

EFFECT OF FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICT ON FOOD SECURITY IN PLATEAU STATE

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Abstract

This paper examines the effects of the farmers-herders conflicts on food security in Plateau State. Employing eco-violence theory as a framework for analysis and qualitative research design the paper examines the consequences of the farmers-herders conflicts on food security in terms of availability, access, utilization, and stability of food in Plateau State. The paper revealed that the herders/farmers conflict has consequences on food production and security. This has resulted in food shortage, increase in the price of food items which limit people's access to food through the destruction of farm produce, livestock, infrastructures necessary for food production and ultimately resulting in famine. Herders/farmers crisis also lead to physical destruction and plundering of, livestock, and food reserves, which discourages people from farming activities. Furthermore, the conflict displaces farmers from their communities, reducing agricultural labour force and decrease in herds' production and dairy product increasing pressure on the urban areas as most of the able-bodied men and women who should be engaged in food production flee for safety, not having an only effect on food but at the long run affect social interaction between the two religion, which use to be cordial before, restrictions of movement to areas only were ones religion are dominant. In the light of the above, the paper recommends that, the culture of open grazing must be abandoned adopt only what is obtainable in modern societies; which is ranching effective regulation of grazing and farming activities in Nigeria through efficient land-use laws/ legislations and administration, creation of ranches in states that voluntarily wants it instead of forcefully imposing it on the people, giving to herders for ranching purpose. Government must ensure effective regulation and control of arms in the state and disarm both the herders and farmers who are in possession of arms

Keywords: *Farmers, Herders, conflict, food security*

Introduction

The manifestation of conflicts is one major problem confronting world peace today in different dimensions. From America to Europe, Asia to Africa, conflicts are common phenomena (Jeong, 2008). The conflict has ever been a recurring decimal in the history of mankind. More often than not, this is a result of competition for scarce resources in human society (Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017). Nigeria like other parts of the world has experienced and is still experiencing conflicts of grave proportions among several ethnic and religious communities across the states. This is because of all resources; the land has remained an overwhelming source of conflicts among various user groups as well as individuals at varying thresholds.

These conflicts significantly vary in dimension, process and the groups involved. One of the most crucial problems that have bedevilled Nigeria at the moment is the herders-farmers conflict.

Farmer-herders conflict is a conflict between the herdsmen and the indigenous farmers over the use of land resources. Fasona and Omajola (2005) reported that it accounted for about 35% of conflicts cases reported in Nigerian newspapers. The conflict between the two groups is not just restricted to any particular state or geo-political zone rather it's an issue that poses a serious threat to all parts of the country and its unity as well. These conflicts as observed by Eje, Angai, Abdullahi, Eje, Wudaba, & Ishaku (2017)

have demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the insecurity and food crisis particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts are localized, with reverberating consequences nationwide. Farmer-herders conflict in Nigeria has persisted and stands out as a threat to national food security, livestock production and eradication of poverty which farmers often regarded as the most vulnerable (Dimelu, Salifu, Enwelu & Igbokwe, 2017). It is a formidable challenge to economic development, threat to food security and sustainable livelihood of the agrarian communities (Ukamaka, Danjuma, Mbolle, Achonam & Mbadiwe, 2017). The implication of the conflicts resulted in insecurity, displacement, poor food production, widespread hunger, malnutrition, disability, death in Nigeria.

The etiology of these conflicts that are often put forward by both scholars, farmers and herders for the increases in violent conflicts include the continual destruction of crops by herder's cattle, underdevelopment of grazing lands, land ownership and utilization, increase in production due to the increase in population, climate change, competition over the use of natural resources, especially land, pasture and water, ethnic cleavages, misunderstandings arising from personal animosities between the two groups and the lack of institutions in managing farmer-pastoralist conflicts (Abubakari & Tonah, 2009). Also, Hagberg (1998) argues that this type of conflict stems from competition over scarce resources because of an increase in population, migration and land degradation. This is in line with the population theory of Malthus, which sees a population increase as a source of resource competition and conflict. Thomas Malthus argued that the population will grow exponentially whilst food production will grow arithmetically (Seidl and Tisdell 1999). Thus, the population will double with each cycle, and food production will increase gradually which will cause scarcity of resources in the future.

