

Farmer-Herder Clashes and the Quest for Food Security in Nigeria: A Beam on Agatu

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Abstract

Agatu is one community with an apparently high and uncommon frequency in its record of farmer-herder clash in recent times. Given its predominant farming population, the lack of peace and tranquility in this food basket, certainly has obvious implications for the nation's quest for food security. This study interrogated the farmer-herder palava and its implications for the nation's food security with a focus on the Agatu community in Benue state of Nigeria. Data was obtained from secondary materials including books, journals, magazines, periodicals, newspapers, the internet etc. The theory of peace and development Bennett (2008) was adopted as the theoretical framework while data analysis was by content analysis in respect of the secondary data. Results from analyses yielded insights into the negative consequences and setbacks to the nation's quest for food security occasioned by clashes. Hence, the study suggested that government comes on top of the security situation in the Agatu community and its environs if the nation's quest for food security will not remain a mirage.

Keywords: *Farmer, Herder, Clashes, Food security, Mirage*

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Background to the Study

Nigeria is one country where conflicts between pastoralists and farmers have been witnessed in many provinces leading to destruction of lives and property with implications for the nations' security. States like Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Taraba, Kebbi, Kaduna, and Zamfara amongst others in the northern region, have witnessed intense conflicts between farmers and herdsmen. This situation which is not confined to the northern region spreads across the southern parts including Oyo, Enugu and Imo. Olayoku (2014), observes that, “over 120 cases of farmers-herdsmen conflict were reported around the country between June, 2008 and May, 2014, leading to over 3700 deaths and over 61, 000 people injured”. During this period, crops and livestock running into billions of naira were destroyed, while thousands of people were displaced. Herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria often involve disputes over land and/or cattle between herders particularly with the Fulani and Hausa as well as farmers (for example the Tiv or Tarok).

The most affected states are those of the Nigerian Middle Belt like Benue, Taraba and Plateau. Since the fourth Nigerian republic which emerged in 1999, farmer-herder violence has killed thousands of people and also displaced tens of thousands more. This followed a trend in the increase in the farmer-herder conflicts throughout much of the western Sahel due to expansion of agricultural population and cultivated land at the expense of pasturelands, deteriorating environmental conditions, desertification and soil degradation, breakdown in traditional conflict solution mechanisms over land and water disputes; and proliferation of small arms and crimes in rural areas (Foreign Affairs, 2015).

Reports emanating from the Global Terrorism Index (2014), reveal that, “the Fulani militants using machine guns, attack villages to assault and intimidate farmers”. After killing about 80 people in total from 2010, they killed 1,229 in 2014. Most deaths occurred in the Nigerian Middle Belt, particularly the states of Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba where 847 deaths were recorded. In addition to terrorist attacks, Fulani militants were also involved in non-state armed conflicts with groups from Eggon, Jukun and Tiv farming communities. These conflicts resulted in 800 deaths by 2015. The year 2016 saw further incidents in Agatu, Benue and Nimbo, Enugu state.

Statement of the Research Problem

Among the Tiv and other farmers in the North-central, south-south, south-east and North-eastern regions, cases of conflicts with herdsmen are endless. The usual effects are loss of lives and crops, destruction of properties, displacement of persons, decline in income/savings, as well as threat to food and national security. Besides, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) recently placed Nigeria's Fulani herdsmen as the world's fourth deadliest militant group as they account for about 1,229 deaths in 2014. Thus, “while Boko Haram was associated with about 330 casualties in the first quarter of 2016, the Fulani herdsmen accounted for nearly 500 deaths and have shown no sign of slowing down” (GTI, 2015). Against this background, “it has been predicted that the Fulani herdsmen might well surpass Boko Haram as Nigeria's most dangerous group” (Burton, 2016; GII, 2015). Given the high incidence of such attacks by these herders on Agatu, a major food basket in the Benue state of Nigeria, this study is

constrained to investigate the implications of the menace for the nation's quest for food security.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study is to investigate the farmer-herder imbroglio and the quest for food security in Nigeria with a focus on the Agatu community in Benue state. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- a. Assess the farmer-herder clash in the Agatu community of Benue state and its implications for the accessibility of food supplies.
- b. Examine the herder-farmer clash in Agatu with its implications for the supply of animal protein.

Research Questions

Two questions will be addressed in this study. They include

- a. How does the farmer-herder clash in Agatu affect food accessibility to Nigerians in general?
- b. What is the effect of the farmer-herder clash on the supply of animal protein to Nigerians?

