



MISEREOR
• IHR HILFSWERK



BENUE VALLEY JOURNAL OF HERDER-FARMER CRISIS

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VOLUME 1, JULY, 2020

Published by

ISSN 2756-312x

**Catholic Diocese of Makurdi
Foundation For Justice,
Development And Peace (FJDP)**

**in collaboration with
Centre for Peace and Development Studies,
Benue State University, Makurdi**

ISSN 2756-312x

www.fjdp.org and www.bsum.edu.ng



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OF HERDER-FARMER CRISIS

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Benue Valley Journal of Herder-Farmer Crisis is a quarterly publication of the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi Foundation for Justice, Development and Peace (FJDP), in collaboration with Center for Peace and Development Studies, Benue State University, Makurdi – Nigeria.

The objective of the publication is to generate and share evidence-based information on the tensions and violent conflict between pastoralist and farmers in the Benue Valley with individuals, government and relevant stakeholders for peace building purposes.

Articles, which must not exceed 6,000 words or 15 pages, including references with an abstract of 150 to 200 words are to be submitted to: journal.benuevalley@gmail.com such articles MUST be typed in double line spacing (MS Word), in 12 points of Times New Roman. The APA or MLA styles (Footnotes and Endnotes) will be acceptable provided there is consistency. Papers submitted for publication must include title, name(s) of author(s), institutional affiliation and relevant contact addresses.

Contributors will receive 2 complimentary copies of the edition in which their contributions appear. E-copies are available at www.fjdp.org and www.bsum.edu.ng

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WORKING WITHIN THE LAWS: CROP FARMING–PASTORALISM CONUNDRUM AND CONVALESCENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Every society has laws regulating the conduct of humans and non human elements within it. The level of law utility and adherence makes the difference. The essence of the state is to provide enable environments for all and sundry to operate without relapsing into the state of nature. There are laws regulating various arms of government, public ventures, private businesses and the extent of power individuals have or may use. There are various laws in Nigeria. More importantly, there are laws regulating land usage for crop farming and pastoralism. Just like every other laws, the conundrum is the level of awareness of these laws and the adherence. Therefore, the crises that emanate from farmers and herders in the Middle Belt of Nigeria are problems of working within the laws of crop farming and pastoralism. The social contract theory is used to explain the importance of laws and working within them. Mixed research design is used to collect data on the

relevant variables. The convalescence is the reviewing old laws, the making of new laws for new occurrences and to forestall future reoccurrence of crises between farmers and herders.

Keywords: Crises, Development, Farmers, Laws, Pastoralism and Social Contract

Introduction

Laws are the basic fulcrum that hold and control the modality of relationship among groups of people in a community. They are the landmarks that regulate the extent of relationship among groups of people. Laws are the yardstick that tells the extent to which an individual can relate with the other so as to remain civic and humane in interactions. Every society has laws regulating the conduct of humans within it. The rationality behind having laws is to maintain a good, cordial and harmonious relationship among the various groups of people in a particular society. Laws in themselves have no power except the people begin to apply it in their daily deeds.

The level of the utility and adherence to laws makes the difference in all human societies. Communities that adhere to laws and various regulations strictly are noted for harmonious and formal relationship. Growth and development are as well most evident in the economic, social and political landscape of such countries. On the contrary, the communities that do not adhere to laws and various regulations strictly are noted for lack of harmony and mostly informal backdoor relationship. In such climes, growth and development is a scarce

commodity.

In most developed countries of the world, the strict adherence to the rule of law is a norm which has helped to sustain growth and development. In both developed and developing countries, the essence of the state is to provide enabling environments for all to operate without relapsing into the state of nature (Aluko and Sayuti, 2020; Aluko, 2019). The state of nature is the phenomenon where life is short, nasty, solitary, poor and brutal. Everyone is for himself while God is for all. The rich crush the poor, the strong trample on the weak. The ethnic groups or individuals that have access to state power cast away other groups in fierce violent power 'bragadoism' (power tussle).

No doubt, there are laws regulating various arms of government, public and private businesses, utilities, and the extent of power an individual has or may use over public resources. The laws regulating the executive, the legislature and the judiciary are embedded in the constitution. The laws regulating the conduct of individuals, their rights and duties are as well embedded in the constitution. Therefore, the onus lies on the various arms of government and individuals to do their businesses without fear or favour.

There are various laws in Nigeria. They are summarised as public and private laws. The public laws are those concerned with the public domain while the private laws are those regulating the private domains. Both public and private laws have their unique selling points peculiar to them. They also have their various points of convergence. A major point of convergence is on land use and ownership. There are laws regulating land ownership and land usage from both the public and

private laws.

There are multiple laws governing land administration in Nigeria. Most states have enacted laws providing for the establishment of a state land registry. Nigeria's Land Use Act of 1978 had abolished all existing freehold systems. However, several variants of law exist from different states in the country regulating land usage. More importantly, there are various laws regulating land usage for crop farming and pastoralism. Several anti-grazing laws have been enacted in some states in Nigeria such as Benue and Ekiti state among others. These laws vary from state to state based on the peculiarity of land usage crises such state is facing.

Just like every other law, the conundrum is the level of awareness of these laws and the adherence. Therefore, crises emanating from farmers and herders in the Middle Belt of Nigeria are problems of working within the laws of crop farming and pastoralism. The pastoralists are migrants who seek to find pastures for their flocks (Aluko, 2017a). The famers are 'landowners' who plant crops to feed their families and the community. However, respect for the landowners is respect to the law of mutual existence and protection of lives and property. This law has been broken in the middle belt, Benue State and most importantly in Nigeria. This results in the brutish bloody clashes between pastoralists and the farmers in the region leading to fiasco and relationship conundrum. The focus of this paper is on how the pastoralists and famers conundrum be resolved within the ambience of the law.

Conceptual Clarification

Violence

Harroff-Tavel (2010) posits that violence is purely criminal. He mentioned different forms of violence including social and political uprising, hunger riots, identity-based violence among ethnic or religious groups and clashes between territorial gangs, terrorism and acts of xenophobic violence directed against migrants. However, urban violence has intertwined with different forms of violence in urban areas. He goes further to say that;

Armed urban violence between groups that are generally considered as criminal (drug dealers, territorial gangs, mafia-type groups, etc.), or between those groups and government forces or private militias, raises some complex legal (and political) problems. This is particularly the case when that fighting is between groups engaged in a collective confrontation of major intensity, which testifies to a high degree of organization.

Akinwale and Aderinto (2012) and Aluko (2019a) agree that all forms of violence constitute a serious social problem irrespective of their nomenclatures. Any form of violence that constitutes a threat to security of lives and property of a large number of people in an urban area is considered urban violence. This conceptualisation is based on recognition of the fact that urban violence can be more devastating compared to violence in a rural setting. Penglase (2011) argued that representations of violence are often centred upon transgression to the community settings, norms and conducts. Kunkeler and

Peters (2011) and Aluko (2017b) argue that violence is generally framed and interpreted as criminal violence. Within a context of state failure or the inability of state representatives to provide security, the lives of inhabitants of cities such as Rio de Janeiro and Johannesburg are constituted by a culture of fear that is attached to issues of crime (Koonings and Kruijt, 2007).

Krause, Muggah and Gilgen (2011) categorise violence as direct and indirect. Direct form of violence results in physical and psychological harm including intentional fatalities, assault and sexual violence. The indirect manifestation of violence is an aftermath of lawlessness that affects negatively other aspects of livelihood, social relations and the well-being of the people. This concept agrees with the same trend of violence in general which may manifest in either the urban area or the rural area. Muggah (2012) however concluded the whole gamut of violence by submitting that;

There is no agreed definition of what constitutes violence or how it should be measured. However, there are parameters to the discussion that hinge on its direct and indirect characteristics, its intensity and duration, its spatial—socio characteristics, its intentionality and context. It is generally agreed that urban violence often features interconnected forms of insecurity and that it challenges narrow categories and classifications. Multi-dimensional frameworks are emerging that attempt to explain different thresholds of urban violence.

Further classifications of violence include the following: social violence, physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and economic violence.

Social Violence – Acts of controlling behavior, such as preventing someone from seeing friends or family of birth, stopping someone from leaving the house; requiring to know where someone is at all times, stalking, spreading false information, videos or photos without permission or forcing women and girls to have an abortion.

Physical Violence – Slapping, pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, dragging or throwing objects at someone; choking, strangling or burning someone; using a weapon, hazardous chemicals or substances against someone; or kicking or pulling someone's external genitalia (for males).

Sexual Violence – acts of unwanted sexual comments or physical contact, rape by physical force, or otherwise forced sex (for instance, by blackmail or threats), denial of using protection during sex, a sexual partner hiding their HIV status, sexual acts or intercourse that were performed on the basis of feeling there was no option or penetration with an object against someone's will.

Psychological Violence – Insults, belittling or humiliation in private or in front of others, threats of abandonment, being ignored or treated indifferently, intimidations and acts aimed at scaring someone; threats of using weapons against someone, or threats of hurting someone or someone one cares about.

Economic Violence– Denial of household money for expenses (chop money) even if enough financial means are available, unsolicited taking of money, control of

belongings and spending decisions, damage to or destruction of someone's property, denial of the right to work, forcing someone to work against their will or denial of food and other basic needs.

Pastoralist-Farmer Violence

This is a form of violence which is centred on the use of land, water and crops by both man and animals. It is the violence that emanates from setting priorities by either farmland owners on their crops or by the pastoralists on their animals which results into clash of interest and brutal settlements. It is also the violence that results from claims of land claim ownership by various ethnic groups and the right to use the land. Therefore, violence erupts from the pastoralists' claim to the land by virtue of migration from the nomadic trade ventures while the farmers claim that they own the land by virtue of inheritance from their ancestors.

It is also a form of violence that ensues due to clash of interests. The pastoralists' interest is in their livestock which are fed by migration from one place to the other including farmlands. The famers' interest is in their crops and the protection of their harvested crops. The pastoralist wants to feed the herds with plants which include the crops of the famers so as to ensure that the herds remain productive and survive droughts. On the other hand, the famer wants to protect himself, his family and the community from starvation, hunger and famine by ensuring food security. This clash of interests no doubt leads to fierce blood bath for ownership, survival and superiority.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Contract Theory

The Social Contract Theory traces the existence of the state to the mutual agreement and mutual consent of the people, to form a state. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, both from England, and Jean Jacques Rousseau from France are the three political philosophers who propounded this theory. They assumed that, to escape from the pre-political condition of society, individuals entered into a social contract. These theories served as the basis for modern democracy and mutual existence of individuals within the state. The theory established the obedience to political authority, laws, and that ultimate political authority rested with the consent of the people. The pre-political condition of mankind was described as the state of nature. In order to prevent the state of nature, laws are invented. This is why Jean Jacques Rousseau posited that 'Man is born free, everywhere he is in chains'.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), an English political philosopher, in his work, *Leviathan* explains the origin of the state. He explains that prior to the emergence of a civil state, human beings were in the state of nature. Hobbes began his thesis with the concept of a state of nature, which he characterised as the pre-social phase of human nature. Their lives were under constant struggle with nature. The state of nature was a condition of unmitigated selfishness and capacity. It was a condition of perpetual war 'where every man was enemy to every other man.' The life of a human being was 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. To evade the state of nature, and for securing their natural rights of life, liberty and property as civil rights, individuals

entered into a social contract to establish a state. The people authorised their right to govern themselves to the sovereign, which came into being as a result of the contract. The person or assembly of persons to whom the rights are surrendered becomes the sovereign and the individuals who agree to submit to the authority become subjects. The sovereign has the absolute right to keep the state without any challenge.

On the other hand, John Locke (1632-1704) in his book, *Two Treatises of Government* explained that the state of nature was not a state of war, but a state of peace, natural rights, preservation, goodwill and mutual assistance. Locke's state of nature was pre-political. The people were social and had rights and liberties. The state of nature ensured three rights to individuals relating to life, liberty and property. The state of nature was one of inconvenience. Life was inconvenient because each individual had to interpret the law of nature for himself and had also to enforce it without the help of any other authority. The state of nature did not have the machinery to enforce the natural rights of individuals.

To preserve such state of affairs, two contracts were made: social and governmental. Social contract led to the formation of civil society and governmental contract to the establishment of government. Social contract was among the individuals - to surrender their natural rights in exchange for civil rights. Governmental contract was between the individuals and the ruler, to establish a system of law and justice in the form of a state. The ruler was the party to the contract and was bound by its terms. Unlike Hobbes, Locke traces the source of government's authority to the consent of the community. Locke introduced the concept of limited government, in terms

of the rulers, their powers, functions and tenure. He believed in limited monarchy. The king was the trustee of the people. If the ruler abused his powers and breached the popular trust, he may be changed by revolt by the people.

In the opinion of Jean Jaques Rousseau (1712-1778), 'the general will of the people' led to the creation of the institution called the state. Rousseau in his literary work, *The Social Contract* described the state of nature as a state of bliss and happiness. With the passage of time, increase in population and disparity of wealth and power, life became intolerable. Simplicity and happiness disappeared. Human beings then started to build their relations on cooperation and dependency. They entered into a 'social contract' to preserve their natural rights without submitting or subordinating to any ruler or authority (Aluko, 2019b).

Individuals surrendered their rights to the General Will of which individuals themselves were part, and hence they shared rights even after transferring them. Individuals were governed by a new authority in the name of general will (common good) of the people, in the form of direct democracy. Rousseau regarded the general will of the people as sovereign. The common good depends on the prevailing circumstances of a society. According to Rousseau, the government is merely the tool to execute the popular will. Thus popular sovereignty is in continuous exercise and there is no scope of revolt in his theory.

This theory is criticised on certain common counts. First, the individuals who were naïve to the concept of political authority and civil rights could not, from any particular point of time, enter into an agreement and

start living a collectivised civil life. Second, if the existence of state is based on agreement of the members of a society, then the old agreement may be revoked in accordance with the self-interests of the members. Thus, a mechanically originated state will run under the constant fear of destabilisation.

However, working within the laws is a mandate of the social contract whether from Hobbes', Rousseau's or Locke's perspective. The laws ensure submission to good living and protection of lives and the property of the people. This will also ensure the ascription of punishment to any one that violates the contracts. The pastoralist-farmer crises in Nigeria is as well seen as a breakup in the laws and orders guiding the rights to life and property, grazing and anti grazing laws and the land use act. A continuous violation of such laws will lead to more catastrophes and it can eventually escalate, resulting into another civil war in Nigeria.

Laws of Crop Farming and Pastoralism in Nigeria

In colonial Nigeria, there were different land tenure systems for the northern and southern parts of the country. In the northern part of the country, the Proclamation of 1900 was promulgated by which all the land in the territory was annexed by the British Government. Subsequently, the colonial government of Northern Nigeria set up the Northern Nigeria Lands Committee in 1908 to recommend an appropriate land tenure system for the region. Based on the committee's report which was adopted by the colonial government, the Land and Native Rights Proclamation of 1910 was enacted. The statute was replaced later by the Lands and Native Rights Ordinance of 1916.

After Nigeria's independence, the Northern Nigerian legislature enacted the Land Tenure Law, 1962, which was the operative legislation at the time the Land Use Act was enacted in 1978. The tenure systems formulated by these two statutes are in many respects similar. The major similarity is the vesting of all land in the territory in the government, which then made it available to the citizens through the grant of rights of occupancy (Nwocha, 2016; Aluko, 2018). This gives the picture of the conundrum and conspiracy embedded in the Land Use Act that was enacted in 1978 which was similar to the Northern Nigerian legislature enacted Land Tenure Law, 1962. Why did it have to take the pattern of the laws of the Northern Nigerian legislature and not the south? Is southern Nigeria not a federating unit any longer?

In the south of Nigeria, there was no uniform tenure system applicable to the various communities. This was the true nature of autonomy of the social contract theory. The various communities, tribes and nations comprised in the territory operated diverse land tenure systems, which largely endured and survived colonialism. The basic thrust of these various land tenure systems in the south was private ownership of land. Land was owned absolutely by private individuals, families or communities and was not subject to superior control save where the occupier held an inferior title as tenant or customary tenant. The government only exercised direct proprietary control over comparatively small areas which it had acquired for its own use.

In effect, land could only be acquired through negotiation with various land owing families, communities or individuals. The title of ownership,

therefore, was not vested in a government, but in the various landowners. The governments of the various states of southern Nigeria and the middle belt could however, compulsorily acquire land through the Public Lands Acquisition Laws applicable in the various states (Nwocha, 2016; Aluko and Sayuti, 2016). Where this was the case, compensation was paid to the previous owners and the land was used for some public purposes. Outside the lands acquired by government, most of the lands in the south were the subject of private ownership and were as such, articles of commerce. Therefore, individuals, families or communities had absolute liberty and discretion to sell, mortgage, lease or retain their land without reference to a superior authority.

The Land Use Act, enacted in 1978, was meant to standardise land administration systems across the country. It vested all urban land within a state in the state governor, and all non-urban land in the local governments in which they are found (The 36 states in Nigeria and 774 local government areas). The state governor and local government authorities are empowered by the Act to grant “statutory rights of occupancy”. The 1978 Land Use Act abolished all existing freehold systems, and provided for a nationwide leasehold system. The leases are typically granted for 99 years, the maximum period stipulated by the Act. However, less than three percent (3%) of Nigeria’s land is thought to be formally registered with federal, state or local authorities.

Over time, due to the inadequacies of the 1978 Land Use Act to cater for the peculiarities of each state and region in the federation as well as new occurrences such as pastoralist-famer crises, new laws were made by

states to ease political, economic and social tensions in their respective states. Therefore, there are multiple laws governing land administration in Nigeria. These laws vary from state to state. Most states have enacted laws providing for the establishment of a state land registry. Apart from the Land Use Act of 1978, the laws that govern land administration in Nigeria include the following: Registration of Titles Law (Lagos State, 2003), Land Instrument Registration Law (1925), The Registration of Titles Law, Registered Land Act of 1965 (Replaced the 1925 law in Lagos State), Property and Conveyancing Law (1884), Land Use Charge Law (Lagos state), Urban and Regional Planning Land Law (Decree 88) of 1992 and Anti-Grazing Law 2018 (in Benue, Ekiti State among other states in Nigeria).

The conundrum in the laws regulating land use is evident in two major ways: i. A political arrangement and ii. Loyalty problem. The political arrangement is seen as the imposition of the Northern Nigerian legislature enacted Land Tenure Law of 1962 rebranded as the 1978 Land Use Act of Nigeria on the entire country as a political arrangement. This arrangement is in favour of the Northern oligarchy and their trade. The oligarchy had been controlling political power in Nigeria since independence and ensures power circulation within its elites. The power to control the land is equivalent to the power to own everything found in the land and on the land including human beings.

Therefore, pastoralists from Northern Nigeria had utilised that advantage to advance their trade to transverse the entire length and breadth of the country through nomadic occupation –rearing of animals. Armed with the notion that the land belongs to the

government and their northern kinsmen are in control of the political power, farmland and the crops on it are seen as a cheap source of sustenance for their herds (Aluko and Munyaradzi, 2018). This is why they also lay claim to the middle belt and southern Nigeria's land as their ancestors' land. They thereby occupy it forcefully, resulting into violent attacks on the farmers, innocent children and women in such locations.