In Plateau State herders and farmers have co-existed from time immemorial in a relatively peaceful relationship. This interdependent relationship on each other is evident that both groups depend on each other for survival, and it formed the benchmark for exchange and which brought about even development (Shettima and Tar, 2008). The farmers and the herders have a long heritage and economic relationship, though there were pockets of disputes and sources of disagreement existing between both groups that were resolved by both groups peacefully.

According to Shettima and Tar (2008), the activities of the herders include the movement of their cattle to graze on cereal crop residues on farmlands that belong to farmers, while the farmers require from the herder's protein in the form of dairy products that are needed for their day-to-day consumption and manure to fertilize their fields. Similarly, Monod, (2018) noted that the survival of the herders is formed under interaction with farmers. Thus, it becomes apparent that the interdependent linkage flows as each group needs water, land, fodder and other land use for their economic activities. Unfortunately, with the increase in population density, competition for land, water and space, selfish interest metamorphosed this form of relationship that has existed centuries back has been truncated with many disputes arising across the regions that have grown into widespread violence, death, and internal displacement of persons.

According to Moritz (2010), herders-farmers conflicts does not only have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved, but it also disrupts and threatens the sustainability of agricultural and pastoral production; as herders and farmers conflicts led to the destruction of food crops and farm produce, as most of the foodstuff comes from the rural areas. Also, the bloody clashes between the herders and farmers

have forced farmers to abandon their fertile farmlands, rendering several communities deserted and reduced farmers to tenants in internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps. This is a symbiotic scenario as herders are not also spared. They also count their losses as cattle are rustled, leading to a reduction of income and a shortage of beef for the general public. Nweze (2005) noted that many farmers and herders have lost their lives and herds, while others have experienced declining productivity in their herds. This development portends great danger for food production in Nigeria since the state is the hub of the nation's food security. This according to Olobatoke & Omowunmi (2017) implies food insecurity in Nigeria.

Several works have been done on the prevalence of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria (Gyuse & Ajene, 2006; Alubo, 2008; Okolie & Ugwu, 2011; Abbas, 2012), while numerous studies have been conducted on the socio-economic, financial and political implications of farmers-herdsmen conflicts on national development in Nigeria. Also, there exist some works on food security in Nigeria, such as Nwalie (2017), Okolo & Obidigbo (2015), Otaha (2013), Ojo & Adebayo (2012) etc. These works are plausible in their own merits, while the discourse on farmers-herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria has largely been done without giving adequate emphasis on its implication on food security, particularly in Plateau State. This paper, therefore, focuses on the effect of the farmers-herders conflicts on food security in Plateau State.

Statement of the Problem

Herders-farmers' conflicts in Nigeria have grown, spread and intensified over the past decade and today poses a threat to national survival. In Plateau State, the frequent clashes between herders and farmers in the predominantly farming areas have destroyed lives and farmlands and have become a major threat to efforts to boost food production

which is the major diversification option of the present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari.

The effects of these farmer-herder conflicts are nebulously leading to a decline in farming, causing unprecedented food scarcity, hunger, and the governments' security apparatus needed to strategically provide safety for this populace is lacking. Also, there has been almost a total absconding of farmers, especially youth in these localities. Already, seven out of the 17 local governments in Plateau State, namely Riyom, Mangu, Barkin-Ladi, Bokkos, Jos North, Jos south and Bassa LGAs are mostly affected by the rampaging of herders and farmers have a tale of woes to tell. The conflict has left in its trail heavy losses of lives and properties. Several farmers have been displaced and dispossessed of their farms by armed men suspected to be herdsmen (*Eme et al.*, 2014).