Literature Review

Conceptual Clarification

Farmer: A farmer is also called agriculture and is defined by Dyer (2007) as, “a person engaged in agriculture, raising living organisms for food or raw materials.” The term usually applies to people who do some combination of raising field crops, orchards, vineyards, poultry, or livestock. A farmer might own the farmed land or work as a laborer on land owned by others. However, in advanced economies, a farmer is usually a farm owner, while employees of the farm are known as farm workers.

Pastoralism/herders: The definition of pastoralism varies greatly in terms of purposes and focuses (e.g intentional, extensional, descriptive, stipulate, etc). In the dimension of production, pastoralism is animal husbandry, the branch of agriculture concerned with the care, tending, and use of grazing livestock in dry or cold rangeland. In the dimension of livelihood, pastoralism is “a subsistence living pattern of tending-herds of large animals” (Blench, 2001) or a “successful livelihood strategy on less productive lands through livestock herding” (IFAD, 2008). A “pastoral system” is defined as a system occurring in rangeland area where livestock grazing is the predominant form of land use” (FAO, 2002). Blench (2001), summarizes that, “cattle and sheep are broadly raised as pastoral herds, by ranchers in North America and Australia and by herders in Africa, Europe, and Asia” A pastoral system is “characterized by relatively large herd or flock sizes, a high proportion of females, and more steers than oxen in the case of cattle” (FAO, 2002).

Food Security: According to World Food Summit (1996), “food security exists when all people, at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. Four major dimensions evolve from this definition as follows:

- a. Physical availability of food: Food availability focuses on the “supply side” of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels and net trade.
- b. Economic and physical access to food: This refers to adequate supply of food at the national or international level which does not in itself, guarantee household level of food security.
- c. Food Utilization: Utilization is often viewed in terms of how the body makes the most use of various nutrients in the food.
- d. Stability of the other three dimensions overtime: Even when one's food intake is adequate today, he/she is still considered to be food insecure where there is no adequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of the individual status. Factors like weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices) may affect one's food security status.

In the past few decades, food security as a concept has been considered at global, national, regional, state, household and individual levels. In the early years “food security implied arrangement for providing minimum level of food gains for the population in the developing countries during years of normal as well as poor harvest”(Rentlinger, 1977). Official concepts of food security need be mentioned for further clarifications of its meaning. In this vein, United Nations (1975) view the concept as, “availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic food stuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices”. The FAO in 1983, expanded the concept to include; securing access by vulnerable people to available supplies, implying that attention should be balanced between the demand and supply sides of the food security equation. It defined the concept as, “ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need” (FAO, 1983).

Empirical Review

This section reviews past and present works on the subject matter in a tabular form as follows:

Table 1: Past and Present works on Farmers-Herder Clashes in Nigeria

Surname of Researcher (s) Title of study/year Time frame of study	Geographical and content scope covered	Data sources and analytical tools	Results/findings/conclusions
Imo (2017). The Demographic implications of nomadic herdsman and farmers clashes in Nigeria	Nigeria: The paper examined the demographic implications resulting from nomadic herdsman and farmers clashes. Thus, it concentrated on variables such as population and land.	Data was sourced from secondary materials obtained from various texts across the country. It leveraged on the Malthusian population theory.	The paper discovered that the scenario has time without number thrown up tribal, ethnic, regional, religious and political sentiments which threaten the corporate existence of Nigeria. It recommended that government should ensure that those involved in the allocation of land for farming should imbibe responsibility and not locate along cattle route or over grazing lands to avoid encroachment by nomadic herdsman.
Fajonyomi, Fatile, Bello, Opusunju and Adejunwon (2018). Farmers-Herdsman conflicts and food security in North central geopolitical zone of Nigeria.	Nigeria: The Study Examined The Effect of Farmers Herdsman conflicts on food production. The focus was the north central geopolitical zone. Specifically, it drew its study, population from states including Kogi, Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa, Niger, Kwara, and the federal capital territory, Abuja.	Primary data were obtained from farmers, villagers, traditional rulers and NGOs across the North central zone by means of questionnaires. Data were tested and verified using mean, simple percentages, correlation and regression.	The results indicate a significant relationship food availability and insecurity; stability of food supply and displacement of people as well as the availability of food and disability and death in the north central geo-political zone of Nigeria. The study recommended government policies that monitor and stock attacks by herdsman.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Peace and Development (Barnett, 2008)

John Barnet articulated some important relationships between peace and development in theory. This article was an effort to link Galtung's (1969) theory of 'peace as the absence of violence' with Sen's (1999) theory of 'development as freedom'. This theory of peace is a wider notion of peace that includes more than the absence of direct physical violence. It does not however, advocate an open-ended approach such as that associated with Galtung's (1969) classic formulation of 'structural violence', which has been criticized for being so broad that, 'violence' becomes so ubiquitous as to be meaningless (Bufacchi 2005; Lawler, 1995).

