



## EFFECT OF HERDSMEN AND CROP FARMER CRISIS ON LIVELIHOOD OF FARMING HOUSEHOLDS IN KOGI STATE NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The crisis between herdsmen and crop farmers have escalated in recent years from North Central region of Nigeria, threatening the livelihood of farming households which has unraveled the country's social fabric, displaced some of the populace and resulted in a steady deterioration in the political and social activities of the country as a whole. This study examined the effect of herdsmen and crop farmer crisis on livelihood of the farming households in Kogi State, Nigeria. A simple random selection of 80 farmers from Oke-Dayo, Kabba Bunu rural locality of Kogi State was used for the study. A well-structured questionnaire was used for the data collection and descriptive Statistics were used to analyse the data generated from respondents. The study showed a good participation of female (male; 55%, female; 45%) in farming and revealed that the major causes of conflicts in the study area were uncontrolled grazing. Most of the crisis were yet unresolved in the study area. Meanwhile, farmland productivity was 87.5% before the herdsmen-crop farmers crisis resulting in increased crop production but after the clash, farmland became 60 % unproductive, in which 97.3% of crops were either destroyed or affected. Livestock and animal production were also affected.

**Keywords:** Herdsmen, Crop Farmer, Crisis, Livelihood

### INTRODUCTION

Over 90 per cent of pastoralists are reportedly Herdsmen, a large ethnic group straddling several West and Central African countries. These herdsmen (the world's largest semi-nomadic group) live in fourteen West and Central African countries, from Senegal to Central African Republic. They established the Sokoto caliphate (1804- 1903) (International Crisis Group, 2017). Pastoralists own approximately 90 per cent of the national herd, estimated at 19.5 million cattle, about 975,000 donkeys, 28,000 camels, 72.5 million goats and 41.3 million sheep (FMARD, 2011). Most of the Herdmen people herd sheep, goats and cattle across the dry grass lands of their environs. The main Herdmen sub groups in Nigeria are: Fulbe Gombe, Fulbe Adamawa, Fulbe Sokoto, Fulbe Mbororo, and Fulbe Borgu (Kasarachi, 2016).

Protracted conflicts around the world have been a main cause of a rise in global hunger in recent years. Conflicts are also driving the dramatic increase in the number of forcibly displaced people—from 40 million people in 2011 to almost 66 million in 2016 (UNHCR, 2017; World Bank, 2017). Rural areas are bearing the brunt of these conflicts with its populace being most severely affected (FAO et al., 2017). Conflict is often compounded by drought and other climate shocks, exacerbating the impacts on rural food security and livelihoods. Conflicts between farmers and herdsmen have been a regrettably common feature in the West African sub region at large and Nigeria in particular (Tonah, 2006).

In the period before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the challenge was mainly recorded along the savanna regions of West Africa. Cattle rearing were mainly prevalent in the Guinea, Sudan and Sahel savanna belts where crop production was carried out only during the short rainy seasons on a small-scale basis. This gave the cattle herders access to a vast area of grass land in the region. With the passage of time and the introduction of irrigation in agriculture, these herdsmen in an attempt to search for pasture and water to sustain their cattle had to move

southward to the coastal zone where the rainy season is longer and the adverse impact of dry season on vegetation is not as intense as it is in the savanna region. The large number of wild animals and the fear of losing animals to diseases, especially trypanosomiasis however prevented these herdsmen from settling in the southern zone permanently (Blench, 1994).

Recent study by Ogbette et. al (2018) have shown that serious conflict frequently erupt between herdsmen and crop farmers leading to loss of lives and valuable properties. The conflict has not only brought insecurity, but has also demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the food crisis in Nigeria due to loss of farmer lives, crops and valuable properties. The nomadic herdsmen have been in conflict with local farmers, especially in the middle belt, over the access and control of lands on which their cattle graze. Since 2015, several violent clashes between the herdsmen and farmers have been reported in many parts of the country particularly in states including Benue, Kogi Nasarawa, Enugu, Edo, Ondo, Delta, Ekiti, Abia and the Southern part of Kaduna state. These attacks have had dire consequences for the country especially in terms of loss of lives, valuable properties and communities destroyed and there have been negative impacts on national security. Herdsmen and crop farmers clashes have become a major threat to the development and national security of Nigeria. The increased operation has caused diversion of government attention on some key areas of the economy, as huge amount of human and material resources are channeled into curbing the menace (Kelechi, 2010).