Majority of those displaced are women and youths who make up a substantial part of the farming community, they have thus become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with a far-reaching impact on farming activities. Because the people displaced are peasant farmers they often depend on others to give them land to plant crops on a smaller scale than what they have cultivated before. Conflicts resulting from the use of Fadama land have also jeopardized huge financial investment by the government, Africa Development Bank and World Bank in the Fadama projects in the state (Ardo, 2004). The effects of the sustained herders-farmers conflict in the affected localities have led to farmers' reluctance to go back to their farms even as the current farming season is far gone. For example, the able-bodied young men don't have an interest in Agriculture but prefer staying in the urban areas for petty businesses like "Keke NAPEP" and so on, women from the affected local governments have stayed away from farms for fear of being killed or raped by the marauders. This has resulted in a drastic reduction in farm

outputs, a development that has heightened the fear of hunger.

The negative effects of these conflicts coupled with the policies of the federal government regarding food production and importation, prices of essential commodities and food products have skyrocketed making them unaffordable to the common man. The price of rice, for example, has been hitting historic highs of ₦26-30 thousand per 50kg bag as at October 2021 and the inflation rate increased to 18.34% (Source: National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria), triggering panic amongst the people across the country. Persistent increase in prices of other staple products such as fish, bread, meat, cereals, chicken, yam, onions, beans, vegetable oil, tomatoes, groundnut oil and others have aggravated the continued woes of the common man. Shortage of products and ever-increasing prices has created unsettling sentiments across communities, dampening the country's efforts to end poverty. There are estimates that more than 65 per cent of the Nigerian population is food insecure (Osagie, 2013). It is against this background that this study seeks to assess the impact of farmers-herders conflicts on food security in Plateau State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of farmers-herders conflicts on food security in Plateau State, Nigeria. The specific objective includes:

- i. To examine the causes of farmers-herders conflicts in Plateau State, Nigeria?
- ii. To investigate how farmers-herders conflicts pose a threat to food production in Plateau State.
- iii. To Establish the effects of farmers-herders conflicts on food security in Plateau State.
- iv. To device mechanisms for resolving farmers-herders conflicts and ways to attract youth to return to farming in Plateau State?

Conceptualizing Food Security

Food security is a broad concept that cuts across many dimensions. Food security as a concept cropped up during the world food crisis between 1972-1974 that called for the first World Food Conference. Maxwell and Smith (1992) pointed out that a decade ago; there were about 200 hundred different definitions of the concept in published writings.

At the 1974 World Food Conference the term "food security" was defined with an emphasis on supply. Food security, they said, is the "availability at all times of adequate, nourishing, diverse, balanced and moderate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2003). Therefore, the focus then was on availability and adequate supply to meet increasing world population demands. The availability was basically about nations/states producing more food so that supply will even exceed demand for people to have enough to eat.

Later definitions added demand and access issues to the definition. The final report of the UN World Food Summit 1996 states that food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for active and healthy life (FAO, 1996; Patel, 2013). This definition is again refined in The State of Food Insecurity 2001: Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for active and healthy life (FAO, 2002). According to Okuneye, (2014) Food security entails ensuring sustainable access, availability and affordability of adequate quantity and quality food to all citizens to meet up with their physiological requirements.

Related to the above, the World Bank states that three pillars determine food security: food availability, food access, and food use and misuse (World Bank, 2001). The FAO (2008) added a fourth pillar: the stability of the first three dimensions of food security over time. In 2009, the World Summit on Food Security stated that the "four pillars of food security are availability, access, utilization, and stability" (FAO, 2009). **Availability** relates to the supply of food through production, distribution, and exchange. **Accessibility** refers to the affordability and allocation of food, as well as the preferences of individuals and households; as the causes of hunger and malnutrition are often not a scarcity of food but an inability to access available food, usually due to poverty. Food **Utilization**-this has to do with how the body utilizes the food consumed, issues with safe food handling, preparation and storage, and diversity in food consumption. Issues with how food is distributed among members of households are also important here (FAO, 2008). **Stability** of the other three dimensions (mentioned above) over time- It is just not enough to have access to safe and nutritious food to a certain extent, regular access, and maintaining that access, is the goal. So, losing the ability to have regular access to food due to challenges such as unemployment, security challenges, or even adverse weather conditions that hampers one's ability to access food, can make that individual to be considered food insecure (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2008; FAO, 2008). According to the FAO, for food security objectives to be realized, all four dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously (FAO, 2008). The definition of food security adopted by this study is the most recent definition of the concept by the FAO, which takes into consideration the diverse and unique situation of people around the world. To the FAO: "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary

needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 2015). The core components of this definition, as underlined above, informed the decision to adopt the concept in this study.