The second conundrum is centred on the loyalty problems. Whenever any other kind of law is made to challenge the 1978 Land Use Act, it is seen as a direct confrontation with the northern hegemony and oligarchy. It is also seen as a direct confrontation with the pastoralist nomadic way of life. Moreso, the population of livestock is noted to be growing in direct proportion with human population, which makes the venture a prospective prosperous trade. Any law against the venture is perceived as law against the traders' (pastoralists) survival and prosperity. Therefore, there is a stern agitation against the implementation of such laws (Aluko, 2017c). A classical example is the anti-grazing law in Benue State which was seen as an effrontery against the pastoralist trade ventures and occupying strategy. Therefore, there were fierce political dialogues, economic campaigns and social sanctions which were accompanied by more violent encounters of the pastoralists against the indigenes.

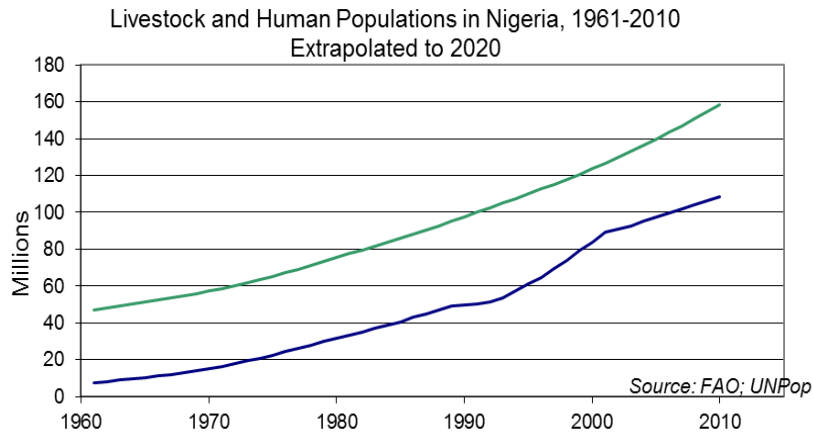


Figure I: Livestock and Human Populations in Nigeria, 1961-2010 Proportionate and extrapolated to 2020

Conclusion

A major problem in Nigeria that has given her the toga developing country since independence in 1960 is the inability to work within the laws. There are good laws that can help to propel good and harmonious relationships among all the federating units, promote trade and commerce, enhance economic growth and development, and propel political advancement and social equilibrium. However, such laws are not obeyed by both government and citizens, are partially obeyed and or outlawed eventually. Other draconian laws that promote segregation, ethnic domination and chauvinism, religious bigotry, wider gaps between the rich and the poor and those that directly 'bless' the minority ruling class at the expense of the majority and invariably promote poverty, hunger and anarchy usually see the light of day and are judiciously followed.

The laws are meant for the poor while the rich are above the law. The state uses the instrument of violence to protect the rich and their ethnic groups against the vast majority. The laws regulating the use of land, especially the right to farm or graze, have been suspended in the air. The rights to life and property of farmers are being toyed with especially in the middle belt of Nigeria. This has led to the death of some minority ethnic group members. A median solution is to prohibit the use of force to graze and destruction of farmlands. However, the conundrum is implementing it and making the parties to obey the law.

The convalescence to the problems of working within the laws regulating land use is the political adherence to law regardless of whom it favours and whom it may hurt. The social contract theory opines that man was born free but everywhere, he is in chains. Moreover, laws that are seen causing segregation and division among the various ethnic groups must be jettisoned by making other laws to outlaw or reduce the magnitude and effect of the biased law. Working with the law which is the judicious implementation of such solution-oriented and corrective law with public prosecution of the offenders is necessary for success and development in Nigeria.

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HISTORICAL AND POLICY CONTEXT OF
FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICT AND THE
CHARACTERIZATION OF THE OPEN GRAZ-
ING PROHIBITION AND RANCHES ESTAB-
LISHMENT LAW IN BENUE STATE

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Abstract

Conflict between farmers and herders has been in existence for decades. Clashes between herdsmen and farmers are multi-dimensional –and is a consequence of the interplay of different factors. This paper examines the historical and policy context of Farmers-Herders Conflict and Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law in Benue State. Symbolically, both the farmers and herders

view their land and cattle as sacred, historical sphere of influence and as an ancestral heritage. And both farmers and herders need land for the survival of their source of livelihood. Predicated upon this, hence, issues related to land are usually marked by fierce confrontations resulting to huge destructions of lives and properties. It was to abate the persistent conflicts between herdsmen and farmers over land that both the federal and state governments have developed a variety of responses including the recent law passed by the Benue state government. The law prohibits open rearing and grazing of livestock and calls for the establishment of ranches. Since the implementation of this law on 1st November 2017 in Benue State, there have been series of both verbal and violent confrontations between the farmers and herders. It is in light of the aforementioned issues that this study unpacks the characterisation of this law by both the farmers and herders. While the farmers view the law as the panacea to the decade long violence in the state, the herders on the other hand contend that the law is horrific, unbearable, and repressive aimed at outlawing their means of survival. This characterization of the law resonates the indigene settler phenomena in Nigeria and could have negative implications for both groups in the future. Therefore, this papers suggest for more sensitization of this law among the herders as well as the amendment of the law to reduce the

binaries between indigenes and non-indigenes.

Key Word: Open Grazing Prohibition, Farmers, Herders, Conflict, Law, Ranching.

Introduction

Land in most communities in Nigeria such as among the Tiv people in the Benue valley, is freighted with symbolic meaning, it is sacred and considered as an ancestral and historical sphere of influence.....
(Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009, p.1)

The above quotation underscores the attachment most farmers have with their lands. Similarly, herders also have the same affection towards their herds which is the major source of their economic and social livelihood. Both the former and the latter view it as their ancestral heritage and the source of their spiritual and economic survival. Therefore, any attempt to discount them of this heritage is treated with resistance which leads to large scale conflict. Dispute arises usually because both farmers and herder need the land for their economic activities which result to violent confrontations in different parts of Nigeria (Njoku, 2018).

Conflict between farmers and herders has been in existence for decades. For as long as pastoralism and farming exist, there will always be some degree of conflict between the groups practicing it (Bagu and Smith 2018). Globally, clashes between herdsmen and farmers are multi-dimensional –and is a consequence of the interplay of different factors. As espoused by Ducrottoy,

Majekodunmi, Shaw, Bagulo, Musa, Bertu, Gusi, Ocholi, Bryssinckx, and Welburn (2016) herding and farming, has come under pressure in Africa as a means of livelihood largely due to changes in economic, social, political and environmental factors. The violent conflicts between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers which have been a challenge in West Africa comes with adverse effect on livelihood, peace and order (Olaniyan 2015; Shettima & Tar 2008; Tonah, 2006). For example, Agyemang (2017) reported that Ghana is not immune to conflicts between sedentary farmers and Pastoralist Fulani and its attendant consequence. In the same vein Bukari and Schareika (2015) also observed that between 2010 and 2013, there were as many as 60 media reports of clashes between local farmers and Fulani herdsmen in many parts of Ghana. Kreutmann and Schutte (2011) reported that the conflict between herders and farmers was resolved in Northeastern Afghanistan through the resettlement of the herders to where they can access water and land without encroaching into farmlands. In Europe the conflict between the Komi and the Samoyed nomadic Reindeer was solved through 'herd control'.

The relationship between the farmers and herders had been to a large extent cordial and symbiotic (Ducrotoy, et al, 2016). This relationship was such that during the dry season, herders move to the southern parts of the Guinea savannah zone, because of pasture. In the wet season, these zones face high problems of trypanosomiasis transmitted by tsetse flies causing herders to move to farmlands within the northern Sudan savannah, supplying dairy products to the local farming community. In return, the farming community supply herders with grains. At post-harvest, the cattle would graze on crop

and their dropping becomes manure on the farms (Ducrotoy et al, 2016).

This relationship that was once interdependent has turned hostile, notably, in the last decade characterised by violent confrontation leading to the loss of lives and properties both for the farmers and herders alike. Arguably, some of the attacks from the conflict that ensued between these groups are genocidal in nature. Similarly, Blench and Dendo (2003) countered that it is not possible to say the relationship between farmers and herders had been completely cordial in the past and even now. They however, opined that between 1980 and 2003 the frequency of the violence escalated significantly and can be the inter-play of production system, religion and politics.

Scholarly literature abound on the conflict between farmers and herders. For example scholars Olaniyan, Francis and Okeke-Uzodike (2015) Okoli and Atelhe (2014) Muhammad, Ismaila, and BiBi (2015) and Abbass (2012) have examined the conflict from the prism of climate change, eco-politics and eco-violence. In Nigeria the major causes and aggravating factors behind the farmers herders conflict as espoused by International Crisis Group (2017) and Njoku (2018) are climatic changes leading to drought and desertification, population increase, loss of grazing lands in Northern Nigeria due to expansion of human settlements, technological and economic changes, new farming methods, crime, including rural banditry and cattle rustling, political and ethnic strife, cultural changes, and the collapse of traditional value system, proliferation of weapons. A dysfunctional legal framework that allows crime to go unpunished has encouraged farmers and herders to take

the laws into their own hands (International Crisis Group, 2017; Njoku, 2018). Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009) they observed that the major source of conflict in the Benue valley is propelled by issues related to land. And the conflict between the herders and farmers is mostly over grazing land. This is because both the farmers and herders need the land for grazing and farming. Commenting further Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009) indicted the state as responsible for this conflict because of her inability to settle the indigene settler saga in the Nigeria constitution; issues related to water spots and grazing land as well as the Nigeria's land tenure system which affects the accessibility of land by peasants.

A recent attempt was made to examine the farmer herder conflict from the prism of the victimization experiences and the trans-territorial backlashes of the open grazing prohibition law enacted in Benue in neighbouring Nasarawa state (Tade and Yikwabs, 2019; Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin, 2017). However, there exist dearth of literature with regards to the newly enacted open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law. Hence, this study unpacks the characterization of this newly enacted law in view of making recommendations towards forestalling the conflicts.

The series of conflicts between the herders and farmers come with negative consequences. As averred by Bagu and Smith (2018), the north central region is possibly the epicentre of conflicts between herders and farmers in Nigeria. The result of these conflict has led to loss of both human and animal lives as well as properties and farmlands. For example, as reported in 2014, groups of heavily armed Fulani herdsmen killed over 100 villagers in Kaduna State, 69 villagers in Katsina

State, and 37 villagers in Benue State different attacks (Bagu and Smith, 2018). Ofuoku & Isife, (2009) captures poignantly some of the negative consequences of these incessant conflicts to include poverty, land degradation, relocation of farmers and herders alike which comes with burden; proliferation of small arms and light weapons, farms and properties destroyed, cattle rustle (Ofuoku and Isife, 2009; Ofem and Inyang, 2014). Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009) averred that since agriculture is the linchpin of the rural economy the re-occurrence of these conflicts has negative economic consequences for both farmers and herders. It affects them directly as well as the larger society who depend on agricultural products. This means that if these conflicts are not tackled appropriately the sustainability of both the economy and environment would become a mirage and this will again affect the 'zero hunger' goal of the Sustainable Development Goal.

The recent enactment of the OGP&RE, 2017 law in Benue State has now brought a new dimension to the conflicts. It was to abate the persistent conflicts between herdsmen and farmers over land that both the federal and state governments developed a variety of responses to the ongoing violence in the Middle Belt, including the recent law passed by the Benue state government. This paper therefore, examines the historical development of herdsmen and farmers conflicts in Benue, provides a historical account of policies aimed at resolving the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria as well as the characterisation of the newly enacted open grazing prohibition law by both the farmers and herders. Doing this the paper utilized secondary sources of data in an attempt to unravel the issues surrounding the newly en-

acted laws in Benue state.

Overview of Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Benue State

The conflict between herders and farmers in Benue State is perennial, stretching over decades. According to the World Watch Research (2017), the conflict between the herders and farmers could be traced to the immediate post-colonial political parties that emerged in Northern Nigeria. While the Northern People's Congress is the predominant party in the North, Benue indigenes preferred the United Middle Belt Congress led by Tarka Joseph. This did not augur well as it eventually led to violent confrontations between the Benue indigenes who are mostly Farmers and predominantly Christians and the non-indigenes who were mostly Fulani and Hausa practicing Islam. This may not be a direct conflict between the herders and farmers but it is argued that the outcome of the conflict had some religious undertone which resulted in more tension between the herders and farmers, since both groups practice different religions.

On 18 April 1989, there was a violent attack on the Tiv people of Benue state leading to several losses of lives and properties. This was as a result of the murder of a Fulani leader in Benue State. Though, it was said there was no concrete evidence of who the killers were, the reprisal effect was the killing of hundreds of Benue people who were living in Akeleku area of Nasarawa State (World Watch Research, 2017).

One of the most disturbing violence took place on 12 June, 2001, when some suspected Benue bandits killed Alhaji Dr. Musa Ibrahim, who was a Muslim and Chief, at Ihuman Village, which is predominantly a Tiv-settle-

ment. In reaction to the death of Dr. Ibrahim Musa the Tiv living in Nasarawa State, particularly in Awe, Doma, Obi, and Keana LGAs were attacked and killed in large numbers. The pandemonium caused indiscriminate reprisal attacks on the Tiv people and their property, and the corresponding counter-attacks by the Tiv people (Aper, 2006; National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, 2013). By the end of the crisis, over 74 persons lost their lives from both the farmers and the herders' communities with properties worth millions of naira destroyed. The crisis also led to more tension and suspicion among their fellow kinsmen in Benue and the neighbouring communities of Nasarawa State (Alubo, 2006). According to Umar (2006), between 2000 and 2015, no month passed without clashes being told between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. The crisis has caused invasions of farmlands which result in the loss of agricultural products as well as lives (Umar, 2016).

Reports are many on the farmers and herders conflict in Benue; for example, Vanguard newspapers (2015) reported that suspected herdsmen killed 28 people, injured many in Benue state and sacked three villages. The Sun (2015) of April 2015 reported that suspected herdsmen attacked Adeke, Mbadiwan, in Gurua District of the Local Government, killed several people and injured many. The major areas that have faced these menace the most over the years is the middle belt region especially Benue and Nasarawa State. Similarly, World Watch Research (2017) averred that in recent years, there has been an increase in Hausa-Fulani herdsmen assaults targeted at native communities in Benue State. It reported that through some of these attacks in the Middle Belt, 853 persons have died between January,

2014 and March, 2014. From these attacks the Fulani lost 214 persons and 3200 cows while the Tiv lost 633 persons, six soldiers also died as a result of these conflicts (World Watch Research, 2017). The Sun newspaper of January 03 2018 reported that over 50 people were killed and over 30 injured in Logo and Guma Local Government Areas of Benue state. The same paper reported 3 killed in Anyiin on 5 January, 11 killed in Logo on 7 January, six killed in Logo, Guma and Okpokwu on the 18 January, seven killed in Gboko 1 February, three killed in Anyiin and Logo 10 February, one killed in Logo 14th February. These are example of series of attacks leading to loss of lives and properties in Benue state as a result of these conflicts.

Brief of History and Policy Context of Cattle Grazing in Nigeria

Historically, the Federal Government of Nigeria has made about five Laws, Acts or Regulations to control land use, including cattle grazing in the country (Olugbenga, 2017). These include:

- i. Land tenure Act of 1962.
- ii. Grazing reserve Act of 1964
- iii. Land use Act of 1978
- iv. National Agricultural Policy of 1988
- v. National grazing Route and Reserve Commission.

Grazing Reserve Act 1964

Grazing reserves were established in the 1960s to provide nomads with secure land tenure and to reform the livestock sector. The importance was for the 'sedentarisation' of nomadic pastoralists, to help reduce

the incessant clashes between the farmers and herders (Suleiman, 1986). Similarly, Olugbenga (2017) observed that it was in order to prevent unselective cattle grazing so that farms could be safe from destruction by cattle that the Government established grazing reserves in northern Nigeria and the Obudu Cattle Ranch in eastern Nigeria in the 1960s. The grazing reserve Act was passed in 1964, targeted at permitting lands to herders to curb farmers-herder's conflicts, increased yield through sedentarisation and to increase social amenities (Waters- Bayer and Taylor-Powell 1984a; Awogbade, 1987; Olugbenga, 2017). The Grazing Reserve Law aimed at settling pastoralists in the northern part of Nigeria, by the acquisition of 'local land' for grazing. In the Law, state and local governments have power to establish grazing reserves. "A local government may constitute such areas by order with the approval of the minister, and then determine rules of access including the level of grazing fee (Dyer, 2008).

The National Agricultural Policy of 1988 sought to allocate 10% of Nigeria's landmass to grazing reserves (Olugbenga, 2017). The Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL) called this policy a "conscious effort by the central government to protect pastoralism. However, this policy has not been implemented (CIEL, 2006). By 1998, of the 313 grazing reserves acquired, only 52 had been gazetted, and even in these areas, reserves have been encroached into by agricultural cultivation (CIEL, 2006). Another challenge faced is the fact that the provision of grazing reserves did not take into cognizance the fact that pastoral system is dynamic, specifically as it did not consider dry season herding thereby resulting in herders' migration from reserves.

According to the International Crisis Group (2017), most of the 415 grazing reserves established by the northern regional government in the 1960s have since been lost. Only 114 were formally documented or demarcated, though the government failed to back these agreements with legislation guaranteeing exclusive usage or take active measures to avert encroachment.

Land Use Act of 1978

The Land Use Act brought a reform to the statutory and customary land tenure system that was practiced in the different regions of Nigeria. It nationalised all land and conferred it under the regulation of the military governor of each state who is given power to control land in the interest of the general public (CIEL, 2006). State governors are given the power to, “grant statutory rights of occupancy to any person for all purposes” in rural and urban areas. Management of rural land was detached from the Native Authority and given to the governors. It is worthy to note that prior to this system in the colonial era, land was managed by Native Authority (Hoffman, 2004, 85). This was the practice even after Nigeria got independence in 1960 with the Land Tenure Act of 1962 which shared a rather similar principle with the colonial method of managing land affairs in the country. But as a result of urbanisation and the challenges surrounding the oil sector in the 1970s, the military government of Obasanjo enacted the Land Use Act of 1978 which was a totally different policy from what was obtainable in the past (Dyer, 2008).

Ahmed-Gamgum (2018) posited that by 1978, the Nigerian Government had announced the Land Use Act which vested the custody of land in the Federal Capital

Territory on the Federal Government/Minister of Federal Capital Territory; custody of Urban Centre Land is vested on the State Government and the custody of rural area land is vested on Local Government Councils. This Act was meant to make it easier for non-indigenes to get land on lease in their host communities and also to make it easier for indigenes to get certificate of occupancy. However, Ahmed-Gamgum (2018) argued that the pastoralists cannot claim any place as their grazing routes because of their migratory nature which have historically resulted in trespass and encroachment of the properties of others. Over a period of time this brought about conflicts of interest on land in some places. The Federal Government then identified areas to be known as grazing routes and reserve. This did not solve the problem because there was no compensation as required by law to customary land owners (Ahmed-Gamgum, 2018).