Herdsmen and farmers crisis no doubt have negative impact on the lives, property, food security and educational development in Nigeria. Though, there is the dearth of quantitative evaluation of the catastrophic attacks, available statistics has it that between June 2015 to December, 2016 Human Rights Watch in 2017 reported that an estimate of 50 people were killed in Egor, Nasarawa state and Agatu/Logo

Benue state in June 2016. On February 5th 2018, there was crisis between herdsmen and farmers which claimed lives at Oke Dayo, in Kabba Bunu of Kogi state. The herdsmen attack has claimed thousands of lives, destruction of farmlands and valuable properties worth several billions of naira in the country. The study therefore seeks to examine the effect of herdsmen and crop farmer crisis on livelihood of farming households in Kogi State Nigeria.

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Kogi state, Nigeria. The state was created on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1991 out of the former Benue and Kwara state of Nigeria with Lokoja being the headquarter. The state is known as the confluence state, as the river Niger and river Benue meet in this state. The state lies between latitude 6°30N and 8°48N and longitude 5°23E and 7°48E the state occupies 29,833 km<sup>2</sup> and covers 10,838.67m<sup>2</sup>. Out of the total land area, only about 2 million hectares is cultivable with only about 0.5 million hectares are under cultivation. The population of the state going by the 2006 census was 3,278,487 people and was projected to reach about 4.37 million in 2015 (Olatunde and Adejoh, 2017; national population census, 2006). The state climate is characterized by both wet and dry season with an annual rainfall ranging between 800-1100mm between the month of April and September while the dry season is usually between October and March. The temperature of the state ranges between 22.8°C and 33.2°C (Kogi state government, 2007; Olatunde and Adejoh, 2017).

Interview and structured questionnaire were used in collecting primary data. The primary data contains a direct or original account of event or phenomena given by someone who actually observed the crisis. The Secondary Data are relevant information obtained from the works of others-Textbooks, journals, magazine and unpublished articles, Research and project reports in a related field, Manuals containing policy statement of the selected companies.

The target population is the farming households in Oke Dayo, Kabba-Bunu local government rural locality of Kogi state. The

sampling technique involves a simple random selection of 80 farmers from the study area. The respondents were therefore subjected to well structure questionnaires. Data were analysed using descriptive statistical tools- mean, mode and frequency distribution.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### Socio-Economic characteristics of farmers

From Table 1, most of the respondents are male (55%) while the remaining (45%) are females. This result shows that most population involved in farming in the study area are male, it shows a good participation of females also in farming. A study by Olayemi et al (2012) stated that women are known to be more involved in agricultural activities than men in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries. The involvement and participation of men in the agricultural activities cannot be undermined. Age is a very important factor in agricultural production because it has impact on efficiency and production level. The mean age of the sampled farmers was 45 years while 63.7 percent falls below 26 years of age, 25.0% have their ages ranged from 26-35 years. 5% of the respondents are between 36-45 years while 6.3% of the sampled respondents are ranged 46 years and above. These findings shows that majority of the farmers in the study area are young able bodies men and women and it will surely enhance increased production in farming. It also shows that the future of agricultural production in the study area is certain. Data reported in table 1 indicates that there is stratification on the status of education in the study area. 41.3% are SSCE holders, 31.2% of them are diploma/ NCE holders, 20% are HND/BSC holders, 7.5% are post graduates. This indicates that almost half of the respondents have secondary certificate and others have at least tertiary institution certificates. A good educational background has always influence agricultural development positively; education is known to facilitate farmers understanding and use of improved crop production practices.