The freedoms that most matter for development, or what Sen (1999), calls 'the crucial instrumental freedoms', include: economic opportunities (for example, the freedom of women to seek employment and the freedom of individuals to interact to seek mutually advantageous outcomes in terms of consumption and production); political freedoms (for example, freedom of speech, freedom of the media, civil liberties and the freedom to vote; social opportunities (for example, the opportunity to access education and healthcare and to participate in social life). Peace as freedom suggests that the means and ends of peace and development practices should be to ensure the equitable distribution of economic

opportunities, political freedoms, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, protective security and freedom from direct violence. It is a theory that merges some of the most useful aspects of both the Galtung and Sen's theories and, hopefully, avoids some of its pitfalls. It is a view that merges peace and development into one single framework. The theory sums up in the fact that 'peace' and 'development' are both sides of the same coin.

Research Methodology

In this qualitative study, data obtained from secondary sources are analyzed by content analysis in the following order:

Research Question One (1): How do the farmer-herder clashes in Agatu affect food accessibility to Nigerians in general?

According to Nnamani, Orjinta and Ihejirika (2018), “farmer-herder conflict has assumed very dangerous dimension with unimaginable consequences for food security”. All States in the north central geopolitical zones have experienced one form of attack or the other resulting in poor food production. This is why Adams, Atelhe and Emanuel (2017) in their study observed that, “the conflict in Agatu in Benue State has degenerated to the mass movement of people from their original home abandoning their farming activities. Similarly, Nasarawa, Plateau and Kogi States are experiencing the menace of farmers-herders conflicts”. The implication of these conflicts in all these communities is that, “economic activities including the production of food are often threatened to result in wide-spread hunger and malnutrition” (Okoli and Atelhe, 2013). Currently farmer-herder conflicts have heightened in dimension to the extent that casualties have continued to rise. Apart from constituting severe threats to the means of survival and livelihoods of both the farmer and the herdsmen, the conflict as observed by Eje, Angai, Abdullahi, Epe, Wudaba and Isiaku (2017), “have demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the insecurity and food crises particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts are localized with reverberating consequences nationwide”. Farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria has persisted and stands out as “ a threat to national food security, livestock production and eradication of poverty with farmers often regarded as the most vulnerable” (Dimelu, Salifu, Enwelu and Igbokwe, 2017). Food accessibility bothers on supply and prices. This has constituted a matter of grave concern to scholars who hold similar views on the issues.

For instance, Oti, Onyia and Umounyang (2017) and Anyabe, Atelhe and Sunday (2017) are unanimous in their position that, “farmer-herder conflicts have resulted in food scarcity due to destruction on farmlands, attack on farmers' homes by herdsmen and migration of people away from communities to IDP camps. They further share the view that the killing and destruction of farmland, crops, animals, etc, have drastically affected food supply within and outside the region resulting to high level of food importation into the country. Access to food cannot be enhanced with food importation as price cannot be within the reach of the average citizens. The state of inadequacy in food supply and the consequences of food accessibility is buttressed by the empirical research conducted by Fajonyomi, Fatile, Bello, Opusunju, Michael and Adejuwon (2018) on “Farmers/Herdsmen conflict and food security in north central Geo-political zone in Nigeria. The study revealed that, “there is a significant

relationship between the availability of food and insecurity, stability of food supply and displacement of people as well as the availability of food and disability and death in north central zone of Nigeria.”

Farmer-pastoralist conflicts are generally considered a negative phenomenon which often leads to loss of lives and properties which invariably impacts negatively on the community. The table below shows that reductions in farm production is the most serious effect, followed by increased poverty within and among the communities, social, insecurity and inadequate food supply for the family, respectively. Consequently, food items are scarce and there is a reduction in income leading to poverty. This may be far-fetched from why the manifestation of poverty was rated second highest effect of conflicts.

Table 2: Effects of Farmer-Herder Clashes

Effect	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate food for the family	80	66.7
Interruption dependent education	43	35.8
Reduction in health care provision in the family	58	48.3
Reduction in farm production	108	90
Increased poverty	92	66.7
Social insecurity	81	67.8
Scarcity of food items	100	83.3

Source: Field survey data 2004-2007

Economic Effect of the Farmer-Postoralist Conflicts

The table above shows that distortion in prices of goods and services accounting for 83%, Scarcity of food items 78.3% while social insecurity had 75%. It further shows that the first economic parameter often affected by a conflict situation is price of goods and services. This is so because this parameter is affected by other factors which include transport costs, labor, information, etc., Scarcity of food and its attendant high food prices is a very common feature in conflict situations as there is likely to be blockage in supply and the diversion to peaceful environment.