National Grazing Route and Reserve Commission

A Bill for an Act to Provide for the Establishment, Preservation and Control of National Grazing Reserves and Stock Routes and the Creation of National Grazing Reserve Commission and for Purposes Connected therewith was sponsored by Senator Zainab Kure in 2011. This bill was not only meant for the creation of grazing reserves across the country but also for the creation of a Commission that handles it. The bill however, faced a serious challenge because senators especially from the Southern part of Nigeria saw it as a way of making them forfeit their lands which is their cultural heritage meant to be passed to their children to herdsmen (International Crisis Group, 2017; Edward, 2014). Similarly, this Bill

was sponsored by three legislators from 2015-2016, but was dropped in November 2016 on the grounds that the Land Use Act 1979 made such decisions the exclusive prerogative of state governments, (This Day, 2016).

All the bills meant for the creation of grazing reserves brought much debate that heated up the polity especially as a result of the varied nature of the Nigerian State. The herders and their backers agree more with grazing reserves as the panacea to these incessant conflicts. Idowu (2017, p.9) captures it more succinctly:

The crux of the debate for those in favour of the bill is that the herders now suffer shortages of pastures as a result of environmental factors which are more pronounced in their homestead. Those who opposed the bill on the other hand argued that there is a hidden agenda to continue with the Othman Danfodio expansionist tendencies southward.

Those from the southern part of the country who are already in dire need of land as a result of the shortage of land even view the proposed bill as inimical and consciously orchestrated to accentuate northern hegemony, dominance and oppression. Another argument against the grazing and reserve bill questions the moral rationalisation of the bill with respect to Nigerians in the Western, North Central and the Eastern part of Nigeria who would be deprived of their lands and inheritance to another tribe who still retains the right to land in their respective home State (Idowu, 2017).

Tackling the Conflict: Benue State Government's Effort
The Benue State government has made several efforts at tackling the perennial conflict between herdsmen and farmers. One of such efforts is the 2011 Joint Committee on Communal Clashes between the Fulani Herdsmen and Tiv farmers at Border Communities of Benue and Nasarawa States. The 2011 joint committee identified some of the triggers of these conflicts to include but not limited to the following: (a.) Competition for land which is as a result of the increase in population of both herdsmen and farmers. (b.) The Benue valley is attractive for grazing cattle, hence, the influx of herdsmen from within and outside Nigeria as a result of the porous borders. (c.) Absence of functional grazing reserves. It is important to note that this is not the case now as the state has enacted the anti-open grazing law which subscribes to ranching instead of grazing reserves. (d.) Absence of cattle routes and where they exist, most have been blocked/taken over by farming and other economic activities. (e.) Grazing of cattle on farm lands belonging to Tiv farmers and cattle rustling by resident Tiv youths and some criminal Fulanis. (f.) Trading of cattle by some inexperienced youths (g.). Access to some sources of drinking water for the cattle, has been taken over by farming activities, thereby making the water sources inaccessible without encroachment on the farms while in some communities, drinking ponds, streams and earth dams are polluted during grazing activity. (h.) Proliferation of illegal arms among herdsmen and Tiv farmers. (i.) Allegations and counter allegations and encroachment into farmlands. (j.) Breaching of agreement by Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and Tiv community leaders. (k.) Migrant

lifestyle of the Nomads (Report of the Joint Committee on Communal Clashes in Benue and Nasarawa States, 2011).

The following recommendations were made by the Committee which include: Acquisition, compensation, gazetting and developing grazing reserves and stock routes, Clusters Tiv settlements, persons directly or indirectly involved should be investigated and appropriate actions(s) to be taken. Institutionalized conflict resolution mechanism, rules of enhancing relationship should be spelt out clearly, sanctioning of erring herds-men and farmers, intensive awareness campaigns, seminars and sensitization programmes be carried out to both parties; Relief materials be provided to those affected by the conflict, the proliferation of weapons should be thoroughly checked and also the influx of herders into the Benue valley (Report of the Joint Committee on Communal Clashes in Benue and Nasarawa States, 2011). Most of these recommendations were not implemented and these conflicts persisted with monumental losses for both the herders and farmers and this necessitated the enactment and the implementation of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law.

Overview of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law

States such as Ekiti, the Federal Capital Territory administration, Taraba and Benue have passed laws or rules to help herding of animals. Benue and Taraba State Government have enacted a law to stop grazing of animals openly and inspire the shift to ranching. All these laws are aimed at solving the persistent conflicts between these two groups. States Governments which en-

acted these laws felt the Federal Government has not done enough to protect the life and properties of the citizenry which is its constitutional mandate. These conflicts persisted and the perpetrators are becoming bolder, killing, maiming and destroying crops and properties which consequently affect the local economy of the States that experience these menaces. For example, according to Olugbenga (2017), the Ekiti State Grazing Regulation Law 2016, was a straight consequence of, and reaction to the problems of violence and assaults by nomadic Fulani herdsmen and the lackadaisical attitude of the Federal Government to bring to bear any policy that will forestall the rising tides in a lasting way. Olugbenga, however, observed that the major trigger of the law in the State was the public outcry that presaged the calls for affirmative government action to curtail the rising surge of herdsmen's attacks on the people of Ekiti State. This happened after the attack on Oke-Ako Community in Ikole Local Government area of Ekiti in which two indigenes died and several people were wounded (Olugbenga, 2017). Similar cases also informed the enactment of the "Benue State OGP&RE, 2017 Law". This policy aims at reducing the conflict between these two groups.

Taraba State Government also enacted a similar law to help bring an end to the farmers-herders' conflicts experienced in the State. The law has a similar objective with that of Benue. As reported by Ahmed-Gamgum (2018), the aims and objectives of the law are contained in section 3 which includes to: (a) promote the modern techniques of animal husbandry, particularly the rearing of livestock (b) promote job and investment opportunities in Livestock farming as well as expand the value

chain. (c) Prevent destruction of farm crops and community pond, settlement and property by the open grazing of livestock d. prevent clash between herders and farmers (e). Regulate and support the growth of livestock farming and manage the environment impact of open livestock grazing (f). Prevent, control and manage the spread of disease as well as to ease the implementation of policy that will enhance the production of a high and healthy breed of livestock both for the local and export markets.

From the foregoing it is clear that this regulatory policy in both States stems from the incessant attacks and reprisals which have led to the loss of lives and properties. Therefore, both states enacted this law to help bring a lasting solution to these conflicts. In Taraba State where a similar law has been enacted, the government reported that the implementation will be in stages and gradually since ranching is not any easy task. The Taraba State Government reported that its ranching system will begin with infrastructural provision, pilot ranch establishment, clinic establishment, personnel training, livestock control mechanisms and also the Taraba State Livestock and Ranch Administration and Control will be inaugurated as well as a Special Task Livestock Control and Administration Marshals Corp will also be put in place to help in the implementation of this law (This Day, 2018).

While the law in Benue and Taraba takes more drastic steps in shifting from traditional method of herding to ranching, the law in Ekiti State seems a partial form of anti-open grazing as it does not stop herding completely but forbids grazing at night as well as some restricted areas. This is contained in Ekiti State Govern-

ment (2016:3-4) cited in Olugbenga (2017, p.5),

It contains eight major sections but the most popular include Section 2 which prohibits uncontrolled grazing; Section 4 that provides for impounding of cattle or other ruminants that engage in indiscriminate grazing; and Section 2 (3) provides that “no cattle or other ruminants shall by any mean move or graze at night” while Section 2 (4) provides that “cattle movement and grazing are restricted to the hours between 7.00am and 6.00 pm.

As stated in the legislation, the overall purpose of the Benue state Open Grazing and Prohibition law was to achieve six goals: (i) prevent the destruction of crop on farms by open grazing (ii) prevent clashes between nomadic livestock herders and crop farmers; (iii) protect the environment from degradation and pollution caused by open rearing and over grazing of livestock; (iv) optimize the use of land resources in the face of overstretched land and increasing population; (v) prevent, control, and manage the spread of disease and enhance the production of high quality and healthy livestock for local and international markets; and, (vi) create a conducive environment for large scale crop production (Kwaja, and Ademola-Adelehin, 2017). The law prohibits open rearing and grazing of livestock and calls for the establishment of ranches and livestock administration, regulation, and control. Since the implementation of this law on 1st November 2017 in Benue State, there have been a series of violent clashes and verbal confrontations between the farmers and herders on one hand and the state and federal government on the other.

Characterisation of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law

Following the enactment and the implementation of the open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law in Benue and Taraba state. There have been series of confrontations, interpretations and characterisation of the law. This paper therefore argues that the interplay of these interpretations and confrontations has implication for the success of the new law as well as the intergroup relations that exist between the farmers and herders. According to Kwaja and Adelehin-Ademola (2017) the Benue OGP&RE, 2017 law has both political, socio-cultural, economic, identity, and legal implications.

The Fulani herdsmen in a swift reaction in November 2017 following the enactment and proposal for the OGP & RE, 2017 law in Benue and Taraba respectively through one of its socio cultural associations Miyeti Allah Kautal Hore (MAKH) promised not to accept it. Parts of their submission as captured by Hankuyi (2017) and Godwin (2017) is that the yearly quantity of rainfall in Nigeria does not last long unlike what you find in countries where the ranching system is working whose rainfall lasts 6 to 7 months. They view the OGP & RE, 2017 law as a dangerous gambit, oppressive and negative aimed at destroying the pastoralist culture and economic livelihood of the Fulani Herdsmen. They also argue that the OGP & RE, 2017 laws does not factor in their social practices, the mode of their economic and production processes. Compelling only the herders to adhere to global best practice will not be justice since farming does not conform. Hankuyi and Godwin view the OGP & RE, 2017 law as illegal because it infringes on movement between states for commercial purposes found in item

62 which according to them is a federal matter; since their movement is likened to commercial activities between States. They argue that Benue State does not have power over River Benue and its waterways that pass through Benue State; hence, it lacks the constitutional power to stop herdsmen from going through especially during dry season when water is difficult to find.

As reported by Ejembi (2017), the Christians under auspice of the Christian Association of Nigeria Benue state chapter came out to publicly declare their support for the open grazing prohibition law. The chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria Benue state chapter while reacting to the comment credited to the Chairman of MAKH contends that: Benue state CAN took exception to the characterization of the Anti-Open Grazing law by MAKH as wicked ‘wicked, obnoxious, and repressive which is meant to criminalize the means of survival of the Fulani people’. He contends that the law is aimed at resolving the rather persistent conflicts between the farmers and herders. According to Ogebe (2018), published on the Christian Association of Nigeria’s website General Buhari is culpable in the conflict because he has never come out to condemn the perpetrators of the heinous attack because he is also a Muslim and a Fulani man the ethnic group of the herders who have perpetrated most of these attacks. The Inspector General who is also a Muslim blamed the Open Grazing Prohibition Law as the reason behind the conflicts experienced in the state and calls for its suspension. The Nigeria’s Minister of Defence who is a Fulani and a Muslim also criticized the newly enacted law. He contends that the law should be suspended because it is partly the reason for the conflicts experienced in 2018

between the herders and farmers.

The above discourse shows a divide between the state and federal government and between the Muslims and Christians on the other. As Umoh (2017) opined that when the socio-political ecology of Nigeria is evaluated from the ethno religious cleavages, it deepens the divide along religious line and further heightens distrust in the polity. This schism along both religious, political and ethnic and between the state and federal government clearly depicts the general crisis rocking the foundation of Nigeria. In Nigeria policies are looked at from the prism of either religious, ethnic, party or regional affiliations. It is important to note that while the farmers in Benue state are predominantly Tiv and Idoma Christians the herders on the other hand are mostly Fulani Muslims. This dichotomy is playing out on a law that is meant to solve the conflict. The differences in the position of the Federal government and state government in respect to the law are very critical. This is because while the state government has the power to make laws in line with its agricultural development but cases of killings even after the enactment of the law is supposed to be handled by the federal government whose mandate is the securing of lives and properties of the populace. Therefore, there is a mistrust between states and the federal government, and between Islam and Christianity adherence in respect to the newly enacted law.

The power at the centre and those in charge of the security outfits of the country have all discredited the open grazing prohibition law seeing it as one of the triggers to the conflict experienced in Benue state. But it is worthy to note that, though, the trans-territorial backlashes of the Benue law triggered part of the recent con-

flicts experienced in middle belt Nigeria. It, is however, the series of the conflicts between these groups over the years that led to the enactment of this law to forestall it. Therefore, the conflicts which went on even in the face of this law is partly as a result of the reaction by the herders who are not in tune with the law. We therefore argue that as far as the security architecture of Nigeria is skewed in favor of one religion it will be difficult to have justice and fairness even on sensitive security issue as this.

Umoh (2017) captures this issue poignantly when he observed that the conflicts between farmers and herders fundamentally reveals and weaken the already faulty structure of the Nigeria's federalism. He argued further that Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari is of the Fulani speaking extraction which further lends verve to the general believe that the Federal government is not doing enough to curtail the conflict. This further raises questions such as, 'does he owe them or is he giving them a level playing field to achieve their plans?', 'How do they get their supplies of arms?', 'Who bankrolls their activities?', 'Are they playing out the Boko Haram script and attempting to make the nation ungovernable too?' (Umoh, 2016; worldwatchmonitor.org, Ohikere, 2017; ReligionofPeace.com, 2017). Similarly Campbell (2016) contends that conflicts between farmers and herders which is fundamentally caused by ecological factors is now more endemic as it is now being fuelled by religion, ethnicity and political manipulations.

Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin (2017) conducted a research for a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Search for Common Ground on the 'Implication of the Open-Grazing Prohibition Laws' between farmers/herdsmen in

the Middle Belt region of the country. In the paper they argued that the Benue open grazing prohibition law has some discriminatory clauses. The guidelines for acquiring land to ranch places more stringent conditions particularly for those who are non-indigenes. This portrays the law as though meant to evict the herders who are perceived to be non-indigenes in Benue state even though are citizens of Nigeria.

The potential rancher also needs to have enough capital because of the financial implication. And this portrays this law on a bad light. And this explains why since the enactment of this law there have being exodus of herders out of Benue to other neighbouring states with new triggers to the conflict (Tade and Yikwabs, 2019; Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin, 2017). In Nigeria, the indigene/settler and majority and minority contestation is not new. These contests is one of the major baseline for different forms of conflict experience in the country. It is in light of the aforementioned that that while analyzing state hood in Africa Abdullah (2003) countered that in contemporary Africa one of the triggers to conflict has to do with the rights and privileges conferred to 'citizens' and 'indigenes'. He went further to submit that "all indigenes are citizens but not all citizens are indigenes." This means access to land and water which is important to both farmers and herders is determined by their indigene status and this becomes a source of conflict.

The question then is whether the enactment of the law followed the due process? Indeed, the procedure and process involved in the enacting of the law was in tandem with the constitution of Nigeria. First, the Benue

state House of Assembly has the constitutional backing to make laws within her jurisdiction especially as it relates to agricultural development of the state. Therefore, the call for the abrogation of the law by the federal government shows to an extent how the state is culpable of not upholding the constitution. The process of enacting this law followed all due procedures and all people, including the herders and their association had ample opportunity to make inputs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As appropriately suggested by Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin (2017), the government needs to facilitate a platform to address the concerns of herdsmen and ensure farmers, herdsmen and relevant experts jointly develop inclusive and gradual implementation plan for the law. The herders have shown displeasure with the implementation of the law as divisive tool employed by the government and people of Benue State to chase away the Fulani Herders out of the state, as well as an outward opposition to their socio-economic ritual of herding, to correct this ill perception the state government should sensitize both farmers and herders on the tenets of the law and its intended functions, while the government at both federal and state levels tries to sensitize both herders and farmers, conscious efforts should be made to correct the religious and ethnic undertones attributed to the law, efforts should be made show the world the aims of the laws is to restore peace and cordial economic relationship among farmers and herders using legal provision(s).

Secondly, ranching is more or less a formal mode of cattle rearing practiced in developed societies, it requires

pastoralist to engage in modern and semi-scientific modes of cattle rearing that requires formal trainings and orientation, imposing such policy on pastoralist that have engaged in transients forms of grazing with little or no formal education their whole lives, appears inappropriate and rash, government should establish training centre's and invite nomadic experts to educate Fulani-Herders on the new and scientific mode enforced by the ranching laws , this will prepare the herders on the provision of the law and they will be more abreast with new cattle rearing technique and be more informed generally on how to adopt it for economic gains.

The Civil Society Organization further advised the government to engage investors to invest in industrial ranching and develop incentives to stimulate ordinary herdsmen to establish subsistence and community-based ranches in the short, medium and long term. This would aid in curbing the diverse implications of the law across economic, cultural, security and religious dimensions.

Ranching as entrenched by the Anti-Open Grazing Law provides for pastoralist to confine their animals to a ranch and provide forage for those herds within the ranch, this position will attract heavy financial burden on the pastoralist to maintain their herds, what it means is herders will have to outsource for forage and transport it to the ranch, imposing all of this cost on the local pastoralist in attempt to conform to the law by the pastoralist will be unfair of the government, so we call on government at different levels to provide soft loans to herders to lessen their financial burden, since farmers in a similar fashion enjoy a cloud of intervention from Government (state and federal), Multinationals and CSOs. The Benue state government also needs to iden-

tify alternatives with incentives that would attract herdsmen to gradually embrace ranching in line with the law, amidst such is providing herders with soft loans and grants as the case may be.

There is the need for the Benue state government to review the procedure for land acquisition to remove clauses that appear discriminatory to the herders. The bureaucracy involved in the process for obtaining land for the ranching purpose for the herders is very stringent, and indeed appears as the acclaimed attempt to deny or frustrate the process of land acquisition for the herders. As a matter of fairness and justice, the Benue State House of Assembly should relax some of the conditions attached to obtaining a land for ranching by the herders. This will address the ill perception held by the Fulani-Herders of seeing the law as way of frustrating the Fulani people out of Benue but rather as a tool of curtailing the conflict and ensuring industrial harmony among the duo.

Lastly, as a way of addressing the dichotomous position of the Federal and State government, challenging the legality and calling for the revoke of the law. A careful legal review of the law has shown that the law followed all due process, as the Benue state house of assembly has constitutional backing to create and amends laws that affects state's agriculture, while the governor in similar fashion gives his consent and endorses and passes the bill into a law, all of which implies the law followed all the laid down rules. The Anti-Grazing law in Benue satisfy all legal processes outlined by the Nigerian constitution, therefore, the federal government there is the need for the federal government to support the

full implementation of the law as both the state and federal government work out better ways of improving the law.