Concept of Farmers-Herdsman Conflict

Conflicts between herders and farmers have received clarification from different scholars. Oladele and Oladele (2011) defined farmers-herdsmen conflict as a competition between two agricultural land users, comprising farmers and herdsman, which oftentimes turn into serious overt and covert hostilities and social friction. This definition views farmers-herdsmen conflict as a struggle over scarce resources, such as land and water. It underlines the importance of resources in farmers-herdsmen conflict. Audu (2013) in his submission posited that farmers-herdsmen conflicts are a struggle between crop farming and pastoral groups for land or other resources that are critical for the sustainability and/or development of pastoral and agricultural production systems, such as watering areas, wetlands and fertile lands which can assume violent or non-violent dimensions. This view outlines the importance of land and water resources to the development of pastoral and agricultural production, as well as emphasizes the influence of resource scarcity in farmers' herders' conflict. Other scholars who support this view include Udoh and Chilaka (2012) who believe that resource scarcity is the primary cause of farmers-herdsmen conflict.

King (2013) on the other hand defines farmers-herdsmen conflicts as conflicts involving farming communities and pastoralists occasioned by the struggle for land resources and socio-cultural dominance in a given environment. He postulates that management and resolution of the farmers-herdsmen conflict could be enhanced through an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural behavioural patterns of herdsman and farmers. This definition highlights the importance of the socio-cultural perspective as vital to understanding farmers-herdsmen conflict. King's view is

supported by scholars such as Moritz (2012) who believed that farmers-herdsmen conflicts are influenced by socio-cultural factors such as religion, livelihood practices and other cultural practices.

Writing on conflicts between herders – farmers, Karim, James and David (1999) distinguish between conflicts of interest, competition, and violent conflict. Conflicts of interest to them refer to the fundamental relationship between actors who permanently or temporarily co-habit an area, have different objectives and interests, and use similar local resources such as land, vegetation and water. Conflicts of interest over the ownership and use of resources may therefore exist between any resource users (farmers and farmers, herders and herders, herders and farmers), and maybe intra-household, interpersonal, intragroup, inter-group or in some cases between local users and outside interests such as corporations and the state.

Empirical studies on effects of farmers-herders conflicts on food security

Sulaiman and Ja`afar-Furo (2010) examined the economic effects of farmer-herdsmen conflicts in the Fadama areas of Bauchi State in Nigeria. This study covered research design, population, sample, statistical method, findings, the result of the study and conclusion, which relates to the current study as it studies the conflict between herders and farmers and its effect but differs in sample technique, population, and sample size. The author reviewed concepts captured in the study. This study is rational and related to the current literature. The research design was a cross-sectional survey design based on a simple stratified random sampling with a population of 1050 respondents from Toro, Bauchi state and a sample size of 300 farmers and herders. A well-structured questionnaire was the instrument employed. A Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17.0 was used for the analysis and the significant results were expressed as ANOVA and t-test. An empirical method

was used, and data were collected from Fadama farmers and herders from the area using a structured questionnaire administered through individual personal interviews. The outcome revealed that farmers experienced a reduction in farm production, increased poverty within and among the communities, social insecurity, inadequate food supply for the family, interruption of education of children and reduction in healthcare provision of the family represented relatively lower proportions. Findings showed that the herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria has become so pervasive that has led to the loss of lives and properties. He also states that many farmers and herders have lost their lives and herds while others have experienced dwindling productivity in their herds. In most of these encounters, citizens are regularly killed and the destruction or loss of property leaves an already endangered populace even poorer.

