

Effect of Herders-Farmers Conflict on Food Security in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

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Abstract

The study is designed to assess the impact of Herders-Farmers Conflict on Food Security in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The study employed a social survey design to collect data from a large population by using a representative sample to generalize. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentages and results were narrated descriptively and tabulated according to the response area of the questionnaires collected. The study found that the struggle over land between farmers and herdsmen has affected crop production and the violent clashes between farmers and herders have greatly denied the people of Bassa access to quality, safe water, fish ponds, and enough food supply within and outside the community. Based on the findings, the study recommended that conflict management committees should be set up by the government to collaborate with farmers and herdsmen's unions and associations in creating comprehensive awareness and compliance with designated stock routes. Proper modalities should be put in place by the government to ensure a total end to these violent clashes between farmers and herders.

Keywords: *Food security, Farmers, Conflict, Pastoralism/herders, Conflict Management Strategy and Security.*

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Background to the Study

Agricultural production is crucial for the livelihood and economic sustenance of the majority of the Nigerian population. Farmers and herders play a significant role in meeting the nutritional needs of the country, contributing to food security at the individual, household, national, regional, and global levels. Food security is achieved when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2022). However, Nigeria's agricultural sector faces several challenges that impact its productivity, including poor land tenure systems, low levels of irrigation farming, climate change, and land degradation, among others. These challenges have stifled agricultural productivity, affecting the sector's contribution to the country's GDP and increasing food imports due to population rise, leading to declining levels of food sufficiency. With the increasing population, estimated to reach 400 million by 2050, enhanced agricultural productivity through adaptation of new technologies and innovations is necessary to ensure food security. Smallholder farmers produce most of the food in low-income and developing countries and form the backbone of the country's food supply. Therefore, their contribution to food production is essential for Nigeria to achieve self-sufficiency and ensure satiety for household food consumption through local production (Chiaka, Zhen, Yunfeng, Yu Xiao, Muhirwa and Lang 2022).

Conflict poses a significant challenge to world peace in the present day. It is defined as a serious disagreement or argument about something important that disrupts law and order (Collins, 2016). Conflict arises when individuals or groups have opposing needs, ideas, values, and goals. In Nigeria, farmers and herders are increasingly engaging in disputes over access to water and grazing land, which is a worrisome trend considering their historical coexistence and shared use of resources (Oyetade, 2017).

The conflicts between farmers and herders are the most prevalent resource conflicts in Nigeria. These conflicts primarily stem from disputes over land, particularly grazing fields. The competition for control over economically valuable resources leads to heightened tensions and violent clashes not only within farming communities but also between herders and crop cultivators. This situation is not surprising, considering that land is a vital resource for human survival. Agricultural activities, especially crop production, require extensive land resources. Factors such as soil quality, temperature, structure, texture, and pH levels play a crucial role in determining suitable land for agricultural activities (Adisa, 2012).

The conflict between herders and farmers over resources has been present in Nigeria for a long time. This conflict has remained the most prevalent resource use conflict in Nigeria, with changes in its character and severity over time. Although herders and farmers have coexisted for a long time, tension has always been present due to the rural interests involved. Conflict arises when livestock is not well controlled, and herds wander onto cultivated fields, particularly during critical periods such as sowing and harvests. These conflicts occur when agricultural activities hinder the movement of herds and cut off

their access to water or pastures. And it has been mediated by local community authorities. However, in recent times, the conflict has escalated beyond the traditional conflict resolution mechanism, leading to increasing distrust and suspicion among the two groups. The conflict has spread over a wide geographical area, particularly in Nigeria's Nasarawa State, where it has been observed that since 2011, there have been reported cases of conflicts between farmers and herders. These conflicts often result in large-scale destruction of lives and properties, posing a serious threat to the means of survival, livelihood, and food security in the state.

The herders-farmers conflict in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State has had a significant impact on food security. Food security is crucial for national security, and any household head unable to feed their household is considered irresponsible. Similarly, a nation or state that cannot provide sufficient food for its population cannot be deemed responsible. In Nigeria, a recent study has revealed that over 52 million people, approximately 30% of the country's total population, are hungry, with 52% living below the poverty line (Ajayeoba, 2018). The situation worsened following the escalation of conflicts between farmers and herders. Resource competition-driven conflicts between these two groups have become increasingly common in many parts of the state, particularly in Bassa Community. These conflicts have transformed from mere competition into serious hostilities and social friction, affecting various parts of the country.