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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS BETWEEN PASTORALISTS AND FARMERS IN NIGERIA'S BENUE VALLEY REGION

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Abstract

This paper interrogates the contemporary strained relations between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria. It examines how conflicts have of recent, characterised relations amongst the two groups and have, more often than not, degenerated into armed confrontations with scores of people on both sides killed and properties worth billions of naira destroyed. The paper used both primary and secondary sources. Findings revealed that the contradictions in the Nigerian constitution which, in effect, guarantees the pastoralists' rights to move freely and graze in any part of the country have more often than not brought them into conflict with farming communities when the pastoralists' herds encroach into, or destroy farmlands. Findings of the study further revealed that the failure by the government to find a permanent solution to these conflicts largely explains the protracted nature of the conflict. The paper concludes that this circle of violence can best be understood

in the context of a resource conflict and as a clear case of a people resorting to self-help. Against this backdrop, the paper recommends a holistic reappraisal of the open grazing practice by pastoralists and is in support of the establishment of ranches or cattle colonies in view of the fast dwindling space for open grazing viz a viz the astronomical increase in population.

Key Words: Pastoralist, Conflict, Farmers, Benue Valley, Relations

Introduction

Conflicts between farmers and pastoralists have no doubt become a cankerworm eating deep into the fabric of the peaceful coexistence of Nigerians. In recent times, it has posed a great threat to the unity of the Nigerian state. Presently, no part of the country is yet to get its fair share of the conflict between farmers and pastoralists while the epicenter of the conflict remains central Nigeria. In most places where the brunt of the conflict has been felt, there have been killings of scores of humans as well as livestock with reckless abandon, destruction of crops and houses in the most devastating proportions as well as displacement of people. Confirming the level of the devastation, Amnesty International in one of their studies revealed that armed confrontations between farmers and pastoralists in states like Adamawa, Benue, Taraba, Ondo and Kaduna have resulted in 168 deaths in January 2018 alone and in 2017, 549 deaths and thousands displaced across Enugu, Zamfara, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Cross River, Adamawa,

Katsina, Delta and Ekiti State.¹

Little doubt, the conflict between farmers and pastoralists is an age long one which was hitherto resolved using Traditional Conflict Mechanism (TCM), but the use of sophisticated weapons like the AK47, chemical weapons and others has rendered the traditional method infective. Emphasising the extent to which the conflict has lingered and is not anywhere near resolution, Mbaeze and Ejike revealed that the continued intermittent clashes coupled with almost total lack of capacity by the Nigerian government in addressing the Herder-Farmer conflict in Nigeria may soon degenerate into political instability which would undermine the economic growth of the country and could ultimately lead to a total breakdown of law and order.²

The difficulty in resolving the conflict has called for great concern not just within the government agencies saddled with the responsibility of keeping the peace or civil society organisations who ensure that the various agencies of government wake up to their responsibilities; the academia is also doing the needful by discharging their interrogative expertise to come up with workable recommendations for addressing the menace.

My interest to embark on this research is informed by the fact that many recommendations and solutions have been made and some tried but the conflict is still anything else but resolved. In the constitution itself, all Nigerians are empowered to move freely and settle as well as engage in any lawful venture in any part of the country,

¹Mbaeze, C. N. & Nnaji, E. S., "Herders-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria: Implication for National Development" in: *International Journal of Social Science and Technology*, (Vol. 3 No. 4; June 2018):42

²Ibid.:3

yet the indigene and settler crisis also potent as the system recognizes the difference, rights and privileges of the indigene as well as settlers. The relationship between farmers and pastoralists has continued to be characterized by more conflicts than consensus since independence due to the very reasons and factors this paper shall interrogate later.

Relations between Pastoralists and Farmers before Independence

In the pre-jihad era, farmers and pastoralists enjoyed peaceful intergroup relations as they lived peacefully together. Confirming this position, Wegh insisted that the first encounter between pastoralists and farmers was cordial and without acrimony.³ Narrowing it down to the Tiv of central Nigeria, Hembe stated that Tiv who are predominantly farmers and Fulani (mostly herdsmen) enjoyed a relationship of harmony to the extent that the Fulani came up against any other tribe that wanted to fight with the Tiv.⁴ This does not mean that farmers and pastoralists did not have misunderstandings in the pre-jihad era. Some factors, however, made their relations take a different dimension in the early 19th century.

One of them was the Usman dan Fodio jihad. In 1804, Usman dan Fodio launched an Islamic Jihad which sought to purify Islam as well as expand the Muslim territory southwards to predominantly non-Muslim city-

³Wegh, Shagbaor, *Between Continuity and Change*, (Lagos: OVC Nigeria Ltd., 1998):28

⁴Rupest East, *Akiga's Story: The Tiv Tribe as Seen by One of its Members*, (Ibadan: Caltop Publishers, [Nigeria] Limited, 2003):20

states. Between 1804 and 1817, his forces made several unsuccessful attempts to institute an Islamic state in the whole of the then northern Nigeria but especially in central Nigeria. The stiff resistance faced by the horsemen of the Jihadists further reinstated the unwillingness of some of the ethnicities to coexist with their Fulani pastoralist counterparts and also heightened the tensions created during the pre-jihad period. The colonial era also brought a new twist to the intergroup relations between pastoralists and farmers.

Going further, the colonial era also accords much preference to nomadic livestock breeders at the expense of the crop cultivators. Specifically, the colonial government made concerted efforts in settling pastoralists in all the provinces of the Northern Region including the middle belt. And even though both pastoralists and the colonial authorities were aware that population growth aggravated shortage of land, the Minister of Animal Health and Forestry through the permanent secretary circulated a memo dated 20th March, 1958 stating that transhumance pastoralism shall be integrated firmly into the life of the country against all odds in order not to lose the capital wealth invested in livestock as well as the animal revenue derived therefrom.⁵ It revealed clearly the authorities' bias on the side of herdsmen, which farmers view as an affront on their interest.

The Changing Relations after Independence

In the post-independence era, the intergroup relations

⁵"Fulani Settlement in the Northern Region of Nigeria" in: Provincial Correspondence Jacket, MAKPROF 2/79 (2nd collection), (National Archives, Kaduna, 13-10-2014): No.VN72/3/239

between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria had already become strained because to most farmers, the continuous insistence of the authorities to settle pastoralists in their domain meant displacement from their ancestral lands. Taking another instance in the Benue Province, on Saturday 25th March 1961, a request to permanently settle pastoralists in the province was communicated to pastoralists who sadly agreed and left.⁶ Later on, some chiefs unofficially allowed the influx of the same exiled pastoralists for financial benefits, a situation over which even the technical officer of the Benue Province, Michael Elenu, expressed worry of impending danger.⁷ Invariably, it is safe to say that roots of the suspicion on traditional institutions by parties in this conflict are age long as well.

In a nutshell, the post-independence era brought about the threshold of population growth that has been aggravated by shortage of land and climate change, which amongst other things is causing desertification of the north and forcing southward movement of herdsmen. Meanwhile, treacherous acts and insincerity on the part of both farmers and pastoralists, as the paper shall examine in later sections, has continued to worsen the already strained intergroup relations between the two groups.

⁶"Meeting of Fulani Settlement in Tivland" in: Provincial Correspondence Jacket, MAKPROF 2/79 (2nd collection), (National Archives, Kaduna, 13-10-2014): No.VNBE.105/Vol.2/290

⁷"Meeting of Fulani Settlement in Tivland" in: Provincial Correspondence Jacket, MAKPROF 2/79 (2nd Collection), (National Archives, Kaduna, 13-10-2014): No.VNBE.105/Vol.2/291.

Factors Fueling Conflicts between Pastoralists and Farmers

Recurrent Challenges of Itinerant Grazing: Intergroup relations between farmers and pastoralists having become strained, destruction of crops in recent times is, more often than not, greeted with more conflict than dialogue. Encroachment into farmlands and destruction of crops either deliberately or accidentally has been one of the major challenges or cause(s) of the skirmishes between farmers and the pastoralists escalating to armed confrontation. This is partly because itinerant grazing activities also harden the land, thereby making it near impossible for tillage, especially for farmers who use local implements like the hoe.

Acquisition of Grazing Space: Acquisition of grazing space is one of the most prominent causes of conflict between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria. Some traditional rulers and other highly placed persons in the state have struck secret deals with pastoralists through their representatives or leaders – a “deal” which grants pastoralists the right to graze in such communities.

Criminality and Desperation: Due to desperation, farmers and pastoralists have engaged themselves in various forms of criminalities to the detriment of each other, which includes cattle rustling, overcharging for destroyed crops, and indiscriminate killing of cattle for sale and consumption, intimidation and advance fee fraud. Conversely, a network of cattle rustlers believed to be sponsored in Nigeria by abattoir owners has been using people (especially youths) to operate. It is estimated that Fulani pastoralists have been losing at

least eighty cows annually to cattle rustlers in the state.⁸ Meanwhile, even though Fulani pastoralists have admitted that their relatives spearhead this criminality, they do not dismiss the fact that they do it in connivance with the youths of their host communities. This alone has been generating tensions and the urge for revenge on the part of herdsmen. Confirming this notion, Hagher recaptured a statement made during a Tiv-Fulani peace meeting in Government House, Makurdi (2012) by Sa'ad Abubakar III in which the Sultan of Sokoto who also doubles as the Patron of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) asserted that the Fulani are trans-border peace-loving people who are so attached to their cattle; they (Fulani herdsmen) can kill in order to defend their cattle and are easily provoked because they are courageous fighters who do not easily forgive adversaries.⁹

Climate Change: Climate change has been causing the aridization of the far north, thereby forcing southward migration of herdsmen. Audu revealed that the desert has been advancing 600 meters in about ten northern states, Nigerian land of about 3500 square meters turns to desert every year thereby forcing southward migration of pastoralists and their cattle.¹⁰ Meanwhile, due to population growth, there has been an attendant shortage of arable land for farming activities. Even the

⁸ For obvious reasons, the source for this information is not provided.

⁹ Hagher, Iorwuese, *Beyond Hate and Violence: Understanding the Tiv Struggle for Citizenship Rights and Social Justice in Nigeria*, (Ibadan: Caltop Publishers, 2013):6

¹⁰ Audu, Sunday, "Freshwater Scarcity: A Threat to Peaceful Co-existence between Farmers and Pastoralists in Northern Nigeria" in: *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, (Vol.3, No.1, 2014):245

existing portions have become infertile due to continuous usage.

Activities of Criminal Groups: Pastoralists have been using youths in their host communities as spies for financial and other benefits. This has contributed in no small measure to heightening tensions between the two groups because such spies leak damaging pieces of information to pastoralists such as; the level of preparedness of their communities for defence or attack, names of strong opinion leaders or warriors who pastoralists should bribe for support or kill to achieve their aims, the kind of charms they possess, time and place of attacks or reprisal attacks, etc.

Government Response: The primary constitutional duty of a responsible government is to guarantee the security of lives and properties, but this seems not to be the case here because the porous nature of Nigeria's borders has enhanced many heinous and trans-border crimes. For instance, the smuggling and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), and transportation of mercenaries from Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Libya and other countries to Nigeria are all a dangerous failure on the part of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN). Needless to say, the FGN seems not to understand the magnitude of the carnage going on within her borders. It has, in part, dawned on farmers and pastoralists that they have to and must take responsibility for their own security.

Another consequence associated with government commitment is attacks and reprisal attacks which have since become a major impetus for the escalation of violent armed confrontations. The conflict has become widespread because of certain attacks or reprisal attacks

and largely or partly as a result of its magnitude – the magnitude of damage and devastation, that has to do with loss of lives and properties. The fact that government is still not eager to arrest and punish aggressors, has emboldened attackers to carry out more heinous acts which result in various degrees of destruction and carnage. In the end, government is not sincere.

Nature and Dynamics of the Conflictual Relations

The conflict between pastoralists and farmers in contemporary Nigeria is also enmeshed in the dangerous cocktail of vexatious diverse and ethicised politics. This is geographically captured in the statement by Bayeri, the National Secretary General of Gan Allah Fulani Development Association (GAFDAN), an umbrella organisation of the Fulani herdsmen. Writing in *The Nation Newspaper* of April 27th, 2016, he based his defence of the activities of the Fulani pastoralists on the constitution.¹¹ Quoting from chapter four, he alluded to the freedom of every Nigerian to move freely throughout Nigeria, and reside in any part thereof, and that no citizen of Nigeria shall be expelled from Nigeria or refused entry or exit therefrom. Bayeri then wondered why with these constitutional provisions, there were multitudes of protests and demonstrations against pastoralists and cattle grazing in Nigeria.

The reality is that nobody quarrels with the freedom of movement granted Nigerians in the constitution. Nevertheless, if Bayeri was honest with himself, he

¹¹ *The Nation Newspaper*, (2016):23

should have realised that the freedom granted does not include allowing one's cows or any other animal for that matter to roam freely and eat up other people's crops and destroy their farms. In the same publication, Bayeri lambasted the southern media for what he referred to as 'mercenary' inflammatory one sided, unbalanced and felonious report. He surmised that all these were a gang up and ethno-religious war against Fulani. Bayeri also made a case for open grazing rather than ranching of cows. He argued that the Euro-American exotic cows could survive only in ranches while the non-exotic Nigerian cows could survive in grazing or traditional grazing only. It is surprising that after keeping cows for centuries, the Fulani pastoralists have not learnt to adapt to change in environment when, largely owing to population increase, there are no more virgin lands, if there ever were any. Others have even suggested that they should consider changing from the non-exotic to the exotic cattle.¹²In defending the Fulani, the same Bayeri in an interview entitled "Why Fulani Pastoralists don't forgive easily" which appeared in The Nation Newspaper of May 7th, 2016 gave us a rare glimpse into the mind of the Fulani herdsmen. He stated that:

The Fulani pastoralists have this instinct of wanting to take revenge. It is in their nature. It is inherent, and in his blood even from his traditional activities. So if you strike a Fulani man today, wait for him another time. So when you hear that pastoralists attacked a

¹² Wegh, S., "Grazing Reserves as Killing Fields", The Catholic Star Newspaper, (June 30th, 2016 edition): 32

community, just ask if there was no any clash say, 10, 15 years ago.¹³

Bayeri relates this revengeful lifestyle to what the Jews do. If the Palestinians send their rocket and kill two Jews, the Jews will kill 30, 70, 100 Palestinians. According to this line of thought, there are no qualms in dismissing the killings by pastoralists as a non-issue since, according to him, they have been carried out in retaliation. One would have imagined that man has moved away from his predatory and 'survival of the fittest' way of life. To hear now that in the twenty first century, a people live with an inherent desire for revenge, to inflict pain on others and habitually shed blood is very worrying.

To wade into this, the senate of Nigeria in 2016 initiated a bill in the Nigerian senate meant to provide for the establishment, preservation and control of national grazing reserves and for purposes connected therewith.¹⁴ The sponsors and backers of the bill were seeking that power be granted the Federal Government Commission to acquire land from all the states in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory to establish grazing routes and reserves for Fulani herders. The red and the green chambers of the national assembly debated the bill in august 2018.

The bill was opposed by lawmakers from southern Nigeria and some from central Nigeria. Besides, several associations representing the interests of different ethnic groups in southern and central Nigeria have publicly

¹³The Nation Newspaper, (May 7th, 2016):24

¹⁴<http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/11/10/senate-rejects-grazing-reserve-bill-says-its-unconstitutional/>

opposed the bill. The main reason the southerners rejected the bill was hinged on their fear that the bill would deprive others of their lands. It is important to note that southern Nigeria has much less land than northern Nigeria, and that its population density is much higher than the north.¹⁵The none-Fulani groups feared that once entrenched on reserves, the Fulani would seek to acquire more land, and contrary to the expressed purpose of the bill, would get into more conflicts with the non-Fulani owners of the land.

Responses by the State

The enormity of the role which the government plays (or fails to play) in the conflict between farmers and pastoralists cannot be overstated. This is due in part to the fact that the conflict intensified and gradually escalated to armed confrontations as an expression of government's failure to arrest and punish aggressors or guarantee security of lives and properties. Perhaps contrary to the widely held view that governments have been indifferent to the plight of its citizens as it relates to the conflict between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria thereby pushing both parties to resort to self-help, an instance was recorded in Benue State where the Federal House of Representatives constituted an ad-hoc committee led by Samson Osagie which embarked on a fact finding mission. The committee visited the state on

¹⁵ Okeke, O.E., "Conflicts Between Fulani Pastoralists And Farmers In Central And Southern Nigeria: Discourse On Proposed Establishment Of Grazing Routes And Reserves", *International Journal Of Arts And Humanities*, ((Bahir Dar, Ethiopia Vol.3(1), 2014):66-84

15th March, 2011¹⁶ while the Senate also set up committees led by Mohammad Magoro under the name: Senate Joint Committees on Security, Intelligence, Defense/Army, Police and Interior which embarked on yet another fact finding visit the state on Thursday 10th April, 2014.¹⁷

Relatedly, the Federal Government, through the Office of the Inspector General of Police, Muhammad Abubakar, sent a fact finding team to Benue State on 30th March, 2014 to identify the remote and immediate causes of the clashes between farmers and Fulani pastoralists in Benue State. The team were also to identify criminal elements operating within the scenario (especially cattle rustlers), know the dimension the crisis had taken, and proffer solutions to it.¹⁸

It is however disheartening to note that the three committees of the Green, and the Red Chambers of NASS and the Police IG have not made their findings known

¹⁶Abomste D. & Kwegi, H., "A Joint Memo by the Gwer-West Local Government and Her Traditional Council", Submitted to Hon. SaniJaji, Chairman, House Committee on Public Safety and Intelligence on Fact Finding Visit on Terror Attack and Destruction of Lives and Properties in Agatu LGA and other LGAs in Benue State, (5th May, 2016).

¹⁷"Memo by HRH Daniel Abomtse, TerTyoshin (Nagi) II on Farmers Vs Fulani Pastoralists Crises", presented to: Senator Mohd Magoro, the Senate Lead Chairman on Joint Committees of National Security, Intelligence, Defense/Army, Police and Interior – on Fact Finding Visit to Benue, Nassarawa and Plateau States, Thisday, (10th April, 2014, Government House, Makurdi).

¹⁸"Visit by DIG Operations Force Headquarters Abuja, Mr. Michael Zuokumor and Leader, Inspector General's Committee on Fact Findings/Solutions on Farmers/Fulani PastoralistsClash in Middle Belt Region – Interactive Session with Stakeholders of Benue State, (Government House Makurdi, 30th March, 2014).

as at the time of this research, neither have their missions yielded any positive result. This has again confirmed government's insincerity. State governments, apart from supplying succor to victims of the conflict, had in 2007, 2011, 2012 and 2013 initiated different Joint Committee Meetings involving farmers and herdsmen, which resulted to the formation of a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) of Nassarawa/Benue States.¹⁹

In the National Assembly too, there have been misgivings about the conflict. Recall that Senator Rabiukwankwaso, a former governor of Kano State, had sponsored a Bill at the Red Chambers of the National Assembly (NASS - Senate) for the establishment of grazing reserves and routes in all the thirty-six states of the federation including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) while in the Green Chambers of NASS (Federal House of Representatives), Zainab Kure and Karimu Steve are also pursuing a similar bill in purpose and content. Meanwhile, the member representing Gwer-East/Gwer-West Federal Constituency at the NASS, Mark Gbillah expressed the stand of the Green Chambers of NASS. In his words:

The National Assembly is united against any law that permits open grazing in Nigeria despite the opposing views of some members, which is natural of a legislative house everywhere in the world. However, I

¹⁹ Ber Godwin, "Rejoinder TTC/P1/12 - Re: Farmers VsPastoralists in Benue: Sultan Calls for Commission of Inquiry", (17th March, 2014)

want to assure Benue people, most especially the constituency I represent (Gwer/Gwer-West Federal Constituency of Benue State), that all the National Assembly members from the state are relentless and are on the same page in this struggle.²⁰

Nevertheless, the Benue State Governor, Samuel Ortom, has on different fora reaffirmed his administration's commitment to work round the clock to ensure that peace reigns across the state and the conflict between farmers and pastoralists in the state becomes a thing of the past.²¹ Eventually, the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law 2017 was passed in March 2017 and enforced in November 2017. The reactions to the open grazing prohibition laws are diverse and need to be interrogated extensively in a separate work.