Research Question Two (2): What is the effect of the farmer-herder clash on the supply of animal protein to Nigeria?

Ofem and Inyang (2014) underscored a vital point as they posited that;

- a. Symbiotic relationship existed before now between nomads and the farmers in every new community they stop to take a rest. The residents of the host communities who are usually farmers derived free organic manure from cow dung and protein from the beef and dairy products while the nomads relied on the farm produce for food.

This was the scenario that played out in the past. In recent times however, the presence of the nomads and their cattle has provoked violent clashes in several communities across the country. Some scholars have accused the media of biased reporting on the issues. For instance,

in this study of the predicaments of the pastoralists and farmers, (John 2014) maintains “the existence of one-sided reporting” while Nformi, Juliet, Engwali and Nji (2014) revealed that, “farmer's encroachment on cattle routes is the real cause of clashes between them and nomads”. In his contribution, Haman (2002) revealed that, “the nomadic herdsman or grazers suffer from material damages when the crop farmers inflict physical injuries on the cattle by using cutlasses, spears, or guns or by poisoning the cattle”. The result is that as food items are lost, so also are this major source of animal protein as cows are also lost.

Reliable statistics on the extent of cattle and food losses are not easy to come by. A 2015 study revealed that, the economic toll has been huge despite human and material losses. The study found that on the average, the federal government was losing 13.7 billion dollars in revenue annually because of farmer-herder conflict in Benue, Kaduna and Plateau states”. It also stated that communities and households also pay a heavy price.

The ethnic Nzor-Tiv Global Association estimated its Agatu communities in Benue state lost N65 billion properties (204 million) during the early 2006 herder attacks. The loss of cattle herds, crops (due to population displacement and damage to irrigation facilities) as well as increases in transport and labor costs in post conflict environments all increase poverty and food insecurity in affected communities and beyond (Ujege, 2016).

A study by Apenda (2016), on an assessment of the impact of farmer-herders conflict on food insecurity in Benue state, found that “so many human lives were lost, farm lands, residence and schools were destroyed leading to a decline in farm output (causing food insecurity) and human capital loss”. Such food insecurity includes the protein component emanating from cattle losses as stated earlier.

Findings

The analysis in this study yielded a number of findings:-

1. The farmer-herder conflict has assumed very dangerous dimension with unimaginable consequences for food security in Nigeria.
2. All states in the North central geo-political zone have experienced one form of attack or the other resulting in poor food production.
3. The conflict in Agatu, Benue state, has degenerated to the mass movement of people from their original homes and abandoning their farming activities.
4. The consequences of crises in the local communities of Benue, Nasarawa and part of Benue have reverberating influences across the entire Nigerian nation.
5. The killings and destruction of farmlands, crops, animals, property, schools, churches, etc have drastically affected supply both in terms of animal protein and staples.
6. The situation has forced the nation into food importation with the adverse consequences of high food price which translates to reduced access to staples and animal protein.
7. The movement of people deprive them from their normal farm nomadic activities which result in reduced production.

Conclusion

This study employed the tool of content analysis to analyze secondary data sourced for the study. It was revealed that beyond Agatu, some other states in the North central geopolitical zone of the country have experienced one form of farmers-herdsmen clash which leads to movement of people out of their homes. Despite depriving such people their means of livelihood, it impoverished and led many to their untimely deaths. Livestock stocks (cattle), property, schools, churches, residential buildings, etc were destroyed. The overall consequences include, shortfall in supply of essential food materials as stapples, animal protein, etc. These constitute hindrances to the quest for food security in the country.

Suggestions

The federal government of Nigeria (FGN) must take the lead in initiating measures to stem the tide of farmer/herder clash in Nigeria if the goal of food security most be attained. Such steps must include:

1. Evolving an all-inclusive land tenure system that would take cognizance of the interest of the major parties in the conflict.
2. Measures should also be taken to map out regular grazing areas and routes throughout the county.
3. There must be a legal framework which must provide for the enforcement of the stipulated guidelines for farmers and herdsmen to reduce the incidence of conflicts.
4. Just as there are laws enshrined in the constitution on the protection of lives and property, special laws must be enacted for the protection of food crops and animals which constitute the major source of food stuffs and animal protein.
5. A special orientation campaign should be mounted to ensure the education and enlightenment of both parties to the conflict on the need for cooperation as they engaged in normal farming and grazing activities.

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