The conflicts between farmers and herders have resulted in large-scale destruction of lives and properties, posing a significant threat to the means of survival, livelihood, and food security in the affected areas. Agricultural activities have been disrupted, leading to yield and income losses for farmers. Additionally, the movement of herds has been hindered, limiting their access to water and pastures. The problem statement can be summarized as follows: The herders-farmers conflict in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State has negatively impacted food security due to the following factors: Widespread destruction of lives and properties, Disruption of agricultural activities, Yield and income losses for farmers, Hindered access to water and pastures for herders.

Regrettably, no study known to the researchers has been carried out on this problem confronting farmers and herders in the area of food security in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. This, therefore, necessitated this study with a view to ascertaining the Impact of Herders -Farmers Conflict on Food Security in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

Specifically, this study attempts to use the following objectives.

- i. To find out the extent of effect of farmers and herdsman conflict on food production in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

- ii. To examine to what extent did farmers and herders conflict affect accessibility to food supply in Bassa Community.
- iii. To find out if farmers and herders conflict affect food stability in Bassa Community.
- iv. To identify the effort of the state government towards resolving the conflicts between herders and farmers in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Farmers

Farmers, also known as agriculturists, are individuals who engage in agriculture by raising living organisms for food or raw materials. This term usually applies to people who raise field crops, orchards, vineyards, poultry, or other livestock, and they may own the farmed land or work as laborers on land owned by others. In developed economies, a farmer is typically a farm owner, while employees of the farm are known as farm workers or farmhands (Solomon, 2021). However, in developing nations or pre-industrial cultures, most farmers practice subsistence agriculture, which involves simple organic farming techniques such as crop rotation, seed saving, slash and burn, or other methods to maximize efficiency while meeting the needs of their household or community. For the purpose of this work, farmers are defined as crop farmers, also called peasant farmers or subsistence cultivators (Solomon, 2021).

A farmer is a person who engages in agriculture by raising living organisms for food or raw materials (Dyer, 2007). This term usually applies to people who raise field crops, orchards, vineyards, poultry, or other livestock, and they may own the farmed land or work as laborers on land owned by others. In advanced economies, a farmer is usually a farm owner, while employees of the farm are known as farm workers. Agriculture includes farming in all its branches, such as the cultivation and tillage of the soil, dairying, production, cultivation, growing, and harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodities. The purpose of agriculture is to produce food, clothing, and shelter, as well as for business or economic gains. Farmers take necessary steps to ensure proper nourishment of the products for either personal consumption or commercial purposes.

In developed nations, a farmer is typically described as someone who has an ownership interest in crops or livestock and provides land or management for their production. Those who solely provide labor are often referred to as farmhands. Alternatively, individuals who manage farmland for absentee landowners and share the harvest or its profits are known as sharecroppers or sharefarmers. In the context of developing nations or pre-industrial cultures, most farmers practice subsistence agriculture, which involves simple organic farming techniques such as crop rotation, seed saving, slash and burn, or other methods to maximize efficiency while meeting the needs of their household or community. In a subsistence economy, farm products are primarily consumed by the farmer's family or the community.

However, farming is a particularly dangerous industry as there are several occupational hazards. On the lighter part, farmers can encounter and be stung or bitten by dangerous insects and other arthropods, including scorpions, fire ants, bees, wasps, and hornets. Whereas on the more dangerous situations, farmers faced attacks from other competing farmers either for land grazing or cropping. Such situations might lead to the death of the farmers, destruction of their crops, farm land, and death of their loved ones or the destabilization of their communities. This is a common scenario between farmers and herders in sub-Saharan regions.