The Wider Implications of the Conflictual Relations on Nigeria's Unity and Development

The backbone of every meaningful development in any society relies on the quality and quantity of human resources available and the importance of a conflict-free environment to live and do business cannot be overemphasised. Conversely, a communiqué signed by the National Chairman and National Secretary of

²⁰ Gbillah, Mark, "On-the-Line Radio Benue Phone-in Program anchored by Charles Iornumbe of Radio Benue II FM stereo, Makurdi – Nigeria" (Sunday, 7th August, 2016)

²¹ Governor Samuel Ortom, "We Will Not Surrender to Fulani Pastoralists Invasion", retrieved on 27th July, 2016 from <http://www.linknaija.com/2016/06/we-will-not-surrender-to-fulani.html>

Tyoshin Development Association (TDA), Gwer-West LGA, Sylvester Ugbegili and Joseph Mon, stated amongst other things that the Makurdi-Naka-Ankpa federal road has been completely under siege since 2014 by armed pastoralists thereby hindering free movement and other economic activities in and around the area.²²

Human resources lost to the conflict have also hindered economic activities which would have reduced poverty and added to revenue generation in the affected areas as well. Mbaeze and Nnaji corroborated the above assertion when they opined that the Herder-Farmer conflict has prompted a reduction in not just the farmers' outputs but also in the income of farmers owing to the destruction of crops by cattle. To them, it is ironical to the federal government's call to return to agriculture in order to boost the ailing economy since as a result of the conflict, a lot of farmers have lost their farm produce. This automatically affects earning capacity at the micro level and at the macro level affects the gross domestic product of the country (GDP) bringing about shortage in food security of the nation.²³

The social effects of any conflict cannot be overemphasized. The impacts of conflict on the social life of any conflict torn area, especially on the survivors who are mostly orphans and widows, is always devastating. In addition, man is a social being and any

²²"Communiqué Issued at the end of a Meeting of Gwer-West Stakeholders", Convened by HRH Ayua Daniel Abomtse, TerNagi II at his Makurdi Residence to Address the Security Challenges in Gwer-West LGA, (Sunday, 26th January 2014).

²³ Mbaeze, C. N. & Nnaji, E. S., "Herders-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria: Implication for National Development" in: *International Journal of Social Science and Technology*, (Vol. 3 no. 4; June 2011):.42

impediment that restricts his freedom to freely express his right to social life violates the essence of his existence. There has been an increase in the militarisation of the youths and it has been one of the most damaging social effects of the conflict on both parties. The psychological trauma associated with the conflict in the state is enormous. In the first instance, victims of rape are being discriminated against in their communities, a state of affairs which breeds hatred, a feeling of humiliation and the urge for revenge on the part of the victims and sometimes their concerned relatives. Also, it is unfortunate and rather disheartening that little children and women watched the brutality and atrocities that were carried out during the conflict. The picture of such horrors would most likely, haunt them, affecting their mental health and thereby, rendering them emotionally unstable. In the area of academic activities, both public and private schools in the affected areas and beyond have been grounded for many years and some permanently closed or destroyed.

The implication is not any different in the area of humanitarian crises. The conflict between farmers and pastoralists has taken a substantial humanitarian and economic toll on the communities with potentially serious political and security repercussions. The humanitarian impact is particularly grave. From September 2017 through June 2018, farmer-herder violence left at least 1,500 people dead, many more wounded and about 300,000 displaced – an estimated 176,000 in Benue, about 100,000 in Nasarawa, over 100,000 in Plateau, about 19,000 in Taraba and an

unknown number in Adamawa.²⁴

The Way Forward

Government should encourage dialogue between pastoralists and farmers instead of repression. In addition to using armed personnel to quell violent confrontations, government should try to identify the root causes of the conflict and resolve them. In addition, government should in the interim, set up a National Reconciliation Taskforce (NTR) to reconcile the aggrieved parties.

The study observed that the efforts of the government are not enough. Therefore, government should be committed in handling conflicts. Conversely, the situation where panels of enquiry reports are never implemented suggests government's insincerity. Nevertheless, the findings of various commissions of inquiry in different areas of the Nigerian state should be made public as well as implemented to the letter. In so doing, the law prohibiting illegal possession or firearms or weapons should be enforced and all those found guilty of taking laws into their hands made to face the wrath of the law to serve as a deterrent to other mischief-makers.

Government should also resolve the ambiguities that are associated with indigenes and settlers, in which the constitution has contradicted itself. In essence, the conflict between farmers and pastoralists is largely hinged on a situation where farmers are enjoying the privileges of being indigenes and as such, look at

²⁴Accessed on the 4th May, 2019 from <http://crisisgroup.org/herders-farmers-conflict>

pastoralists as intruders while on the other hand Fulani pastoralists, being Nigerian citizens, have the right to reside in any part of the country and engage in any lawful means of livelihood without hindrance from anybody or law as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution. The indigene/settler conflict is widespread in contemporary Nigeria for the same reason, and is likely to persist if nothing is done to remedy it.

Peace building efforts should be extended to victims of the conflict between farmers and pastoralists to restore their confidence and hopes to start all over again thereby checking the socio-economic impact of the conflict on them. Certainly, coming out of any conflict situation is not easy. Therefore, the government should help in rebuilding and reintegrating victims of the conflict into their various societies with economic opportunities, especially the girl-child, out of school children and radicalised/militarised youths.

Victims of rape should be counseled/rehabilitated to restore their hopes and confidence and if possible, the perpetrators brought to justice. Rape victims more often than not, feel embarrassed reporting their ordeals; therefore, they should be encouraged to open up and speak up without stigmatisation.

Youths should be educated and provided access to a sustainable means of livelihood to check the activities of criminal groups. This is because poverty and illiteracy are some of the factors responsible for the conflict. Youths possess the reservoir of strength and can be used either negatively or positively so the government should positively engage the youths. This will go a long way in producing good leadership in the future for they are

leaders of tomorrow.

Government should carry out investigations and prosecute anyone who is involved either directly or indirectly in the conflict as masterminds, accomplices and/or culprits to check cattle rustling, intimidation, greed, impunity, attacks and reprisal attacks which are causes of the conflict. In Adamu's words, "there should be no sacred cows before the law"²⁵ in prosecuting perpetrators of the conflict between farmers and herders.

Finally, government should encourage pastoralists to ranch their cattle or better still, legislate a law to establish ranches. This will not only check water contamination, indiscriminate killing of cattle and crops destruction but restore public trust on their social contract with the state. It will also generate employment, ensure food security and stem the tide/end the conflict. The cases of the conflict between farmers and pastoralists in Benue, Taraba and Ekiti states still linger on but they have all taken step in the right direction by enacting the law.

²⁵Adamu, Mamman, "Colonia Origins of Post-Colonial Conflicts Between Pastoralists and Farmers in Katsina State" in: Olayemi Akinwumiet'al (eds), *Historical Perspectives on Nigeria's Post-Colonial Conflicts*, (Lagos: Unimark Limited for Historical Society of Nigeria, 2007):216

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT IN KOGI STATE-NIGERIA, 2011- 2019

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Abstract

The phenomenon of farmers-herders conflict across several states in Nigeria has prompted management strategies by the government of the Federation. One of the conflict resolution mechanisms in Nigeria has been the use of force by deploying security agents to conflict engulfed farming communities. The use of force has not really effectively addressed farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria as shown in its persistence, prevalence and dimension with growing casualties and economic consequences. Against this backdrop therefore, the study examined the incessant farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria and how the traditional institutions could be used as alternative strategy for managing these conflicts with particular reference to Kogi state from 2011 to 2019. The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative

data. Quantitative data were generated through structured questionnaire administered to 384 respondents selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure. Qualitative data were generated from extant literature. Data collected from the field survey were analyzed with the aid of tables, simple percentages, mean, and frequency counts. Findings of the study showed that the deployment of security agents by the government has not been able to resolve the farmers-herders conflicts or mediate peace. The study thus recommended that among others things, the traditional institutions should be repositioned and strengthened to effectively manage famers-herders conflicts in their respective domains instead of relying on the use of force by the security agents.

Keywords: Conflict, farmer-herder conflict, farmer, herder, traditional institution.

Introduction

Conflicts between sedentary crop farmers and nomadic cattle herders have escalated across several states in Nigeria in the last decade. These have posed a towering threat to national security, national integration, food security, and destruction of the sources of social and economic livelihood the people. Statistics generated from the WANEP National Early

Warning System (NEWS) from January – 16th March 2018, put the figures of deaths arising from Farmer-Herders conflict at 528 (WANEP, 2019). Inherent in this conflict is the issue of access to ecological resources such as water sources and land for grazing or farming (Akuva & Audu, 2018) exacerbated by worsening climatic conditions due to Global Warming (Audu, 2015; Ogoh, 2019). The increasing availability of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), produced locally in Nigeria and those smuggled in into the country through porous borders have further compounded the conflicts between herders and farmers.

The resultant effects of these conflicts in the country include loss of human and animal lives, destruction of property, forceful displacement of farmers from their ancestral homes and farms, decline in school enrolment, economic losses and scarcity of agricultural produce among others (Ibrahim & Chaminda, 2017; Enyi, 2014; Musa, Shabu, & Igbawua, 2014; Oguiche, Haruna & Ikani, 2016; Okoli & Addo, 2018; Genyi, 2019). As at 16th March 2018, a cumulative fatality of 149 people including women and children³ were recorded in violent confrontations and attacks arising from the farmers and herders conflicts in Plateau, Benue, Edo, Ebonyi and Kogi States (WANEP, 2019). In response to these conflicts, the government has always resorted to the use of force through the deployment of military personnel to resolve this conflict. The use of this strategy has not really effectively resulted to long lasting resolution of these recurrent farmers-herders conflicts. Against this backdrop therefore,

this study examines the incessant farmer-conflict in Nigeria with particular reference to Kogi State. It has also suggested how the traditional institutions can be repositioned and used as alternative strategy to effectively manage the conflicts in Kogi state between 2011 and 2019.

The study therefore sets out to achieve four main objectives as follows:

- a. To examine the nature and dynamics of farmer-herder conflict in Kogi state
- b. Ascertain the major strategy employed by the government in resolving farmers-herders conflicts in Kogi state;
- c. Find out whether the major strategy employed by government in resolving farmers-herders conflicts in Kogi state has been effective or not;
- d. Recommend an alternative strategy that could be adopted in effectively managing farmers-herders conflicts in Kogi state.

The study is divided into six sections. Section one is the Introduction. The second section centers on literature review. Theoretical framework forms the thrust of section three. In section four, the paper discusses the research methodology. Results/ findings of the study are discussed in section five. And section six rounds up the study in the form of

conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Analysis

The concept of conflict has been defined by different scholars from different perspectives. That notwithstanding, a few of these definitions would be looked at for the purpose of this study.

According to Yecho, Yecho & Ogoh (2019) citing Maoz (1982), conflict is defined as:

A state of incompatibility among values; where the achievement of one value can be realized only at the expense of some other values or as a pursuit of incompatibility of goals by individuals or groups as a result of the inability of social structure to allocate values objectively (p.3)

Joseph and Benjamin (2016) citing Mc kee (1981) sees conflict as:

A struggle over values or scarce resources in which two contesting groups each seek to improve values or claims on resources over those of the other. To do so, each seeks to maintain or to change the social structure in terms of his or her own interest (p.30).

This postulation by Mc Kee captures all the relevant elements of other definitions and shall thus be adopted in this paper. Farmers-herders conflicts are the conflicts between crop farmers and cattle herders over access to and use of ecological resources such as water sources and land for either crop farming or

cattle grazing.

At the center of every conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders in Nigeria is competition over scarce available ecological resources such as water points and land for cattle grazing or crop farming. These gifts of nature have become scarce relating to the available farmers and herders in the last decade as largely a result of change in global climate conditions which necessitated the migration of cattle herders southwards from their original base in the Sahel ecological zone of the northern region down to the Middle-Belt and the southern part of Nigeria.

In Kogi state in particular and the Middle Belt in general, farming is the major occupation of the people especially those of them in the rural areas, and this vocation is sustained by the availability of both arable and water sources-the same resources that are also of economic importance to the cattle herders. This underscores the conflict between both agricultural land user groups and herders. Conflict itself is not a bad thing as it is a normal feature of all societies, especially plural societies. However, what is bad about conflict is when it turns to violent when not properly managed. It is the violent conflict between the crop farmers and cattle herders that is the preoccupation of this paper. Conflict management on the other hand refers to interventionist efforts towards preventing the escalation and negative effects, especially violent ones, of ongoing conflict. Conflict management is actually another way of controlling conflict before or during and after it has occurred (Yecho et al, 2019).

Farmer-herder conflict is the conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders deriving from competition over scarce ecological resources such as water points and land for crop farming or crop farming.

Thus, the conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders in Nigeria in general and Kogi state in particular has been interrogated by scholars and analysts from different perspectives. An examination of some of the contributions of these scholars is imperative so as to situate the subject matter of the study on a sound analytical framework. Farmers-herders conflict is caused by a combination of factors. In their contribution, Ofuoke and Isife (2009) conducted a study in Delta state to investigate the farmers-nomadic herders' conflict that is common in many parts of Nigeria. Such conflict has caused a lot of losses to Nigeria, the state, local communities, and families. The study unveils the causes of such conflict and suggested ways to prevent and resolve them in the future. The causes of such conflict were: destruction of crops, contamination of streams by cattle, over-grazing of land, disregard for local traditional authorities, female harassment, harassment of nomads by youths of host communities, indiscriminate bush burning; defecation by cattle on roads, cattle rustling and straying of cattle. The socio-economic effects of the conflict include reduction in crop yield and income of farmers/nomads, displacement of farmers, loss of lives and property and loss of products in storage.

In a study conducted by Akuva and Audu (2018) on the socio-economic implications of farmer-herder conflict on the development of Kogi state, they looked

at the displacement of farmers from their homes/farms, loss of lives/property, rural impoverishment and the threat to both domestic and foreign investment.

Similarly, while using Katsina state as a case study, Aliyu(2015) investigated the causes and resolution of conflict between cattle herders and crop farmers and discovered that both agricultural land user groups preferred to have their conflict resolved by traditional rulers and Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) rather than modern mechanisms. The causes of this conflict according to him ranges from crop damage by cattle, pollution of water points by cattle, encroachment on cattle routes to land tenure system.

In his contribution, Ogoh (2019) on his part blamed the perennial famer-herder conflict in Nigeria on climate change, which he said has led to mass exodus of cattle herders from Sahel region of the north southwards to the Middle-Belt region that boasts of more favourable ecological space, a situation resulting in the escalation of this conflict between the two groups with devastating consequences. Using Plateau state as a case study, the study found out that a correlation exists between climate change and farmer-herder conflict. The attendant consequences of climate change, according to this study, appeared in four dimensions, namely, killing of people, displacements and turning of youths into restiveness and the threatening of the growth and consolidation of civil culture in the state.

In a study conducted by Dimelu, Salifu, Enwelu and Igbokwe(2017) titled, Challenges of herdsman-

farmers' conflict in livestock production in Nigeria: Experience of pastoralists in Kogi state, it was found out that the conflict between pastoralists and crop farmers were caused by socio-economic, security, production practices, and institution related factors. As a result of this therefore, pastoralists had the problems of insecurity of human and animal lives, displacement of people and economic losses leading to poor productivity.

Musa, Shabu and Igbawua(2014) assessed the conflict between herdsmen and farmers in Guma Local government Area of Benue state, Nigeria. The study revealed that herdsmen were not accepted by their host communities. The study also found that the role of traditional rulers, destruction of crops/ farmlands and contamination of water sources as well as harassment of herdsmen by host communities were the major causes of conflict between the two groups. Displacement of farmers and herders, loss of human lives and properties and decrease in output were the major effects of the conflict between cattle herders and crop farmers in the study area.

Olobatoke and Omowumi (2017) investigated the effects of Fulani herders' intrusion on the economic livelihood of crop farmers in Yagba East Local Government Area of Kogi state, Nigeria. The findings of the study showed that Fulani herdsmen actually intruded into the crop farmers' farms particularly during the dry season period of the year. The study also revealed that the intrusion of cattle herders into crop farms had a significant negative effect on the crop farmers' output and income.

Selected incidents of farmer-herder conflict in the Middle-Belt of Nigeria between 2011 and 2018 are as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Selected Incidents of Farmer-Herder Conflicts in the Middle-Belt of Nigeria, 2011-2018

Date	State of incident	Number of Deaths
June, 2011	Benue state	20
20/11/2011	Nasarawa state	04
10/02/2011	Nasarawa state	01
17/04/2011	Nasarawa & Benue states	30
22/06/2011	Benue state	08
13/01/2012	Nasarawa state	10
15/06/2012	Nasarawa state	11
07/07/2012	Plateau state	22
24/03/2012	Nasarawa state	10
24/07/2012	Nasarawa state	35
05/01/2013	Nasarawa state	05
06/01/2013	Nasarawa state	16
15/01/2013	Nasarawa state	10
20/01/2013	Nasarawa state	25
24/01/2013	Plateau state	09
08/02/2013	Nasarawa state	30
17/03/2013	Nasarawa state	05
07/02/2013	Nasarawa state	30
17/03/2013	Nasarawa state	05
20/03/2013	Plateau state	18
03/04/2013	Benue state	03
23/04/2013	Kogi state	05
27/04/2013	Nasarawa state	30
04/05/2013	Plateau state	13
13/05//2013	Benue state	50
20/05/2013	Benue-Nasarawa boarder	23

02/06/2013	Benue state	37
07/06/2013	Nasarawa state	40
04/08/2013	Nasarawa state	20
29/09/2013	Benue state	48
28/12/2013	Plateau state	15
05/03/2014	Plateau state	10
25/03/2014	Benue state	04
06/03/2014	Benue state	15
05/06/2015	Kwara state	01
November, 2015	Kogi state	22
10/01/2016	Benue state	45
24/02/2016	Benue state	300-500
07/03/2016	Benue state	8
08/03/2016	Benue state	12
13/03/2016	Benue state	02
16/03/2016	Benue state	36
24/01/2017	Benue state	15
02/03/2017	Benue state	10
11/03/2017	Benue state	07
08/05/2017	Benue state	03
13/05/2017	Benue state	08
01/01/2018	Benue state	73

Source: Compiled by the Author from secondary sources.