**Table 1: Socio-Economic characteristics of farmers**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	44	55
Female	36	45
Age		
Less than 26	51	63.7
27-35	20	25.0
36-45	4	5.0
46 and above	5	6.3
Marital Status		
Single	52	65
Married	28	35
Educational		
SSCE	33	41.3
Diploma/NCE	25	31.2
HND/degree	16	20.0
Postgraduate	6	7.5
Household Size		
0-5	51	63.8
6-10	27	33.7
11 and Above	2	2.5
Total	80	100

Source: Field data, 2021

### Causes of herdsmen and farmers crisis

The research results from table 2 shows that the major causes of conflicts in the study area are uncontrolled grazing, grazing without consent and destruction of crops. This corroborates with the study by Ajibefun (2018) and Adalakun et.al (2015) which revealed that the major cause of the conflict was destruction of crops. Also, a study by Ogboru and Osho (2018) indicated that livestock pastoralism has intensified in Nigeria in recent times, leading to greater environmental concerns and conflicts over access to natural resources. Provided the aforementioned problems continue there is every tendency for crisis outbreak, hence police and the customary

help to resolve conflict. Governments regard the peace and unity of Nigeria as paramount and non-negotiable. 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 (Ahmed-Gamgum, 2018).

The research results shows that 78% of the crisis are still unresolved in the study area, this implies that there is still grievances on the part of farmers who are either not satisfied with verdict given in handling the menace or who are very much at loss over the dispute, thus proper punishment should be put in place to protect farmers and also compensation so as to serve as consolation for farmers.

**Table 2: Causes of herdsmen and farmers crisis**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Cause of conflicts		
Grazing without consent	16	20.0
Destruction of crops	56	70.0
Uncontrolled grazing	8	10.0
Who solves conflicts		
Customary	43	53.8
Police	37	46.3
Conflict status		
Resolved	8	10.0
Unresolved	72	90.0
TOTAL	80	100

Source: Field data, 2024

### Crisis impacts on household food security

The activities of herdsmen has a ravaging effect on food security and production. Table 3 shows that farmland productivity was 87.5% before the crisis and menace, production of crops was on the increase, after the actions and crisis of the herdsmen, farmland became 60 % unproductive. 97.3% of crops were either destroyed or affected and livestock and animal production was also affected. The aforementioned research result shows that the production of crops and

livestock which greatly contribute to food sufficiency and security in the study area has been greatly hindered by the actions of the herdsmen, their activities has been of negative impact on crop production and livestock rearing in the study area.

This menace of the herdsmen people has discouraged farmers from engaging in farming activities, this has poised a big threat to food security and unless necessary measure is been taken it will hinder the agricultural sector.

**Table 3: Crisis impacts on household food security**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Farmland before		
Productive	70	87.5%
Unproductive	10	13.5%
Farmland after		
Productive	20	25%
Unproductive	60	75%
Destruction of crop		
Yes	75	93.75%
No	5	6.25%
Reduction in animals		
Yes	71	88.75%
No	9	11.25%
TOTAL	80	100

SOURCE: Field data, 2024

### CONCLUSION

The crisis between herdsmen and farmers have escalated in recent years from North Central region of Nigeria and are spreading southward threatening the livelihood of farming households which has unraveled the country's social fabric, displaced some of the population and resulted in a steady deterioration in the political, security and stability of the country. This work has discussed the incessant clashes

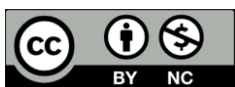
between the herdsmen and crop farmers in Kogi state. It also highlighted the major causes of the violent clashes between the herdsmen and farmers which include the competition for land, water etc. Some other reasons for the clashes between the two groups include the acquisition of sophisticated weapons by herdsmen in contrast to their traditional sticks, bows, arrows and in some cases swords. Also, certain government policies on the matter appear not effective in

finding solution to the conflicts because there are still grievances on the part of farmers who are either not satisfied with verdict given in handling the menace or who are very much at loss over the dispute. Moreover, the incidences of cattle rustling provoke reprisal attacks which result in killings and destruction of villages by herdsmen. On the whole, the herdsmen and the farmers are stakeholders in the economic development of Nigeria. The issues which cause violent clashes between the two groups could be amicably resolved in the over-all interest of sustainable economic growth, national cohesion and stability. The study therefore recommends that there should be legislation to remedy the effect of desertification in the Sahel region, Government should come up with policies to create grazing reserves and dams for pasture and so they do not stray long distances in search of pastures. The government of Kogi State should also introduce programs that will encourage the farmers to remain in agriculture sector. Similarly, proper security measures should be put in place to protect farmers and their farmlands and they should as well be compensated to serve as consolation for farmers.

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