Concept of Pastoralism/herders

Pastoralism is a form of animal husbandry where domesticated animals, known as "livestock," are released onto large vegetated outdoor lands (pastures) for grazing. Pastoralism is practiced by nomadic people who move around with their herds, and the animal species involved include cattle, camels, goats, yaks, llamas, reindeer, horses, and sheep. Some pastoralists supplement herding with hunting and gathering, fishing, and/or small-scale farming or pastoral farming. Mobility is a key feature of pastoralism, and nomadic pastoralists have a global food-producing strategy that depends on the management of herd animals for meat, skin, wool, milk, blood, manure, and transport. Pastoralist societies have had armed men protect their livestock and their people (Carol, Sarah, & Roy, 2021). Pastoralism is utilized in areas with more marginal soils or unpredictable rainfall, conditions not optimal for farming but able to support herd animals if they are moved regularly to newly grown pastures and freshwater sources. Pastoralists who don't farm usually trade meat, milk, and other animal products for the grains and vegetables grown by neighboring farmers. (Carol, Sarah, & Roy, 2021). Pastoralism is one of the key production systems in the world's drylands, and it is utilized in many different climates and environments with daily movement and seasonal migration.

Concept of Food Security

The concept of food security has evolved over time. In the Proceedings of the 1974 World Food Summit, food security was defined as the 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. In 1983, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) expanded the concept to include a third prong: ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need. In an influential World Bank report on Poverty and Hunger, this concept of food security is further elaborated in terms of access to all people at all times to enough food for an active healthy life. Nowadays, food security means always having physical, social, and economic access to sufficient safe and healthy food that meets our food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2009).

Food security is the state of having access to enough, safe, and nutritious food to meet one's dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life. It is a flexible concept that has evolved over time, and it has four main dimensions: (Afzal, Ahmad, Imran,

Khan, Zubair, Akram and Khalid, 2023).

1. **Physical availability of food:** This refers to the supply side of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels, and net trade.
2. **Economic and physical access to food:** Even if there is an adequate supply of food at the national or international level, it does not 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.
3. **Food utilization:** This refers to the body's ability to absorb and use the nutrients in food. It is influenced by factors such as health, water, sanitation, and hygiene.
4. **Stability:** This refers to the ability of a food system to withstand shocks, such as natural disasters, economic downturns, or conflicts, without compromising food security (Afzal, Ahmad, Imran, Khan, Zubair, Akram and Khalid 2023).

Food security is essential for human well-being and development, and it is a fundamental human right. Achieving food security requires a multifaceted approach that involves addressing issues related to food production, distribution, and access, as well as social, economic, and environmental factors.

Farmer-Herders Conflicts (FHC) in Nigeria

The conflict between herders and farmers in North Central Nigeria has been a recurring issue in the country's history (Blench, 2002; Gambo, 2017). The current dangerous dimension of the conflict can be traced back to 2011, with states like Benue, Niger, Nasarawa, Kogi, Plateau, Kwara, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) experiencing various incidents. One significant feature that cuts across all these states is the significant loss of lives resulting from violent attacks by the herders (Asishaua, 2017).

According to a publication by Human Rights Watch in 2013, the violence between Fulani herdsmen and farmers has led to over 3,000 deaths since 2010. By 2014, the group had reportedly killed 1,229 people, primarily operating in the Nigerian Middle Belt, where their attacks claim multiple lives in states such as Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, and the southern part of Kaduna. From 2013 to the first half of 2016, these states witnessed nearly 100 major attacks, resulting in the loss of over 5,000 lives (Ihuah, 2017).

The consequences of these violent attacks have been devastating, leading to destruction, loss of life, and the exacerbation of long-standing divisions within the country. The conflict is rooted in issues of land resources, population pressures, climate change, and other factors. The scarcity of pastoral land, combined with increasing urbanization, has forced herders onto farmlands and restricted areas, leading to conflicts with local farmers. Retaliatory attacks from both sides further escalate the violence (Ihuah, 2017).

Causes of Herdsmen Farmers Conflict in Bassa Community of Kokona Local Government

The causes of the conflict between herders and farmers in Nigeria are multifaceted and complex. According to Baderinwa, (2021) the following factors contribute to the conflict:

1. Destruction of crops by herders' cattle: The destruction of farmers' crops by herders' cattle is identified as a major cause of conflict between herders and farmers. This occurs when herders allow their cattle to graze on farmlands, leading to crop damage and economic losses for farmers.
2. Cattle rustling: Cattle rustling, which involves the theft of livestock, is another cause of conflict between herders and farmers. This can lead to retaliatory actions and further escalation of violence.
3. Ethnic and religious differences: The conflict between herders and farmers is often influenced by ethnic and religious differences. In Nigeria, the conflicts have been prominent between the mostly-Muslim Fulani herders and the mostly-Christian non-Fulani farmers (Baderinwa, 2021).
4. Poverty: Poverty is identified as a contributing factor to the conflict. Economic hardships and limited resources can exacerbate tensions between herders and farmers.
5. Sexual harassment of women by herders: The search results mention sexual harassment of women by herders as another cause of conflict. This issue highlights the gender dynamics and social implications within the conflict.
6. Disregard of constituted authority by herders: The disregard of constituted authority by herders is mentioned as a cause of conflict. This refers to instances where herders do not adhere to regulations or engage in illegal activities, leading to tensions with local communities and authorities.
7. Land conflicts: The conflict between herders and farmers is rooted in land-related issues. Scarcity of pastoral land, combined with increasing urbanization, has forced herders onto farmlands and restricted areas, leading to conflicts with local farmers.
8. Climate change: Climate change and its impact on resources, such as water and grazing land, have also been identified as contributing factors to the conflict. Constant migration from arid areas into more fertile zones can lead to clashes between herders and farmers (Baderinwa, 2021).

Relationship between Herders-Farmers Conflict and Food Security

This section review literatures and studies carried out on herders-farmers as it relates to food security. The following papers below have been reviewed for better understanding. Solomon, (2021). Impact of the Farmers and Herdsmen Conflict on Food Security; Focus on Taraba State. One of the greatest security challenges in Nigeria in recent time is the increasing conflicts between crop farmers and herders. Today, the conflict has spread over wide geographical areas in Nigeria and Taraba State in particular. Taraba state is one of the states in Nigeria that have been greatly affected by conflict between farmers and herders. It is against this background that this study was carried out to examine the extent to which conflicts between farmers and herders affect food production, food availability,

food stability, food utilization in Taraba state. The study adopted survey research method and sampled 285 respondents using multistage sampling technique. The data for this study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was generated from field survey carried out in the state. The study utilized data and infrastructure from study multiple policy documents in State Ministry of Agriculture, Jalingo. Data generated from the field was complemented by extensive review on the farmer herders' conflicts. The data collected were analyzed using p-table and percentage, and Pearson Correlation used to test the hypotheses. The study findings revealed that the increasing incidence of the farmers herder's conflicts has led to widespread distribution of food stuff, lives and properties and entrenched atmosphere of fair and insecurity in the rural communities. This has greatly affected crop farming and grazing activities, resulting in low productivity, food instability, low food utilization, food inaccessibility and inadequate availability of food in Taraba state. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others the need to assist farmers with zero interest credit facilities to boost production and strengthen ties between herders and farming communities to improve security in rural farming areas.

Sani, Michael, Tologbonse, Mahmoud, Raji and Abubakar (2021). The study examined the effects of farmer-herder conflicts on rural households' food security in Gombe State, Nigeria. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaire and focus group discussion among 118 farmers and 112 herders. Percentage, tobit and logit regression models were used in analysing the data. The result showed that, household size and education, farm size and cattle route encroachment were the major causes of the conflict. In addition, killing of stray cattle, population growth, rape and sexual harassment were all responsible to farmer-herder conflict with different marginal effects. The study revealed 59.3% of the farmers and 31.3% of the herders, had food insecure with moderate hunger, while 43.7% of the farmers and 66.1% of the herders had food insecurity with severe hunger. Selling of grazing areas, corrupt practices by traditional rulers are some of the constraints that affects conflict management. There is need to create a platform that will bring all stakeholders together on a quarterly basis in order to have an interaction and to employ extension agents to serve as an intermediary between farmers and herders. There is need for the law makers to revisit the existing 1964 grazing reserves act and 1978 land tenure act so as to give room to accommodate land ownership, usage and control for the competing parties. This may help in reducing the intensity of the conflict. Finally, there is need for the adoption of some mitigating strategies such as alternative dispute resolutions, arrest and prosecution of offenders to manage the reoccurrences of conflicts.