There is no gainsaying that 90 percent of the attacks carried out by the Fulani herdsmen across the nation are on private individuals including farmers, women, children and elderly in various communities' which have accounted for about 80 per cent of deaths and 52 per cent of displaced persons in different communities. Hence, the attacks have mainly been through different means ranging from kidnapping, rape, armed assaults and killings with an average of about 11 people per attack (Osimen, Oyewole & Akinwunmi, 2017)

Theoretical Framework

A number of theories have been propounded that could be used for explaining and understanding the phenomenon of farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria. These include Conflict Theory, Eco-violence Theory, Frustration-Aggression Theory, Relative Deprivation Theory, Human Needs Theory, Political Ecology Theory, Environmental Security Theory, Relational Theory of Conflict, Intractable Theory of Conflict and Theory of the Tragedy of the Commons among others. However, this study shall be examined within the context of Resource Access Theory (RAT).

Resource Access Theory was propounded in the 1970s by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald Sananak. The basis assumption of the theory is that competition for access to and use of scarce resources for life sustenance precipitates conflicts in all societies. According to this theory, ownership and utilization of resources directly and indirectly have defined the dimensions of conflicts involving man since time immemorial. Land has remained the most potent

source of conflict of all the economic resources among various user groups in the society. Both cattle herders and crop farmers desire to have unhindered access to water points and land for cattle grazing or crop farming as a source of livelihood. The theory therefore sees access to resources as the main cause of violent conflict (Fajonyomi, Fatile, Bello, Opusunju & Adejuwon, 2018).

Applied to the purpose of this study, the theory sees farmer-herder conflict as being triggered by stiff competition for scarce available land and water resources by both crop farmers and cattle herders, which both groups use as a source of livelihood. Land has become scarce in the last decade as a result of the degradation and dwindling ecological space, increase in human and animal pollution relative to the available land as well as resource depletion. Thus, the farmers need the land as much as the cattle herders need it. The end result is stiff competition for the resource and the concomitant conflict between the two groups.

The theory has been criticized on the following grounds: Firstly, the theory has been criticized for lack of focus on the individual, focusing mainly on the group. Secondly the theory fails to explain why certain feelings of deprivation or denied access to resources are transformed into collective action, whereas in some similar situation, no collective effort is made to reshape the society. Thirdly, it is also criticized for failing to take cognizance of instances where resource abundance also precipitates conflict as in the case of Niger Delta region of Nigeria where the issue is not resource scarcity but resource control

in the midst of abundant resources (crude oil). These criticisms, notwithstanding, the theory still remains a very useful tool for explaining and understanding the perennial conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders in Kogi state in particular and Nigeria in general.

Research Methodology

The study was conducted in Kogi state of Nigeria between November 30, 2019 and January 30, 2020. The state was created on 27th August, 1991 by the military regime of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. The state is structured into 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs) with its administrative headquarters in Lokoja. These LGAs include: Ankpa, Dekina, Omala, Ofu, Olamaboro, Idah, Igalamela/Odolu, Ibaji, Bassa, Kabba/Bunu, YagbaWest, Yagba East, Ijumu, Ogorimagogo, Lokoja, Okene, Okehi, Adavi, Ajaokuta, Kogi and Mopa Muro. The 2010 projected population of the state as presented by the National Population Commission (NPC) stood at 3,730,936 (see Appendix 2)



Fig. 1: Map of Nigeria showing the study area (Kogi State) Source: www.researchgate.com

Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used for the study. In the first stage, purposive sampling technique, which is a partial intuitive method of selection (Amadi et al, 2019) was used in selecting the study sites- Omala, Adavi and Yagba West Local Government Areas (LGAs). In the second stage, having purposively determined the specific areas of the study, the researcher conducted a simple

random technique to determine the sample size for the study. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) population sample size table was used to determine the sample size of 384 respondents with a 95% confidence level and a 5.0% margin of error (see Appendix 1)

Table 2: Sampled LGAs and Number of Respondents

LGA	Projected Population 2010	Number of Respondents
Adavi	244,914	179
Omala	121,734	89
Yagba West	157,768	116
Total	524,416	384

Source: National Population Commission

Structured questionnaires were used to collect data using a five point Likert Scale (LS) of Strongly Agree (SA=5), Agree (A=4), Undecided (U=3), Disagree (D=2), Strongly Disagree (SD=1) were used to collect data from selected crop farmers and cattle herders in the study area. A total of 384 questionnaires were administered to elicit information on the objectives of the study. Data analysis was thematic in nature with the use of tables, simple percentages, mean, and frequency counts.

Results and Discussion

The respondents were asked to express their opinions based on the statements given in the questionnaire as tabulated below using the Likert Scale of SA {5}, A {4}, U {3}, D {2}, {1}. The Mean score of the respondents is computed thus: $5+4+3+2+1=15/5=3.0$

Decision Rule: If the Mean <3.0, the respondents Disagree; if the Mean e” 3.0 but<3.5 the respondents are Undecided; if the Mean e” 3.5 the respondents Agree and as such the statement is taken or considered as significant.

Table 3: The Nature and Dynamics of Herder-Farmer Conflict

Statement	Rating and Weight Value						
	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	TWV	MI
Farmer-herder conflict is an age long conflict	129 33.60%	127 33.07%	28 7.30%	44 11.45%	56 14.58%	1381	3.59*
Farmer-herder conflict has escalated in the last one decade	122 31.80%	120 31.30%	47 12.20%	47 12.20%	48 12.50%	1373	3.57*
Farmer-herder conflict has taken an ethno-religious dimension	131 34.11%	129 33.60%	35 9.11%	41 10.68%	48 12.50%	1406	3.66*
Farmer-herder conflict has become more violent in recent times with the introduction of AK-47s and other sophisticated weapons of war fare	125 32.60%	123 32.00%	46 11.97%	43 11.19%	47 12.24%	1388	3.61*

Source: Field Survey, 2020

In table 3 above the statement, farmer-herder conflict is an age long conflict has a sample mean value of 3.59; this indicates that the respondents agreed with the statement. The statement that farmer-herder conflict has escalated in the last one decade has a sample mean value of 3.57, which implies that the respondents agreed with the statement. The statement, farmer-herder conflict has taken an ethno-religious dimension has a sample mean value of 3.66, an indication that the respondents agreed with the statement. This finding contradicts those of Bagu and Smith (2017) who found out that the conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders in the Middle-Belt of Nigeria is neither a religious nor an ethnic conflict but rather a resource-based conflict playing out on ethno-religious lines in a fragile country characterized by impunity and corruption. The statement, farmer-herder conflict has become more violent in recent times with the introduction of AK-47s and other sophisticated weapons of warfare has a sample mean value of 3.61, which showed that the respondents agreed with the statement.

Table 4: Government Strategy for Managing Farmer-Herder Conflict

Statement	Rating and Weight Value						
	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	TWW	MI
Government usually deploys security agents to resolve conflict or mediate peace	123 32.03%	112 29.17%	49 12.76%	33 8.59%	67 17.45%	1343	3.50*
The strategy adopted by the government has been majorly the use of force	118 30.75%	127 33.07%	51 13.28%	38 9.90%	50 13.02%	1377	3.60*

***Significant mean of the Government’s strategy for managing farmer-herder conflict**

Source: Field Survey, 2020

In table4 above, the statement that government usually deploys security agents to resolve conflict or mediate peace in Kogi state has a sample mean value of 3.50, an indication that the respondents agreed with the statement. This finding is in tandem with those of Adekun et al (2015) and Ogoh (2019) who found out that the use of law enforcement agents or security agents is the major method of conflict resolution used by the government of Nigeria. The responses on the strategy adopted by the government have been majorly the use of force has a sample mean of 3.60, which implies that the

respondents agreed with the statement.

Table 5: The Effectiveness of Government's Strategy for Managing Farmer-Herder Conflict

Statement	Rating and Weight Value						
	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	TWV	MI
Deployment of security agents has not been able to resolve conflict	136 35.42%	121 31.51%	37 9.64%	41 10.67%	49 12.76%	1406	3.66*
Security agents have often been accused of human rights abuses in an attempt to resolve conflict	128 33.33%	124 32.30%	35 9.11%	43 11.20%	54 14.06%	1381	3.60*

*Significant mean of the effectiveness or otherwise of government's strategy for managing farmer-herder conflict
Source: Field Survey, 2020

In table 5 above, the statement that the deployment of security agents has not been able to resolve the conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders or even mediate peace has a sample mean value of 3.66, which shows that the respondents agreed with the statement. The statement that, security agents have

often been accused of human rights abuses in an attempt to resolve conflict involving crop farmers and cattle herders in the study area has a sample mean value of 3.60, which indicates that the respondents agreed with the statement. What this implies is that the security agents usually deployed to resolve conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders have not really been able to optimally achieve the desired results of mediating peace between the two groups, which explains why the conflict has remained persistent despite all the efforts of the government. Also, in the course of resolving farmer-herder conflicts, the security agents in most cases, end up brutalizing the actors in the conflicts and abusing their fundamental human rights.

Table 6: The Imperative of Traditional Institutions in the Management of Conflict

Statement	Rating and Weight Value						
	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	TWW	MI
Farmers and herders are more comfortable with the traditional rulers resolving conflict between them	135 35.16%	123 32.03%	57 14.84%	31 8.07%	38 9.90%	1438	3.74*
The traditional rulers still command great respect from their subjects, especially in the rural areas	113 29.43%	134 34.90%	63 16.41%	37 9.63%	37 9.63%	1401	3.65*
Many farmers and herders in the rural areas have more trust in the ability of the traditional rulers to resolve conflicts that modern institutions	133 34.64%	119 30.98%	49 12.76%	41 10.68%	42 10.94%	1412	3.68*
Traditional institutions should be repositioned and strengthened to effectively resolve conflicts in their respective domains	127 33.07%	123 32.03%	44 11.46%	54 14.06%	36 9.38%	1403	3.65*

Source: Field Survey, 2020

In table 6 above, the statement that farmers and herders are more comfortable with the traditional rulers resolving conflict between them has a sample mean value of 3.74, an indication that the respondents agreed with the statement. This finding concurs with those of Aliyu (2015) who found out that traditional rulers and Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association

of Nigeria (MACBAN) were the most effective mechanism for handling conflicts between farmers and herders in Katsina state of Nigeria. This finding however contradicts those of Musa et al (2014) who found out that the role of traditional rulers was one of the major causes of conflicts between farmers and herders in Guma Local Government Area of Benue state. The statement that traditional rulers still command great respect from their subjects, especially in the rural areas has a sample mean value of 3.65 which indicates that the respondents agreed with the statement. On the statement that many farmers and herders in the rural areas have more trust and confidence in the ability of the traditional rulers to resolve conflicts better than modern institutions has a sample mean value of 3.68 showing that the respondents agreed with the statement. The statement that, the traditional institutions should be repositioned and strengthened to effectively resolve conflicts in their respective domains has a sample mean of 3.65, an indication that the respondents agreed with the statement.

Summary of Major Findings

The findings of this study are summarized as follows:

- i. The study found out that the conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders has escalated in the last one decade as a result of the stiff competition over shrinking ecological resources such as water and land for either cattle grazing or crop farming.
- ii. The study also found out that the strategy adopted by the Federal and State Governments

- in Nigeria to resolve conflict between farmers and herders has been majorly the use of force.
- iii. The findings of the study revealed that the use of force by the security agents in conflict situations has not been able to resolve this conflict or even mediate peace rather it has aggravated the conflict between the two groups.
 - iv. The findings of the study also reveal that both crop farmers and cattle herders are more comfortable having their conflicts resolved by traditional institutions than the so-called modern institutions
 - v. Farmers-herders conflict has taken a more dangerous dimension in the last one decade with the introduction of AK-47s and other lethal weapons of war-fare accentuated by ethnic and religious colorations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the incessant resource-bases conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders in Nigeria with specific reference to Kogi state from 2011 to 2019. This conflict is an age-long conflict and has escalated in the last one decade with the introduction of AK-47s and other dangerous weapons of war fare with resultant effects of high rate of casualties, displacement of farmers, and destruction of valuable properties worth millions of Naira. In response to this perennial conflict, the Government of the country has always deployed security operatives to conflicts ridden communities in order to resolve it and mediate peace. However, there are

evidences as shown above that the deployment of security and the use of force have not really produced the desired results as these conflicts have remained persistent resulting to increasing number of deaths and displaced persons. It is the conclusion of this study that the deployment of security agents and the consequent use of force will rather escalate the conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders instead of resolving and mediating peace between them. Based on the findings and conclusion drawn therefore, the following recommendations have been made:

- i. Traditional institutions should be repositioned and empowered to effectively manage farmers-herders conflict in their respective domains in Nigeria
- ii. Security agents should be trained and retrained in handling resource-based conflicts such as the one involving cattle herders and crop farmers so that they would be better disposed to mediating peace.
- iii. Security agents should be cautioned on the need to be professional in handling conflicts between cattle herders and crop farmers, and should desist from all forms of human rights abuses in the course of carrying out their statutory duties.
- iv. Security agents found to have engaged in unprofessional conducts such as human rights abuses should be prosecuted and if found guilty should be punished accordingly to serve as deterrent to others.

- v. Traditional rulers found to have abused their powers or perpetrated corrupt practices while discharging their lawful duties to their subjects in their respective domains should be dethroned to serve as deterrent to other traditional rulers who may be having the intention of abusing the powers of their offices.
- vi. There is the need for a periodic enlightenment of crop farmers and cattle herders on the dangers of violent conflicts and the importance of peaceful coexistence in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country like Nigeria.

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Appendix I: Population Sample Size Table (KREJCIE & MORGAN, 1970)

Required Sample Size [†]								
Population Size	Confidence = 95%				Confidence = 99%			
	Margin of Error				Margin of Error			
	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
20	19	20	20	20	19	20	20	20
30	28	29	29	30	29	29	30	30
50	44	47	48	50	47	48	49	50
75	63	69	72	74	67	71	73	75
100	80	89	94	99	87	93	96	99
150	108	126	137	148	122	135	142	149
200	132	160	177	196	154	174	186	198
250	152	190	215	244	182	211	229	246
300	169	217	251	291	207	246	270	295
400	196	265	318	384	250	309	348	391
500	217	306	377	475	285	365	421	485
600	234	340	432	565	315	416	490	579
700	248	370	481	653	341	462	554	672
800	260	396	526	739	363	503	615	763
1,000	278	440	606	906	399	575	727	943
1,200	291	474	674	1067	427	636	827	1119
1,500	306	515	759	1297	460	712	959	1376
2,000	322	563	869	1655	498	808	1141	1785
2,500	333	597	952	1984	524	879	1288	2173
3,500	346	641	1068	2565	558	977	1510	2890
5,000	357	678	1176	3288	586	1066	1734	3842
7,500	365	710	1275	4211	610	1147	1960	5165
10,000	370	727	1332	4899	622	1193	2098	6239
25,000	378	760	1448	6939	646	1285	2399	9972
50,000	381	772	1491	8056	655	1318	2520	12455
75,000	382	776	1506	8514	658	1330	2563	13583
100,000	383	778	1513	8762	659	1336	2585	14227
250,000	384	782	1527	9248	662	1347	2626	15555
500,000	384	783	1532	9423	663	1350	2640	16055
1,000,000	384	783	1534	9512	663	1352	2647	16317
2,500,000	384	784	1536	9567	663	1353	2651	16478
10,000,000	384	784	1536	9594	663	1354	2653	16560
100,000,000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16584
300,000,000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16586

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Appendix. 2: Kogi State Population Distribution by Local Government Area

	Local Government Area	Projected Population as at 2010
1	Adavi	244,914
2	Ajaokuta	138, 042
3	Ankpa	300,113
4	Bassa	157,497
5	Dekina	294,241
6	Ibaji	143,837
7	Idah	89,924
8	Igalamela/Odolu	165,796
9	Ijumu	133,713
10	Kabba/Bunu	163,012
11	Kogi	129,775
12	Lokoja	221, 714
13	Mopa-Muro	49,339
14	Ofu	215,893
15	Ogori/Mangogo	44,882
16	Okehi	252,079
17	Okene	367,139
18	Olamaboro	173,059
19	Omala	121,734
20	Yagba East	166, 465
21	Yagba West	157,768
21	TOTAL	3,730,936

Source: National Population Commission

HERDERS-FARMERS CONFLICTS AND FOOD SECURITY IN BENUE STATE: 2011- 2018

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Abstract

Over the last three decades, the concern for food security has raised serious global concerns due to increase in human population and giving its indispensable role in meeting one of the basic and most essential needs for human existence. However, it is regrettable that individual and governments efforts at tackling the challenge of food insecurity and ensuring food security have been halted by violent conflicts between herders and farmers in the recent past. This paper examines the effects of herders-farmer's conflicts on food security in Benue State from 2011-2018. The paper is based on textual analysis. Published books, articles, reports and dailies were consulted to lay a framework for it. It has shown that apart from the huge losses of human lives, property, finance as well as the humanitarian crises generated by the

skirmishes, the herders-farmer's conflicts in the state have led to serious food security challenges in terms of food production, availability, accessibility, utilization and stability. This has posed a serious challenge not just in the state but Nigeria at large given the state's significant role in crop production and contribution to the growth of the national economy. The paper concludes that, the Benue State Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017, provides the best model and global practice in addressing the issue in this 21st century. The paper recommends among other things that, Herdsmen and their leaders should give full recognition and acceptance of the law in Benue State for peace to reign, the federal and state governments should ensure the resettlement of thousands of farmers in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in the state for them to continue with agricultural production, the state government should evolve deliberate policies to boost agricultural production, revive and modernize already existing ranches and designate specific places for new ones, farmers and herders should embrace dialogue and peaceful coexistence which will guarantee increase crop and cattle production in meeting the dietary and nutritional needs of Benue citizens and Nigerians at large.

Introduction

Over the past three decades, the need for achieving food security has raised serious concerns in the global community. This is because, food production and consumption is one of the basic and most essential needs for human existence. The need for this has become heightened due to increase in world population. In October 2011, the global population was estimated to be 7 billion. The world's population is expected to increase by 2 billion persons in the next 30 years, from 7.7 billion currently to 9.7 billion in 2050 and could peak at nearly 11 billion around 2100.¹

Thus, every responsible government works assiduously to ensure that there is increase and sustained productive activities in the agricultural sector in order to cater for the food and nutritional needs of her citizenry. This perhaps could explain why a 'World Food Summit' was held in Rome, Italy in 1996. Moreover, as a means of tackling the challenge of food insecurity on the one hand and ensuring food security on the other hand, the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were set in year 2000 by world leaders had its number 1 goal to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Available evidence indicates that there was a remarkable progress in achieving food security in many countries at the end of the goals in year 2015 which was the set date and time for its expiration. The expiration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) gave birth to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which has its goal 2 aimed at achieving Zero hunger by 2030.