Olayoku (2016) investigated the effect of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Northern Nigeria. This study covers research design, population, sample, statistical method, findings, the result of the study and conclusion. This study relates to the current study as it relates to the effect of conflict between herders and farmers but differs in sample technique, population, and sample size. The author reviewed concepts captured in the study. This study is rational and related to current literature and their academic resource is built on relevant literature. The research design was a cross-sectional survey design based on a simple stratified random sampling with a population of 650 respondents from Northern Nigeria, and a sample size of 180 farmers and herders. A well-structured questionnaire was the instrument employed. A Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 18.0 was used for the analysis and the significant results were expressed as ANOVA and t-test. His findings during the past eight years about the Nigeria Watch database has recorded 615 violent deaths related to cattle

grazing, out of a total of 61,314 violent fatalities in Nigeria. In 2016, the number of deaths resulting from cattle conflicts doubled to 54, spread across January (Zamfara, Delta, and Osun), February (Jigawa), March (Cross River), June (Kebbi), July (Rivers), and December (Borno and Zamfara). Different weapons were used, from guns in Delta to bows, arrows, charms, cutlasses, and spears in Borno. Taraba State recorded a round of attack by suspected herdsman in 2013, when the Christian communities in Southern Taraba Senatorial District and those on the fringes of the Central Senatorial District, especially in Gassol and Bali local government areas, were attacked. Today, the dimensions of these conflicts have changed with more parties now involved and sophisticated weapons being used leading to counter and reprisal attacks of high magnitude. Although the Local, State and Federal governments of Nigeria have employed different mechanisms to end the menace, these conflicts between Fulani herdsman and farmers have continued unabated. Olayoku (2016) further noted that these conflicts have been most rampant in the middle belt zone noting that in Southern Kaduna for example, particularly in the local government areas of Jama'a, Kachia, Kadarko, Kaura and Sanga, Kaduna State have been subjected to a series of attacks from suspected Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsman since 2011. The attacks have suddenly increased in a manner of arithmetic progression as Nigeria approaches another election year in 2015. Sanga local government area of Kaduna State, with an estimated land expanse of 78 square kilometres and a population of 149,333 going by the 2006 National Population Census, has also witnessed many attacks that killed thousands and dislodged almost a quarter of the population from their original abodes. A reliable source confirmed that in Kobin village, 49 people were killed while 107 houses were burnt in the neighbouring village of Dogon Daji in a single attack. Also in Benue State following a bitter

rivalry between the Tiv and Fulani ethnic groups, a total of 853 people lost their lives since June 2014. While the Fulani herdsman claimed to have lost 214 people in addition to 3200 cows, the Tiv people reportedly killed are estimated to be 633 excluding children and women who died in ramshackle camps last year. Ibanga and Adekunle (2016) studied the effects of farmer's herders' conflict on food security. This study covered research design, population, sample, statistical method, findings, the result of the study and conclusion. This study relates to the current study as it studies the conflict between herders and farmers but differs in sample technique, population, and sample size. The author reviewed concepts captured in the study. This study is rational and related to current literature and their academic resource is built on relevant literature. The research design was a cross-sectional survey design that was based on a simple stratified random sampling with a population of 2000 respondents from Wukari, Taraba state and a sample size of 250 farmers and herders. A well-structured questionnaire was the instrument employed. A Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 19.0 was used for the analysis and the significant results were expressed as ANOVA and t-test. Findings showed that Low financial income is an effect due to farmers-herders conflict on food security, reduced household feeding, hindrance to socio-economic development and farmers-herders conflict affects the supply-demand balance in food and agricultural markets on food security. Furthermore, he stated that attacks by Fulani in Benue in 2016 have led to the killing of at least 1, 269 persons. Out of the 23 local government areas in the state, the rampaging herdsman invaded and occupied 14 local government areas. Six soldiers attached to the 72 battalion in Makurdi were killed in the cross-fire that ensued between the two groups during this period. Five of the soldiers were killed in Agatu in January this year while one captain, was beheaded in the Guma local government area of Benue state. The Tiv people in Guma, Gwer, Gwer-West,