David, Benjamin, Taiwo, Esther and Oluwafisayo, (2019). Herdsmen/Native Farmers' Violence in Benue State and Food Security in Nigeria. The herdsmen/farmers' violence in Benue State, Nigeria has constituted security challenges and could have contributed to food insecurity as more than 2000 lives were lost in Nigeria and over 170,000 were internally displaced in Benue state, a state tagged "food Basket of Nigeria". The paper among others examined the effects of the violence on food production in Benue State and

Nigeria. It was descriptive study that adopted mixed method, using quantitative and qualitative approaches by relying on secondary data. The violence was negatively significantly correlated with sorghum production alone out of ten food crops examined in Benue State ($p < 0.05$). Contrary to general perception, there was no significant relationship between food production in Benue State and Nigeria ($p > 0.05$). Population growth was significantly correlated with maize production only ($p = 0.023$); agricultural budgetary allocation was positively significantly correlated with rice production only ($p = 0.001$). It concluded that food insecurity in Nigeria was beyond herdsmen/farmers' violence. It recommended modernization and transformation of agriculture to increase food production and government should develop political will and be proactive in confronting security challenges in an inclusive manner.

Tersoo, (2016), assessed the impact of Farmers/Herders conflict on food security in Taraba State, Nigeria. The paper examined how the conflict has impacted on food security in Taraba State. It adopted the theory of the tragedy of the commons which states that when a resource is group's collective interest, and thus ultimately destroy the resources. The paper used descriptive statistical tools to analyze is found that so many human lives were lost; farm lands, residences and schools were destroyed, leading to a decline in farm output (causing food insecurity) and human capital loss. The study therefore recommended strong government policy on the localization of the pastoralists in line with the world best practices to avoid further conflicts.

Dimelu, et. al (2017), carried a study on livelihood issues in herdsmen-farmers' conflict among farming communities in Kogi State, Nigeria. The study assessed the causes and effects of herdsmen-farmers' conflict on livelihood of agrarian communities in Kogi State. The result showed that crop farmers were predominantly male (85.2), married (85.9) and with mean age of 51 years. They were small scale farmers with average farm size of 2.9ha and were engaged in the production of yam (97.8%), cassava (92.6%), maize (92.6%) and other arable crops, mainly for income and household food supply. The farmers indicated that violation of laws/tradition; livelihood interference and cultural factors were the major causes of conflict between crop farmers and herdsmen. Consequently, the socio-economic life, production outcome and settlement of crop farmers are affected, cumulating to breakdown in livelihood assets of farmers. The study recommended that there should be strategic and regular orientation of resource users on the need for co-existence and adherence to regulations regarding use of resources and that multistake holders efforts exploring grass root participation should be promoted by government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in policies and strategies for management of conflict among others.

A related study was conducted by Olobatoke & Amusain (2017), titled, effect of Fulani herdsmen "intrusion on the economic livelihood of crop farmers in Yagba East Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria". The study investigated the effect of Fulani cattle herdsmen's intrusion on the economic livelihood of crop farmers in Yagba East Local Government Area of Kogi State. Results showed that majority of the crop farmers are

males (91.00%), married (89.90%) and in their productive age of between 41 – 60 years (46.84%). Majority (51.90%) of the farmers had more than 20 years of farming experience but are still predominantly small-scale farmers engaged in growing cash crops (51.90%) and arable crops (48.10%). All the crop farmers (100%) in the studied area agreed that there were intrusions of Fulani cattle herders into crop farms particularly during the dry season periods of the year. Majority (97.4%) of the Fulani cattle herders reported that they rear no designated cattle grazing outes in the study area.

Theoretical Framework

Karl Marx Conflict Theory: The conflict perspective or conflict theory was derived from the ideas of Karl Marx (1818:1883). The great German theorist and political activist believed that society is a dynamic entity constantly undergoing change driven by conflict. According to Marx, men are always in the social production of their will, namely, relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production, the totality of which constitutes the economic structure of society. The fact that the dominant ruling class (the bourgeoisie) controls the social relations of production, the dominant ideology in capitalist society is that of the ruling class. Ideology and social institutions, in turn serve to reproduce and perpetuate the economic class structure. According to Marx, the real foundation upon which the super structure of social, political and intellectual consciousness was built, has been the exploitative economic arrangement of capitalism. Marx believes that any social setting based on exploitative economic arrangement generated within it the seed of its own destruction (Marx1971, 67).