The quest for food security is much more intense in Africa. This is because, African nations are classified as developing nations based on Human Development Index reports as they are characterized with high levels of poverty and hunger among other things. Even though the continent has great prospects in the agricultural sector with large land mass that is suitable for agricultural activities, it has not been effectively and sufficiently explored and utilized in achieving food security.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), new data presented in the joint UN report, the Africa Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition, in 2017 indicates that:

Hunger in Africa continues to rise after many years of decline, threatening the continent's hunger eradication efforts to meet the Malabo Goals 2025 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly the Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG2). The report placed the number of hungry people in Africa at 257 million or 1 in every 5 people. Out of the 257 million hungry people in Africa, 237 million are in sub-Saharan Africa and 20 million in Northern Africa. The annual UN report further indicates that compared to 2015, there were an additional 34.5 million more undernourished people in Africa, of which 32.6 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 1.9 million in Northern Africa. 2

The Nigerian situation is left to be desired as the

country is ranked among the countries with high level of poverty and hunger. In the 2019 Global Hunger Index, Nigeria is ranked 93rd out of 117 qualifying countries. With a score of 27.9, Nigeria suffers from a level of hunger that is serious.³ Moreover, synthesis report of the Nigeria Zero Hunger Strategic Review in 2017 shows that Nigeria's fast-growing population and high rate of urbanization have created a food deficit of 56 million tones that presents opportunities for market-oriented small holders. The total population of approximately 182 million people (2015), with 48% living in urban settlements, is expected to double by 2040. Urban demand for food is expanding in terms of expected quality and range of products.⁴

Historically, the Nigerian food crisis is traced to the 1970s when crude oil was discovered. The discovery of crude oil came as a blessing on one hand and a curse on the other hand because attention was diverted from agriculture that until then was the bane of Nigerian economy to oil production. This scenario led to several calls by both scholars and analysts of the Nigerian economy that the government should put in place measures and policies that would increase agricultural production to meet the food and nutritional needs of her citizens and at the same time accelerate foreign exchange earnings. In response to this, several policies have been put in place over the years by both state governments and the federal government to boost agricultural production.

However, it is regrettable that, individual and governments efforts at tackling the challenge of food

insecurity and ensuring food security have been halted by violent armed conflicts. Globally, 60 percent of the 815 million undernourished individuals and 79 percent of the 155 million stunted children live in countries affected by violent conflict.⁵ Within the African continent and Nigeria in particular, the last decade has witnessed an up surge in armed conflagrations especially between herders and farmers with its attendant consequences on food production, distribution and consumption. According to Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), “the worsening trend in Africa is due to difficult global economic and worsening environmental conditions and, in many countries, conflict and climate variability and extremes; sometimes combined. Food insecurity has worsened in countries affected by conflict.”⁶

Nigeria as a nation state is under a severe internal socio-economic and security threat. At a more general level, the threat has special economic, political and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions has greatly affected the nation’s stability and can be traced to the Fulani-herdsmen and farmers clash, ethnic militant armies, ethnic and religious conflicts, poverty, insurgency, armed robbery, corruption, economic sabotage and environmental degradation.⁷

In Benue State which is a leading agricultural state in the country has been worst heat by these violent clashes and in some cases unprovoked attacks. Speaking on the effects of violent herders-farmers conflicts on food security in Benue state, Professor Okoli and Handeior maintained that:

In the case of Benue State, there have been highly devastating conflicts that have claimed very many lives and properties endangered by Fulani Herdsmen in communities of local government areas such as Agatu, Guma, Gwer West, Makurdi, Kwande, Katsina-ala and Logo. The crises orchestrated by Fulani herdsmen in Benue State had claimed the lives of more than 5000 victims in the first half of the year 2014. They sacked more than 100 communities and have thrown thousands of refugees into Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp located at Makurdi. These losses of lives have adversely affected farming activities and other related businesses and socio- economic activities.⁸

This paper therefore sets out to examine the negative effects of herders-farmer's clashes on food security in Benue State from 2011-2018 with the view to offer suggestions that will guarantee the peaceful coexistence of the duo and address the prevailing food crises as a result of the conflicts as well as increase agricultural production in a sustained manner to meet the dietary needs of Benue citizens and Nigerians at large.

Conceptual Clarifications

Herders/Farmers

Herders are prevalently Fulani nomads who rear and move their cattle from Northern Nigeria down South. They are hosted in farming communities and come in contact with farmers in various parts of

Nigeria.⁹The usage of the word “herders” in this paper is alternated with herdsmen and pastoralist. They are massively spread over many countries, and are found mainly in West Africa and northern parts of Central Africa, but also in Sudan and Egypt. The main Fulani sub-groups in Nigeria are: Fulbe Adamawa, Fulbe Mbororo, Fulbe Sokoto, Fulbe Gombe, and the FulbeBorgu.¹⁰

On the other hand, farmers refer to those who are involved in planting and growing of arable crops. Specifically, these are sedentary cultivators in various regions of Nigeria who have direct interactions- and disputes resultant there from- with herders.¹¹ They are also referred to as producers of arable crops both for their consumption and for commercial purposes. What this means is that they live on the land and find sustenance through its cultivation for food and income. They settled in communities and carried out farming and farming related activities. Today, farmers have maintained the cultivation of stretches of land available for food and income covering a wide variety of crops in many parts of Nigeria ¹² particularly Benue State

The Concept of Conflict

Conflict is as old as human existence and has attracted a plethora of definitions by scholars and analysts. In ordinary parlance, ‘conflict’ has been broadly associated with tensions surrounding decisions on various choices, sometimes being manifested in confrontations between social forces.¹³ According to Olanlewaju, “conflict could be conceptualized from two approaches, namely: the

objectivist approach, which suggests that conflict emanates from the social and political structure of the society; and the subjectivist approach, advancing that apparent differences and incompatibility of goals cause conflict.¹⁴ This definition suggests that all other definitions of conflict are either from the objectivist or subjectivist approaches. Galtung observes that factors such as ethnic identities and hatred are causes of violent conflict. He further argues that conflict is the incompatibility of goals between two or more parties due to different perception or ideals, resulting into tension, crisis and sometimes violence among the parties, states or communities.¹⁵ According to Dougherty and Pfalzgarff, the term conflict “refers to a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings in a given environment (whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religions, socioeconomic, political, among others) is engaged in conscious opposition to or more identifiable human groups because these groups are pursuing what are or appear to be incompatible goals”¹⁶

The Concept of Food Security

Food is one of the most basic and essential needs of man and there are different elements involved in it such as production, distribution and consumption. Focus on these elements has over the years shaped the meaning of the concept among scholars and international development agencies. Modern concerns with food security formally emerged with the global food crisis of 1973-74. The World Food Conference in 1974 defined food security as:

“Availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices.”¹⁷ This definition reflected the then-prevailing emphasis on supply side constraints. Measurement of food security under the 1974 definition concerned global and national-level supplies of ‘basic foodstuffs’, with all calories treated as nutritionally equivalent and within-country access and distribution largely ignored. As the food security discussion evolved, focus gradually diverged between the notion of food security as a national and international supply phenomenon to a matter of household and individual-level access.¹⁸

Consequently, the 1996 Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security modified the definition thus, “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”¹⁹ This definition was still maintained in the 2009 World Food Summit. According to the United States Agency for International Development, Food security can be described as the condition in which a person have access to good, quality and sufficient food to consume in other to live healthy and productive life.²⁰ To Eme etal, “food security is a broad concept which cuts across many dimensions. It means access to adequate food for a healthy life. This definition highlights two important aspects of food security that is access to adequate food and the nutritional value of the food that guarantees a

healthy life’’²¹

However, the four main dimensions of food security globally accepted were given by the Food and Agricultural organization (FAO). These dimensions include the following:

Physical availability of food: Food availability addresses the “supply side” of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels and net trade.

Economic and physical access to food: An adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household level food security. Concerns about insufficient food access have resulted in a greater policy focus on incomes, expenditure, markets and prices in achieving food security objectives.

Food utilization: Utilization is commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in the food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals is the result of good care and feeding practices, food preparation, and diversity of the diet and intra-household distribution of food. Combined with good biological utilization of food consumed, this determines the nutritional status of individuals.

Stability of the other three dimensions overtime: Even if your food intake is adequate today, you are still considered to be food insecure if you have inadequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of your nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices) may have an impact on your food security status. For food

security objectives to be realized, all four dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously.²²

Theoretical Application - The Eco-Violence Theory
This paper has adopted the eco-violence theory as the basis for its analysis of the herders -farmer's conflicts in Benue State. The eco-violence theory is an emerging theoretical construct that seeks to explain the relationship between environmental factors and violent conflicts. It was developed by Homer-Dixon in 1999. According to him:

Decrease in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and unequal 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.²³

The main assumption of the theory is that resource scarcity is the product of an insufficient supply, too much demand or an unequal distribution of a resource as a result of environmental hazards that forces some sector of a society into a condition of

deprivation and violence. These four sources of scarcity are in turn caused by variables such as population growth, economic development, pollution and obviously climate change. Thus, environmental resource scarcity will constrain agricultural and economic productivity, further inducing the disruption of economic livelihoods, poverty and migration. Migration can occur either because the environmental quality of a habitat has become unlivable or, more commonly, because the migrant's economic outcome is likely to be better in areas with greater resource availability. Both constrained productivity and migration are likely to strengthen the segmentation around already existing religious, class, ethnic or linguistic cleavages in a society.²⁴

It is a truism that the most fundamental reason why Fulani Herdsmen migrate to other areas is because of desert encroachment (desertification) of the Sahel region caused by climate change. Climate change destroys and depletes natural resources and it is also very crucial for individual wellbeing. Climate change significantly undermines individual livelihoods and community growth thereby undermining the capacity of state to provide social services and economic opportunities requisite for state development and stability. The lack of opportunities to sustain livelihood makes indigenes of such communities very susceptible to conflicts.²⁵

Benue state, situated in the middle Benue valley is usually a rallying point for the herders because of its fertile agricultural land with ever growing green grasses suitable for cattle grazing. This is aided by

the presence of river Benue which is the second largest river in the country. It becomes a ready source of water for cattle to drink. On the other hand the people of the state are predominantly farmers, depending on crop production for survival. Thus, when these herders migrate from other regions of the country especially in the northern part to the state, they sometimes consciously allow their cattle to graze on crop farms but at times the cattle stray into the farms destroying crops. This is what often results in conflicts which escalate to violent conflicts. In the recent past these attacks have been planned and coordinated thereby forcing the indigenes out for the safety of their lives for the herders to have free access for grazing.

A Brief Description, History and Economy of Benue State

Benue State, which is located in east-central Nigeria, is a wooded savanna region, Its geographic coordinates are longitude 7° 47' and 10° 0' East, Latitudes 6°25' and 8° 8' North. It is bounded on the south by Cross River, Ebonyi, and Enugu states, on the west by Kogi state, on the north by Nassawara state, and on the northeast by Taraba state. The Benue River defines the western half of Benue's northern boundary; to the southeast it has a common border of less than 25 miles (40 km) with Cameroon, where the Mokamoun River rises in the mountains of that country. The area is inhabited by the Tiv (the largest ethnic group in the state), the Idoma, the Igede and a number of small groups. All are mainly agricultural peoples cultivating sesame seed,

soybeans, shea nuts, cotton, yams, corn (maize), and rice as cash crops. Yams, sorghum, millet, peanuts (groundnuts), and cassava are raised as staple foods.²⁶ The State has a total population of 4,253,641 based on the 2006 census, with an average population density of 99 persons per km². This makes Benue the 9th most populous state in Nigeria.²⁷ It was created on 3rd February 1976. It was one of the seven states created by the military administration headed by General Murtala Mohammed, which increased the number of states in the country from 13 to 19. The state derives its name from River Benue which is the second largest river in the country and its most significant geographical feature.

The economy of the state is driven by agricultural because of her rich produce which include yam, rice, bean, cassava, sweet-potato, maize, soybean, sorghum, millet, sesame, cocoyam, etc. the state accounts for over 70% of Nigeria's Soybean production. The state as one of the highest farming population (657,767 crop farmers as at 2010) in Nigeria is also endowed with one of the longest stretches of river (River Benue) in the country with great potential for a viable fishing industry, dry season farming through irrigation and for an inland water-way. Furthermore, in the state, the records of cassava production show that the total number of farm families involved in the production were 413159.²⁸ The State can boast of a great deal of livestock resources like goats, though the major occupation is crop farming, a lot of fishing activities on Rivers Benue and Katsina-ala are carried out; irrigation is widely practiced along the riverine areas

during the dry season; growing vegetable crops such as tomatoes, okra, carrot, onion, pepper and amaranthus in large quantities. It is also common practice to find each farming family keeping one from of livestock or the other such as poultry, rabbitry, piggery, sheep and goat on a small scale. Poultry, sheep, pigs and cattle are traditionally reared on free holder farmers. The strategic location of Benue State between the Southern forest regions and the Northern semi and grassland regions of the country makes it easy to have fertile land for agriculture with the estimated arable land constituting about 60 percent of the total area. Average farm size is 1.5 to 2.0 hectares.²⁹

An overview of Farmers –Herders Conflicts in Benue State, 2011-2018

No doubt, conflict between herders and farmers in Benue State predates the above periodisation, but available evidence indicates that the conflict assumed a notorious dimension of widespread killings in 2011. However, in the past, a symbiotic relationship existed between the Benue farmers and the herdsmen from Fulani caliphate. When the later would pass with their cattle, not destroying farmer's crops, these farmers derived organic manure from cow dung and protein from the beef and dairy product while the nomads relied on the farm product for food.³⁰ In all the affected areas visited by Amnesty International, people in farming communities talked about the harmonious relationship that existed between them and Fulani herders and the peaceful coexistence they had enjoyed in the past. They explained how beneficial

living together had been and how families from both sides visited and interacted with each other.³¹ Hitherto, disputes between pastoralists and farmers were settled amicably by farming community leaders and Fulani ardos under arrangements which disallowed resort to violence but mutual understanding. However, today's nomads, usually ignorant of such dispute resolution mechanism are often too quick in resorting to violence during disagreements.³²

These conflicts have produced untold consequences in terms of destruction of lives and property. For instance in 2014, "Fulani militants" killed 1,229 people and earned the dubious honour of being named the fourth most deadly terrorist group in the world at the time.³³ In Benue, one of the hardest-hit states, Governor Samuel Ortom reports more than 1,878 people were killed between 2014 and 2016.³⁴ Another report stated that in 2016 alone, at least 1,269 were killed in Benue state, where herders invaded at least 14 of the 23 local government areas (LGAs). Communities and households also pay a heavy price.³⁵ The ethnic Nzor-Tiv Global Association estimated its Agatu communities in Benue state lost N65 billion in properties (\$204 million) during the early 2016 herder attacks.³⁶ In 2019, Governor Ortom reported that in Benue state alone, herdsman-farmers conflicts have led to economic costs of over N400 billion resulting from the destruction of properties over the years.³⁷

Chronicle of Herdsmen dastardly activities and killings (2011-2017)

S/N	Date	Incidence	Place
1	Nov, 2011	Conflicts between farmers and Fulani pastoralists in Benue State, left two soldiers, some 50 men, women, and children dead.	Benue State
2	March, 2012	The conflict between Fulani pastoralists and sedentary farmers in Gwer West Local Government Area of Benue State left over 30 people dead.	Benue State
3	May, 2012	A clash between farmers and herders in Gwer West area in Benue State left five people dead, and many others displaced	Benue State
4	April 23, 2013	10 farmers killed in Mbasenge community, Guma LGA	Benue State
5	May 7, 2013	47 mourners killed in Agatu while burying 2 policemen killed in neighboring Nassarawa town	Benue State
6	May 12, 2013	83 killed by Fulani herdsmen in the Okpanchenyi and Ekwo communities of Agatu	Benue State
7	May 14, 2013	40 killed as over 200 herdsmen stormed Ekwo-Okpanchenyi, Agatu LGA	Benue State
8	June 11, 2013	1 killed, by Fulani rubbers. Also, over 40 cattle belonging to the Catholic Church Otukpo were led away. A number of people were injured. Ichama Village, Okpokwu LGA, Benue State.	Benue State
9	July 1, 2013	40 people killed Fulani gunmen attacked in Okpanchenyi village.	Benue State
10	July 5, 2013	60 killed following clashes between Tiv farmers and herdsmen in Nzorov, Guma, and LGA.	Benue State
11	July 28, 2013	8 killed as herdsmen invaded 2 villages in Agatu LGA.	Benue State

12	Sept 29, 2013	15 killed in Agatu by Fulani herdsmen	Benue State
13	Oct 13, 2013	30 People killed in Oguche and Agatu by suspected Fulani Herdsmen	Benue State
14	Nov 7, 2013	7 killed, 6,000+ displaced when attackers struck Ikpele & Okpopolo communities, Agatu LGA.	
15	Nov 9, 2013	36 killed and 7 villages overrun in Agatu LGA.	
16	Nov 20, 2013	22 killed and lots of properties destroyed in an attack in Guma LGA.	
17	Jan 20, 2014	5 soldiers and 7 civilians gunned down in an attack, in Agatu LGA and 3 killed in attack in Adeke Village	
18	Feb 20-21, 2014	35 killed, 80,000 displaced, 6 villages sacked following an attack in Gwer West LGA	
19	Feb 24, 2014	8 killed following an attack on a Tiv community along Naka road, Makurdi	Benue State
20	Mar 6, 2014	30 killed, 6 villages sacked in Katsina/Ala and Logo LGAs.	
21	March 10, 2014	The convoy of ex-Governor Suswan attacked at Umenger. He managed to escape.	
22	March 12, 2014	28 killed in a raid on Ukpan, in Guma LGA. Yam barns and farms burnt and another 22 slaughtered in an attack on Suswan's village, Logo LGA. The entire village sacked.	
23	March 25, 2014	More than 60 killed and many houses burnt, prompting Gov. Suswan to seek help from the army.	Benue State
24	March 27, 2014	About 55 were killed at Gbajimba with many houses destroyed. over 52,000 internally displaced people at camp established by the Catholic Diocese of Makurdi.	Benue State
25	April 12,	2 were killed in Gwer West L.G.A	Benue State

25	April 12, 2014	2 were killed in Gwer West L.G.A	Benue State
26	Sept 10, 2014	Scores dead when herdsmen attacked 5 villages in Ogbadibo LGA	
27	Dec 14, 2014	10 killed in Benue State by Fulani Herds men.	
28	May 24, 2015	5 days to the end of Governor Suswan's administration in May 2015 over 100 farmers and their family members were killed in villages and refugee camps located in Ukura, Per, Gafa and Tse -Gusa LGAs of the State	Benue State
29	Jan., 2017	A fresh crisis between Fulani herdsmen and Idoma farmers at Okpokwu Local Government Area, left not less than five people dead and several others injured	Benue State
30	Jan. 24, 2017	Grazing of cattle and destruction of farmlands led to a bloody fight in which 2 herdsmen and 13 villagers (a total of 15 persons were killed in Ipiga village in Ohimini LGA.	Benue State
31	Mar 2, 2017	No fewer than 10 persons were killed in renewed hostilities between herdsmen and farmers in Mbahimin community in Gwer East LGA,	Benue State
32	Mar 11, 2017	7 people were killed in Mkgovur village, a Tiv Community in Buruku L.G.A.	Benue State
33	Mar. 27, 2018	1 killed, 1 injured, women raped in their farms in a suspected Herdsmen attack in Adam Village, Kwande LGA.	Benue State
34	May 8, 2017	3 persons were killed. In clash between herdsmen and farmers in Tse-Akaa village, Ugondo Mbamar District of Logo LGA,	Benue State
35	Dec.31 17/	Suspected Fulani herdsmen-turned gunmen also visited	Benue State

Logic of Open Grazing in Nigeria: Interrogating the Effects on Sustainable Development”, in *International Journal of Family Business and Management Studies*, 2(1), 2018. Pp. 1-17.