Makurdi and other towns at the border with Taraba state have recorded about 458 deaths and over 350 communities have been sacked and are now living in refugee camps. Findings also showed that in Taraba State Since 2013, the Christian communities in Southern Taraba Senatorial District and those on the fringes of the Central Senatorial District, especially in Gassol and Bali local government areas, have come under attack from the Hausa Fulani Muslim herdsmen; killing women and children. He also noted that in the Wukari area of Taraba State, for instance, villages such as Borno-Kurukuru, Nyamtsav, Orga, Igbough, Tyougese, Orshio, Ukuusu, among many others have been ransacked by Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen, destroying farms, burning homes and churches. In Dinya, the Catholic Diocese of Jalingo, both the church and the priest's residence were burnt. Abugu and Onuba, (2018) studied the effect of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Northern Nigeria. This study covered research design, population, sample, statistical method, findings, the result of the study and conclusion. This relates to the current study as it studies the effect of conflict between herders and farmers on food security but differs in sample technique, population, and sample size. The author reviewed concepts captured in the study. This study is rational and related to current literature and their academic resource is built on relevant literature. The research design was a cross-sectional survey design based on a simple stratified random sampling with a population of 1650 respondents and a sample size of 200 farmers and herders. A well-structured questionnaire was the instrument employed. A Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 19.0 was used for the analysis and the significant results were expressed as a t-test. Findings on effect on food security include: low financial, reduced household feeding, a hindrance to socio-economic development and farmers-herders conflict affect the supply-demand balance in food and agricultural markets on food security. Also, further findings captured the incidences in

2009 and noted that the number of fatalities more than doubled the figures of the previous year, with 83 deaths spread over April (Benue), June (Plateau and Jigawa), July (Jigawa and Benue), September (Borno), October (Kebbi), November (Imo), and December (Nasarawa, Oyo, and Zamfara). June, July, and December had the highest occurrence per month, while 11 of the 13 reported cases took place in the North. According to the International Crisis Group (2017), the 2010 incidents related to cattle grazing then dropped to thirty-nine (39) fatalities during January (Adamawa and Oyo), February (Ogun), April (Plateau), May (Benue), June (Niger), July (Plateau), August (Adamawa), and October (Plateau). The highest number of reported incidents was two in January, while Niger State had the highest number of casualties. Out of a total of nine cases, seven occurred in the North. In Adamawa, where the international cattle market of Mubi attracted foreign robbers, the violence lasted for seven days. This particular case involved suspected Cameroonian armed bandits with sophisticated weapons. He further related his work to The International Crisis Group, (2017) also reported the use of sophisticated weapons and the portrayal of the Fulani as victims was also noted in a report on Plateau State by the spokesperson of (Miyyeti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) when the Fulani clashed with Berom farmers and lost a young Fulani in addition to 30 cows. Also, that the year 2011 saw a meteoric rise to 116 in the number of deaths resulting from cattle conflicts. These clashes occurred in January (Cross River and Plateau), February (Benue and Plateau), April (Abuja), May (Plateau), June, (Nassarawa and Benue), July (Imo), August (Plateau and Nasarawa), November (Kastina), and December (Zamfara). The highest number of incidents was in February and June, with states in the North accounting for the majority of the reported cases. The highest number of fatalities was recorded in Benue, with 38 in June and 27 in February. However, of the

fifteen (15) reported cases in that year, Plateau State accounted for the highest number of occurrences with four incidents, while Benue and Nasarawa had three each. The most sustained violence lasted for five days in Benue, as against three in Nasarawa. The highest number of deaths resulting from cattle conflicts was recorded in 2012, with the total number put at 128 during January (Delta), February (Enugu, Taraba, and Nasarawa), March (Benue, Borno, and Delta), April (Nasarawa and Abuja), May (Nasarawa and Cross River), June (Taraba and Abuja), November (Jigawa), and December (Ogun). The highest number of incidents was four in February, while the highest number of fatalities was recorded in Cross River, with 40 casualties in May, though Benue had a total of 30 deaths in March (International Crisis Group, 2017). In conclusion, the conflicts between these selected communities have impacted negatively on the economy and other areas of life. The government had also invested a lot in securing the funds that should have gone into developmental projects. Education has been hard hit as very few children go to school for fear of being attacked. This study is intended to examine the causes and impact of these conflicts to proffer a solution to address the menace.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopts the theory of eco-violence as its analytical framework. The theory of eco-violence is an emerging theoretical construct seeking to explicate the relationship between environmental factors and violent conflicts. Developed by Homer-Dixon (1999), the theory holds thus:

Decrease in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests, and fish. This can reduce economic productivity, both for the local groups

experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999).