The conflict between herders and farmers in Bassa community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, and its impact on food security can be linked to Karl Marx's conflict theory. According to Marx, society is constantly undergoing change driven by conflict, and the dominant ruling class controls the social relations of production and the dominant ideology in capitalist society. The conflict between herders and farmers in Bassa community can be seen as a struggle for control over resources, including land and water, which are essential for agricultural production. The conflict is rooted in issues of land resources, population pressures, climate change, and other factors. The dominant ruling class in this context can be seen as the herders who control the resources, while the farmers are the subordinate class who are struggling to access these resources. The conflict can be seen as a manifestation of the exploitative economic arrangement of capitalism, where the dominant class controls the resources and perpetuates the economic class structure. The conflict has negative impacts on agricultural activities, which in turn affects food security in the community. Therefore, addressing the conflict requires a comprehensive approach that considers the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the issue, and the involvement of relevant stakeholders, including faith-based organizations, can play a crucial role in mitigating the conflict and promoting food security in the community.

Methodology

This study aims to address problematic research questions using survey methodology. The population of the study includes all individuals residing in Kokona Local Government Area, which is located in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, with its headquarters in Garaku. The area covers 1,844 km² and had a population of 109,749 during the 2006 census. However, the projected population rate for the local government in 2021, using a 3.5% increase rate, is 561,719. Because it is impracticable to handle this magnitude of number, science has avail us with appropriate tools to select a sample; the researcher therefore the technique used in drawing the sample size is Taro Yamane (1967) formula defined as:

Where n = sample size

N = total population size

1 is constant

e = the assume error margin or tolerable error which is specified as 5% (0.05) in this study.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} = \frac{561719}{1 + 561719(0.05)^2} = \frac{561719}{1404.3} = 399.9 = 400$$

In all, 350 questionnaires with closed and open-ended questions were administered to elicit responses from members of the selected categories, while 50 semi-structured interviews were conducted, making a total of 400 respondents from whom the study elicited relevant data and information for analysis using.

Data Presentation and Results

A total of 400 questionnaires were administered in the above randomly selected work, of which Three hundred and eighty-seven (387) representing (96.75%) copies of questionnaire were properly filled and returned, while thirteen (13) representing 3.25% copies of questionnaire were not returned. These included the use of the Microsoft excel package, statistical analyses (frequency distribution, simple percentages, tables, figures (charts) and simple percentages as well.

Effect of farmers and herdsmen conflict on food production in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Table 1: The struggle over land between farmers and herdsmen has not affected any crop production in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	43	11.1%
Agree	59	15.2%
Strongly Disagree	153	39.5%
Disagree	89	22.9%
Undecided	43	11.1%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

As can be seen in Table 1 above, 42 of the respondents representing 11.1% of the population strongly agree that the struggle over land between farmers and herdsmen has not affected any crop production in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, 59 respondents representing 15.2% agreed. However, a majority of 153 respondents representing 39.5% strongly disagree with the fact that the struggle over land between farmers and herdsmen has not affected any crop production in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, 89 respondents representing 22.9% disagree with this view while only 43 respondents representing 11.1% were undecided as to whether the struggle over land between farmers and herdsmen has not affected any crop production in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

Table 2: Conflict between farmers and herdsmen has not affected cattle rearing and so much in Bassa Community.

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	87	22.5%
Agree	61	15.7%
Strongly Disagree	93	24%
Disagree	96	24.8%
Undecided	50	12.9%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

A look from the above table, it revealed that 87 respondents, representing 22.5% strongly agree that Conflict between farmers and herdsmen has not affected cattle rearing and so much in Bassa Community, 61 respondents representing 15.7% agree that conflict between farmers and herdsmen has not affected cattle rearing and so much in Bassa Community. Also, 93 respondents representing 24% strongly disagree with this statement, a majority of 96 respondents representing 24.8% disagree with the statement that conflict between farmers and herdsmen has not affected cattle rearing and so much in Bassa Community while 50 respondents, representing 12.9% were undecided.