The Nature of the Conflicts

The nature of weapons that are reported to be used in the execution of attacks on farmers in the recent past has been quite disturbing. According to Apenda, “before now, conflicts between the herders and farmers, when they took a dimension that could be referred to as dangerous, involved the use of traditional weapons such as machetes, bows and arrows. The nature of weapons used now include but are not limited to locally made pistols, dane guns, rifles, sub-machine guns, light machine guns and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Islamic terrorist groups to which Fulani herders are close with, look to Chad, Niger and Cameroon for their weapons.”³⁸

Field investigation carried out by MISEREOR’S partners interventions in Nigeria found out that weapons are becoming increasingly common on all sides, and that they are more and more sophisticated. Unlicensed guns are theoretically illegal but are smuggled with impunity from a variety of directions. They are imported into the creeks of the Niger Delta for local use but also sold on to create an income stream. Similarly, they can be bought and sold by insurgents in the Northeast, taking advantage of the vacuum in authority created by Boko Haram.³⁹

The attacks on the Tiv farmers by the Fulani herders were also reported to be coordinated and spontaneous in nature. For example, the nine local

government namely Guma, Katsina-Ala, Gwer west, Makurdi, Logo Agatu, and Kwande which came under direct attacks by the herders, were attacked spontaneously with high level of coordination planning, calculation and execution of never been experience in the state. The conflict has turned terrorists in pattern and dimension.⁴⁰ Attacks were characterized by large-scale destruction of farmlands and property, rape, robbery, abduction, and displacement of farmers. Several farming communities report receiving letters from herders that warns of an impending attack.⁴¹

The nature and extent of the attacks, it appears, goes beyond the issue of contestation over environmental resources and grazing fields and includes a designed plan to evict and occupy Christian populated communities and villages. If this observation is correct, then it means that the attack on Christians in the affected areas is an indication that the Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsman's continued attacks on Benue communities are driven by religious rather than ethnic considerations.⁴²

Causes of Herders Farmers' Conflicts in Benue State

There is no doubt that several causes are implicated in the eruption of violent conflicts between herders and farmers in Benue state. Several researches that are carried out in the area to determine the causes of skirmishes have unraveled many causes. For instance in a research conducted by Musa et al,⁴³ in Guma local government area one of the most affected LGAs in the state unraveled these causes. Crop

destruction by cattle, the role of traditional authorities, contamination of water, overgrazing on fallow ground, sexual harassment by nomads, harassment of nomads by host communities, defecation of cattle on roads, cattle theft by host communities, bush burning and stray cattle. The same causes mentioned above were unraveled in another study conducted by Ogebe et al,⁴⁴ in Gwer West Local government area of the state. They specifically pointed out that:

Communal conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and host communities usually arise when grazing cattle are not properly controlled and consequently graze on cultivated crops like cassava, maize, rice and other cereals of host communities. Attempts by the owners of such farms to register their grievance of destruction of their livelihood (food crops and cash crops) by the cattle of Fulani herdsmen is always stoutly resisted thereby degenerating into communal conflicts. Host communities sometimes register their grievances by placing restrictions on movement and grazing of cattle in designated areas and enforcing compliance through coercive measures decreed by the host community. The decree may take the shape of killing stray cattle or arresting and prosecution defaulters. When the communities attempt to moderate their activities or request their exit, the Fulani herdsmen usually become aggressive and

attack the host community sometimes with the assistance of hired mercenaries. The attack often occur at midnight making the host communities more vulnerable.⁴⁵

It is an undisputable fact that these causes cuts across all the local government areas of the state. Some have further argued that the conflicts between the duo has ethnic and religious connotation. For instance, a security expert in Benue State claimed that the ongoing Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsman's clash with sedentary farmers definitely has serious religious undertones.⁴⁶

Several other factors are also advanced by scholars and analysts of the herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria. To Fumilayo, these factors include, limited land resources, increase in human population, free access to illegal arms, porous Nigerian borders, deforestation, language and cultural barriers etc''⁴⁷ The international crises group equally identified these factors as the major drivers of violence between herders and farmers in Nigeria. These factors include, drought and desertification, loss of grazing reserves, changes in pastoralism and farming practices, rural banditry and cattle rustling and escalating conflicts across northern Nigeria.⁴⁸ To Ningxin Li, population growth, poverty factor, territorial factor as well as religion and cultural identity accounts for violent clashes between herders and farmers in n Nigeria.⁴⁹ Whatever, the causes or factors are. It is important to note here that these causes or factors do not occur ones at a time to trigger conflicts. A single or combination of these causes

and factors has at different times led to these conflicts which have assumed an alarming and destructive dimension in the recent years.

Benue State Government's Response to Herders-Farmers Conflicts

The Constitutional Basis of the Response

It is the primary responsibility of the government to ensure the protection of lives and property of her citizens. This responsibility is enshrined in the constitution. In Nigeria, Section 1 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 is supreme and no any person or group of persons take control the government of Nigeria or any part of Nigeria except in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution; and section 2 Nigeria shall be one and indivisible Sovereign State with a federation of States and the Federal Capital Territory. And has a wide range of objectives and rights to citizens based on democracy and social justice, for example section 17 (3) (a) requires the State to make policies to ensure that (a) all citizens without discrimination on any group whatsoever have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunities to secure suitable employment This means both herdsmen and farmer are to be protected to move around to practice their business in accordance with the law of the State. However fundamental freedoms (section 37 rights to private and family life, section 38 right to freedom of thoughts conscience and religion. Section 39 has limit to any person or group of persons would exercise it. Section 45 of the Constitution of the Federal

Republic of Nigeria 1999 States “(1) Nothing in section 37,38,39,40,and 41 of this constitution shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society:- (a) in the interest of defense, public safety, public order, public morality or Thus just as the herdsmen and indeed any other group of persons have a right to migrate to any part of the country the law does not allow the destruction of host communities life culture household property and land.⁵⁰

The Open Grazing Prohibition and Establishment of Ranches Law, 2017

In response to these rising tensions and cycles of attacks, the Benue State Government passed legislation that banned open grazing on May 22, 2017. The law prohibited the open grazing of livestock or the practice of allowing cattle to roam freely in search of pasture and water, beginning on November 1, 2017 and called instead for the establishment of ranches within the state. The Open Grazing Prohibition and Establishment of Ranches Law, 2017 was met with stiff opposition. For instance, the punch newspaper on January 9th 2018 reported that the umbrella body of the cattle breeders in the country the Miyetti Allah cattle breeders association maintained that “the anti open grazing law in Benue State aimed at regulating cow grazing in the state must be modified for peace to reign”⁵¹

However, the Governor Dr. Samuel Ortom maintained his earlier stand that “no amount of opposition and intimidation will stop the implementation of the anti-grazing law in the

state”.⁵² It must also be said that a vast majority of Nigerian were highly in support of the law and the stand of governor which earned him several awards.

Effects of Herders-Farmers conflicts on Food Security in Benue state

Since what constitutes food security has four main dimensions which are availability, accessibility, utilization and stability, a proper understanding of the negative effects of the herders –farmer’s conflicts in Benue state from 20011-2018 can only be done within the confines of these dimensions. Thus, the effects of herders- farmer’s conflicts in Benue state from 20011-2018 is examined under the following food security dimensions.

Food Production and Availability

Since the eruption of violent confrontations by these two agriculturists, the farmers and herders, it consequence or effects on food security in the state and nation at large has been grave. The food production capacity of Benue State known as “Food Basket of the Nation” has reduced to from production capacity of 100% to about 65%. This is because agro inputs are rarely found because marketers have taken to their heels, crops on the farm lands destroyed, most farmers especially those whose lives have not been exterminated have taken to their heels. One greatest consequence of this is that the economic base of and activities of the people of Benue State have been greatly affected arising from the abandonment of their various communities by the farmers for their dear lives.⁵³ Moreover,

Abughdyer stated that “a total of 664.4 hectares (56.4%) of farmland were destroyed in Benue state between 2010-2014 in three local governments of Agatu, Guma and Logo as a result of farmers and herders crises. This development portends a great danger for food production in Nigeria since the state is the hub of the nation’s food security.”⁵⁴

Moreover, a major cost resulting from Fulani herders-farmers conflicts is drop-in national agricultural productivity and its attendant implication on national wealth formation and the earnings of farmers. The attraction of agriculture is sustained productivity, which helps to offset operational costs and ensures profitability. The driver of the agricultural sector is not livestock production but crop production.⁵⁵ Thus, the reduction in crop production has implications on the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). The major effect of herders-farmers conflicts is disruption and reduction in the productivity of agricultural activities, especially crop production. For instance, one of the theatres of herders-farmers conflicts is the River Benue axis. According to statistical records, the River Benue axis accounts for the production of 20,000 tones of grains annually. The conflicts in that axis have had a negative effect on the sustenance of this productive capacity.⁵⁶ A necessary fallout of low agricultural output as a result of the herders-farmers’ incessant crisis is deepening poverty in these theatres of conflicts as well as adjoining or neighbouring communities. The atmosphere of insecurity and uncertainty created by the conflicts generally reduces the capacity of both groups to produce optimally.

Approximately 132, 818 are said to be facing IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) levels of food insecurity in Benue. 57 Furthermore, Governor Samuel Ortom:

The state has also suffered social dislocations in the form of internal displacement. Statistics show that over 180,000 persons registered in eight officially designated Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in most part of 2018 while over 500,000 displaced people have turned into “refugees” in their various localities as they squat in uncompleted buildings in the most deplorable conditions.⁵⁸

It is imperative to stress here that all these huge number of people that languishing in several Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in the state are farmers and they have been in these camps for almost two years now without carrying out farming activities. Some who made attempts to visit their homes where they fled to see if they could carry out some farming are reported to be killed as nobody can trace their where about.

Income of Farmers

In March 2017, Benue state Governor Samuel Ortom asserted that attacks by herders coming from more northerly states, and possibly also from Cameroon and Niger, had cost his state N95 billion (about \$634 million at that time) between 2012 and 2014.⁵⁹ A study conducted by Apenda Isaac Tersoo titled “An Assessment of the Impact of Farmers-Herder’s Conflict on Food Security in Benue State” Nigeria

came up with a result which clearly reveals the negative impact of these skirmishes on the annual income Tiv farmers. Data was collected and analyzed on socio-economic variables of the respondents. The research showed the agricultural output of the sampled respondents before and during Fulani herdsmen attack on Tiv farmers in Benue state (197). The result revealed 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. ⁶⁰

The Market Prices of Food Product

The herders - farmers conflicts also greatly affected the prices of agricultural products in the markets particularly food items. According to Emmanuel Abara Benson “a likely decline in food production

may affect the economy is the hike in food prices. This is where average Nigerian families stand the risk of being directly affected. This is because the prices of foodstuff in the market increase when the amount of food produced is low.”⁶¹ Similarly, the International Crisis Group notes that “the loss of large cattle herds, crops (due to population displacements and damage to irrigation facilities), as well as increases in transport and labour costs in post-conflict environments all increase poverty and food insecurity in affected communities – and beyond.”⁶²

In September 2013, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) had warned that Sahel States in Northern Nigeria as are faced with severe food insecurity. The release mentions, “Poor families have used up their food stocks and are facing high food prices awaiting the next harvest.”⁶³ According to World Bank’s Food Price Watch, 2014, Food price shocks can be responsible for the origination and continuation of conflict and, more generally, political instability.⁶⁴ In 2019, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) equally stated that “A sharp rise in food prices can significantly affect household consumption and nutrition particularly in developing economies where food account for a larger share of family budgets than in developed countries”⁶⁵ These sharp rise in prices are attributed the effects of conflicts

In Benue state to be specific, majority of IDPs have identified food as their most pressing need. They have limited food access as their stocks were looted and there is little access to replenish farm stocks. Staple food and cash crop production is below

average in the state. Prices remain extremely high around the country and are expected to continue increasing due to current inflation and recession. Conflict affected households thus face additional strain in accessing staple food due to their reduced purchasing power.⁶⁶

The Nutritional Status of the people

In Nigeria, an estimated 1.9 million children suffer from severe acute malnutrition, placing them at immediate risk of premature death. An estimated 71 percent of children and 48 percent of women of reproductive age are anemic (Stevens et al. 2013). Women's nutrition is of particular concern, with a double burden of thinness (11 percent) and obesity (25 percent).⁶⁷

Moreover, a report by Mercy Corps in 2015 noted that an average household in these conflict-prone communities would experience at least a 64 percent or potentially 210 percent decrease in income due to conflicts. This is so because most of them would be afraid to pursue their livelihoods over long stretches of time for security reasons. The impact is the deepening of food insecurity leading to famine, which will inevitably engender malnutrition, an outbreak of preventable diseases, stunting in children and a rise in child and maternal mortality.⁶⁸ On the other hand the United States Agency For International Development (USAID), 2018 Report on Assessing Drivers of Malnutrition in Nigeria from Kebbi, Niger, Benue, and Cross River revealed that:

In the four target states, accessing formal

markets is a challenge because of the inability to meet quality standards. When farmers cannot meet industry specifications, as with most crops, they face low, unreliable incomes from sales; and they are less likely to be able to afford nutritious diets and health services. Additionally, local markets are probably selling products that do not meet food safety standards, increasing the risk to local consumers—including the farming households—of consuming foods with toxins or chemicals.⁶⁹

The causes of malnutrition and food insecurity in Nigeria are multifaceted and include poor infant and young child feeding practices, which contribute to high rates of illness and poor nutrition among children under 2 years; lack of access to healthcare, water, and sanitation; armed conflict, etc.⁷⁰

Food Stability

The increase in the number of attacks on farmsteads by herders has prompted many farmers to abandon their land at the peak of the harvest season, especially in the north-central state of Benue. Benue, referred to as the “food basket of the nation”, has seen its food production ratio decrease by 45 per cent, as farms are abandoned and large quantities of foodstuffs are set ablaze by herdsman or used as cattle feed. This situation threatens the food security not only of Benue, but Nigeria as a whole.⁷¹

That concern was also raised by the Benue State

Commissioners of Agriculture, who stated that a food crisis will occur this year and probably also in 2019, if violence between farmers and herders continues. There is already a shortage of vegetables in a number of states in north-central Nigeria and the prices of beef and milk have risen dramatically. Food prices are likely to rise in other parts of the country also, as large parcels of fertile farmland are turned into pasture or, worse, left unused. Herder-farmer clashes are likely to continue to threaten Nigerian food security until an agreement can be brokered between the two groups.⁷²

Benue State plays a vital role in Nigeria's agriculture sector. Many of the country's staple foods and commercial crops such as tomatoes, rice, cotton, yam, cassava and maize are produced there. Most, if not all of the farming activities in Benue State take place in secluded villages where Fulani herdsmen and farmers often clash due to the destruction of farmlands by the herders' livestock. This generational dispute has lasted throughout much of Nigeria's independence, but it may now affect the nation more than ever.⁷³ Analyzing the effects of herders and farmers conflicts on food stability and security in Benue state and Nigeria at large J.P. Okoro questioned that:

Looking at the contribution of agriculture to national development, it is dangerous for Nigeria to continue with such conflicts that is capable of reducing her agricultural outputs. If farmers are not farming, crops are

not planted, and livestock are destroyed, then what would the teeming population who are not in anywhere close to any government job or any government social intervention do? Also Benue State which has been known as the food basket of the Nation has gradually become the hotbed of the crises. How do we now continue to provide food for the nation?⁷⁴

Extrapolating from the above, it is glaring that the herders and farmers conflicts in Benue state have greatly affected food production, distribution and consumption in the state and Nigeria at large and this ugly trend will continue if nothing is done to urgently address it.

Conclusion

As far as the issue of herders-farmers conflicts in Benue State and Nigeria as a whole are concerned, the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017 of Benue State, is the perfect solution. The nomadic system was appropriate when humans and animals populations were small and land was huge just as the system of shifting cultivation was appropriate. But over the last couple of decade populations of both have exploded fallow periods have been drastically reduced and weather patterns have changed. In this 21st century when the whole world has to pay serious attention to the issues of environment and agricultural production, there can be no place for the nomadic system of animal production. It is complete illegality for Herdsmen who have not acquired such lands to

invade Benue State when it is a known fact that, over grazing drastically reduces vegetation and breakdown is an irretrievable and widespread devastation scale of the natural regulatory mechanisms of the planet earth which are very necessary for crop production. Ranching therefore remains the best global practice in solving the challenge of herders –farmer’s conflicts.⁷⁵ The incidences of attacks that are still recorded in the state can be attributed to lack of recognition and full acceptability of the law by the herdsmen and their leaders, the Federal Government of Nigeria and its full implementation in the state.

Recommendations

The recommendations in this paper are not and cannot be outside the Benue State Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017 as it provides the best model for addressing these skirmishes in the interest of both parties. Thus, to permanently tackle the challenge of herders-farmer’s clashes in the state and its attendant consequences on food security, this paper recommends that:

1. Herdsmen and their leaders should give full recognition and acceptance of the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017 in Benue State for peace to reign. The federal government should equally give recognition, acceptability and support to the law.
2. As a matter of urgency the federal government should aid the Benue State Government to resettle the thousands of people internally

- displaced camps in the state to their ancestral homes for them to continue with agricultural production.
3. There is need to establish a Middle Belt Development Commission as advocated by some national legislators in the state just like the Niger Delta Development Commission and the North- East Development Commission in order to address the critical infrastructural issues in the region as a result of herders-farmers conflicts
 4. The Benue State Government should strengthen her efforts at the implementation of the law through the livestock guards. They should recruit more people who will be posted in all the local government areas to intensity surveillance
 5. The Nigeria Immigration Service and other relevant security agencies should intensity their efforts at checking the influx of illegal migrants especially armed herdsmen in the country from the neighboring countries
 6. The Federal and State Governments should evolve deliberate policies to boost agricultural production
 7. The Benue State Government should revive and modernize already existing ranches such as the Caney Ranch in Ikyogen Kwande Local Government Area which was established by Governor Aper Aku. The state government should also designate specific places for ranching
 8. The Federal Government should turn the

grazing reserves in the northern part of the country into Ranches. Ranches in Kastina, Kebbi, Jigawa, Zamfara, Yobe, Borno, Adamawa and Gombe would not only protect the environment but would transform their local economics.

9. The police and other relevant security agencies should intensify their efforts at the implementation of the Benue state anti-open grazing and ranches establishment law. They should also be more prompt in responding to reports of suspected intending attacks.
10. The farmers and herders dialogue and peaceful coexistence to guarantee increase crop and cattle production in meeting the dietary and nutritional needs of Benue citizens and Nigerians as well as ensure foreign exchange earnings.

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