Implicit in the eco-violence theory is the assumption that competition over scarce ecological resources engenders violent conflict. This trend has been aggravated in contemporary times owing to the impacts of climate change, which has exacerbated ecological scarcity across the world (Blench, 2004; Onuoha, 2007).

The crux of the theory of eco-violence is that the desperate quest for survival by groups in a competitive and resource-scarce ecological sphere is likely to precipitate violent conflict. In effect, ecological scarcity raises the competitive stakes and premium that the various societal groups may place on available ecological resources. This condition tends to precipitate violent conflicts.

Applied to the purpose of the present discourse, the theory of eco-violence offers insights into the nature and dynamics of the herders/farmers conflicts in Nigeria. In this regard, it is to be observed that the conflicts have been driven by the desperation of the affected groups to protect and advance their livelihood interests in the context of an ever-shrinking ecological space, characterized by resource scarcity, livelihood crisis, population explosion, and resource competition. In the case of Plateau State, which is by design the focus of this paper, the situation has been accentuated by the climate change-induced migration of pastoralists from the far North to the North-Central region of Nigeria in search of grazing fields (Blench 2004). This trend has been succinctly captured thus:

As the population is increasing, definitely there will be as well increase in demand for land, water, forest products and grazing land within the territories inhabited by herders and farmers; these groups are forced to find new ways to cope with different types of conflict at once because of competition over marginal resources (Adogi, 2013). Concerning this study, farmer-herdsmen conflicts have been driven by the scarcity of land, and competition between the farmers and herdsmen to ensure their viability in the area. The scarcity of land is due to the degradation and shrinking ecological space, human and cattle population explosion, and resource depletion. Therefore, the farmers need the land for cultivation, while the herdsmen need the land for grazing and rearing cattle. The ultimate cause of the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen lie in the general degradation of resources and the increased competition for access and resources capture (Tonah, 2006) has so far tended to have defied all remedies.

Effects of Herder-Farmer Conflicts on Food Security in Plateau State

Herder-farmer conflicts do not only have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved, but they also disrupt and threaten the sustainability of agricultural and pastoral production and invariably the sustainability of livelihoods of rural communities (Ukamaka, Danjuma, Mbolle, Achonam & Mbadiwe, 2017; Moritz, 2010). These conflicts reinforce circles of extreme poverty and hunger, and destroy social status, food security and affect mostly the most marginalized groups that including women and children (Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017). The livelihood structure, food security and wellbeing of farmers are threatened and compromised which contribute to poverty, food and nutrition insecurity and poor health of farming communities, and further escalation of conflicts. The instability caused by the incessant conflicts will likely lead to food shortages for the communities that depend on subsistence farming.

That Herders-Farmers conflict has led to the wanton destruction of material resources is a fact. It has also facilitated land degradation as conflicts often destroy the physical environment. Open grazing especially when there is overindulgence, is a primary contributor to desertification because it converts arable or pasture land into unproductive land. The resultant soil is thus no longer suited for growing food since it loses its essential nutrient source. The loss of productive land directly results in the loss of available crops for consumption. This heightens food supply reduction and if population growth remains unchecked, it causes starvation and other economic challenges. The long term effect of this is food shortages which can make people die of starvation. Without sufficient pasture for livestock grazing, herds lack the necessary nutrients for survival. The nutrient deficiencies make the animals unable to gain weight appropriate to their productive stage and life which lowers their chances of survival. Human survival levels, well-being, and health are as well affected when there is an inadequate food supply for consumption with the results being acute starvation and death of both people and livestock (Chukwuemeka, Aloysius and Eneh, 2018).

