. The herders' are said to allow their cattle to graze on the farmland without permission, leading to loss of crops and livestock. The conflicts are also said to be violent, with the herders' often carrying arms and threatening the farmers. As a result, the farmers have had to spend money on fencing their farmland, which affects their productivity and income. Also, the herders, believed that the land belongs to everyone and that they have the right to graze their cattle on any land, another major cause of the conflict pinpointed is intolerance of farmers and the issue of water scarcity, as herders need water for their cattle to drink and bathe, and sometimes have to move their cattle to rivers and streams on farmlands, leading to clashes with farmers. The conflict has caused significant damages such as the loss of lives, destruction of properties, displacement of people, and affected the economy and education in the area.

Traders are also affected in the conflict between the herders and farmers as shortage of food from the farms affects their sales. Therefore observed that establish a permanent peace-building mechanism that involves both farmers and herders, and government should address land-use laws and resource management to prevent conflicts between farmers and herders. This is in line with the submission of (Abass, 2014) that conflict erupts mainly because of competition over natural resources, especially water and land along the plains that have enough water during the dry season. Ekpendu (2020) an anti-open grazing law was enacted in 2017, but it has

faced resistance from some herders who argue that they do not have the resources to establish ranches. In some cases, law enforcement agencies have been accused of bias and incompetence in their handling of farmer-herder conflicts (Audu & Yakubu, 2022). Additionally, Edward (2022) noted that some communities, especially those affected by the conflict, have been excluded from decision-making processes and the implementation of programs aimed at resolving conflicts.

CONCLUSION

The study showed that farmer-herder conflict in Plateau State poses a significant threat to food security in the state. The conflict has resulted in the loss of lives and properties, displacement of farmers, and a decline in agricultural productivity. The study has identified inadequate government intervention, poor law enforcement, and proliferation of small arms as contributing factors to the conflict. Therefore, there is an urgent need for effective and sustainable solutions to curb this growing issue. The study concluded that it is imperative that the government and other stakeholders take proactive measures to address the underlying causes of the conflict and mitigate its negative impact on food security. Some of the proposed solutions include the implementation of anti-open grazing laws, the creation of grazing reserves and livestock markets, the provision of basic infrastructure in these facilities, and the promotion of dialogue and peaceful coexistence among communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings, the study made the following recommendations:

i. The government should implement anti-open grazing laws to regulate the movement of herders and reduce the incidence of conflicts between farmers and herders. Government should provide security personnel to patrol the conflict-prone areas to prevent violence.
ii. The government should promote dialogue and peaceful coexistence among communities through the establishment of peace committees and the organization of community-level peacebuilding initiatives.
iii. Farmers should also form cooperative to help one another and reduce the impact of the conflict, this would enable them share resources such as farming tools and seeds and work together to improve the quality and yield of their crops.
iv. The farmers should seek assistance from the government in the form of compensation for crops and farmlands that have been destroyed during the conflict. They should also form cooperatives to help one another and reduce the impact of the conflict and embrace peace-building efforts in their communities.
v. Herders should learn to adopt modern animal husbandry practices. This will help reduce the need for them to move their livestock long distances in search of grazing lands, which often leads to conflicts with farmers.

vi. Herders should be educated on the importance of peaceful coexistence with farmers and the need to avoid conflicts. This can be done through community meetings and workshop where both herders and farmers can come together to discuss and resolve issues

vii. The general public can also help support peace-building efforts in the community and promote food security for all by supporting local farmers, advocating for peace, reporting incidents, supporting government efforts, and by promoting education and awareness in the community about the importance of peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution, and sustainable farming practices.

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