The conflict between the herders and farmers has prompted a reduction in not just the farmers' outputs but also the income of farmers owing to the destruction of crops. In villages of Bassa, Bokkos, Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Mangu and Jos South local government areas various food crops such as maize, guinea corn, millet, hungry rice (acha), yam, rice, potatoes, were either destroyed, looted or burnt down in homes, food stores and markets; farmlands were either seized or food crops destroyed by the herders while cattle were either rustled or killed by the farmers. This is ironic to the Federal government's call to return to agriculture to boost the ailing economy and food production. As a result of the conflict, a lot of farmers have lost their farm produce in the conflicts, which affects earning capacity

of both parties bringing about the shortage in the food supply in the State and the nation at large since Plateau State is a major supply of food to other parts of the Country.

Overtly and covertly because of the conflict and the negative effects of these conflicts, prices of essential commodities and food products have skyrocketed making them unaffordable to the common man. As, Ibrahim, Abdurrahman, Belel & Umar (2015) observed that the farmers and herders conflicts have caused a sharp and substantial increase in prices of foodstuff for crucial northern agricultural crop exports such as cowpeas, maize, millet, rice and sorghum, to the rest of Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. Persistent increase in prices of other staple products such as rice, fish, bread, meat, cereals, chicken, yam, onions, beans, vegetable oil, tomatoes, groundnut oil and others have aggravated the continued woes of the common man in Plateau State. This rise in prices is mainly due to a decrease in agricultural output and uncertainties in markets.

Furthermore, Adebayo & Olaniyi, (2008) noted that the impact of the herders-farmers conflicts had been observed to lead to the displacement of the farmers from their places of origin. They have thus become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with a far-reaching impact on farming activities. These displacements, (stemming from the clashes between herders and farmers over free grazing rights and instability caused by these incessant clashes), will likely lead to food shortages in the immediate communities in particular and the general economy (Chukwuemeka, Aloysius and Eneh, 2018). Also as observed by Olabode & Ajibade (2010) farmers-herder conflicts lead to widespread displacement of farmers from their farms following the destruction of farms by the invading herders and subsequently a fall in farm yield as farmers abandoned their more fertile farmland in avoidance of conflicts. According to the SEMA Director of Search and Rescue in

an interview dated 2018 July, most of the 17 LGAs in Plateau State have internally displaced persons. The LGAs mostly affected are Bassa, Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Jos South, Mangu and Bokokos LGA and Jos North. Gashish district, Jebbu Miango, Geo-Science camps A and B in Jos South Local Government, Farin Lamba in Riyom, Mangun and COCIN Ranpiya in Mangu are examples of camps in which the farmers have taken.

These have drastically reduced the agricultural labour force and decreased herds' production and dairy products in the area.

Conclusion

Aside from the loss of lives, livelihoods and decline in economic activities, herders/farmers conflicts have a serious implication on availability, access, utilization, and stability of the food, since agriculture is the main preoccupation of the rural population in Plateau State. Farmer-herder conflicts have drastically reduced the availability of food supply example, Irish, fonio(hungry rice)vegetables that are known to be much available, now is hardly seen like before as well as the income of rural households and social interaction among the different religious and ethnic groups in Plateau State has diminished drastically. Factors such as the killing of stray cattle, increase in population, religious differences, raping and sexual harassment by the parties are responsible for farmer-herder conflicts. This issue has consistently been at the forefront of most of the media outlets of the nation. As such, farmers view cattle routes and grazing reserves as land not possessed by anyone and can therefore be freely encroached. The herders, on the other hand, has the belief that feeding their cattle under whatever circumstances is a superior and uncompromising right given to him by nature and these had led to clashes between the competing parties. Thus, food insecurity in the state has become an effect of the herders/farmers conflict; this is a national

issue that needs to be tackled with every sense of seriousness.

Recommendations

Village extension agents should be employed to serve as an intermediary between the farmers and herders. There is need to create a platform that will bring all stakeholders together quarterly. Government should investigate the report of traditional rulers and local government officials who engaged in corrupt practices of selling grazing areas and cattle routes, to take necessary action to prevent its reoccurrences. There is the need to revisit the existing 1964 grazing reserves act and 1978 land tenure act to accommodate land ownership, usage and control by farmers and herders. There is the need to adopt some mitigating strategies such as alternative dispute resolutions, provision of relief materials, arrest and prosecution of the offenders, in managing the intensity of the conflicts.

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