Table 3: Destruction of land and water resources during farmers and herders' clashes is not such that enough food cannot be produced in Bassa Community

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	51	13.2%
Agree	38	9.8%
Strongly Disagree	181	46.8%
Disagree	73	18.8%
Undecided	44	11.4%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

From the table 3 above, 15 respondents, representing 13.2% strongly agreed that the destruction of land and water resources during farmers and herders clashes is not such that enough food cannot be produced in Bassa Community, 38 respondents representing 9.8% agree that the destruction of land and water resources during farmers and herders clashes is not such that enough food cannot be produced in Bassa Community also, 181 respondents, representing 46.8% strongly disagreed that the destruction of land and water resources during farmers and herders clashes is not such that enough food cannot be produced in Bassa Community, 73 respondents representing 18.1% disagree whereas 44 respondents, representing 11.4% said they are not sure or not whether the destruction of land and water resources during farmers and herders clashes is not such that enough food cannot be produced in Bassa Community.

Table 4: The violent clashes between farmers and herders have greatly denied the people of Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State access to enough food supply.

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	201	51.9%
Agree	64	16.5%
Strongly Disagree	47	12.1%
Disagree	49	12.6%
Undecided	26	6.7%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 4 shows that a majority of 201 respondents, representing 51.9% strongly agreed that the violent clashes between farmers and herders have greatly denied the people of Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State access to enough food supply, 64 respondents representing 16.5% agree with the statement. Also, 47 respondents representing 12.1% strongly disagree with this statement, 49 respondents representing 12.6% disagree with the fact that the violent clashes between farmers and herders have greatly denied the people of Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government

Area of Nasarawa State access to enough food supply while 26 respondents, representing 6.7% were undecided.

Table 5: The farmers' food crops destroyed during dispute with herdsmen is not so much that the people in the community cannot have access to quality food supply.

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	43	11.1%
Agree	54	13.9%
Strongly Disagree	139	35.9%
Disagree	93	24%
Undecided	58	14.9%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

From the above table 5, 11.1% of the respondents which are made of 43 respondents strongly agree that the farmers' food crops destroyed during dispute with herdsmen is not so much that the people in the community cannot have access to quality food supply, 54 respondents, representing 13.9% agreed that the farmers' food crops destroyed during dispute with herdsmen is not so much that the people in the community cannot have access to quality food supply. On the other hand, 139 respondents, representing 35.9% strongly disagreed with the fact that farmers' food crops destroyed during dispute with herdsmen is not so much that the people in the community cannot have access to quality food supply, also, 39 respondents representing 34% disagree with the statement while 58 respondents, representing 14.9% were undecided about the statement.

Table 6: Violent attacks between farmers and herdsmen are responsible for lack of access to safe water, fishpond and agricultural needs in the community and Local Government Area at Large.

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	203	59.4%
Agree	64	16.5%
Strongly Disagree	13	3.4%
Disagree	70	18.1%
Undecided	37	9.5%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

From the above table 6, a majority of 59.4% of the respondents which are made of 59.4 respondents strongly agree that violent attacks between farmers and herdsmen are responsible for lack of access to safe water, fish pond and agricultural needs in the community and Local Government Area at Large, 64 respondents, representing 16.5% agreed that violent attacks between farmers and herdsmen are responsible for lack of

access to safe water, fish pond and agricultural needs in the community and Local Government Area at Large. On the other hand, 13 respondents, representing 3.4% strongly disagreed with the fact that violent attacks between farmers and herdsmen are responsible for lack of access to safe water, fishpond and agricultural needs in the community and Local Government Area at Large, also, 70 respondents representing 18.1% disagree with the statement while 37 respondents, representing 9.5% were undecided about the statement.

To what extent did farmer and herders conflict affect food stability in Bassa Community?

Table 7: Farmers and herders conflict affect food stability in Bassa Community

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	93	24%
Agree	167	43.2%
Strongly Disagree	56	14.4%
Disagree	41	10.6%
Undecided	30	7.8%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

From the table 7 above, 93 respondents, representing 24% strongly agreed that farmers and herders conflict affect food stability in Bassa Community, 167 respondents representing 43.2% agree that farmers and herders conflict affect food stability in Bassa Community also, 56 respondents, representing 14.4% strongly disagreed that farmers and herders conflict did not affect food stability in Bassa Community, 41 respondents representing 10.6% disagree whereas 30 respondents, representing 7.8% said they are not sure as to whether farmers and herders conflict affect food stability in Bassa Community or not.

Table 8: Despite Farmers and herders' conflict in Bassa food supply have been stable in the Community

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	23	5.9%
Agree	44	11.4%
Strongly Disagree	133	34.3%
Disagree	97	25.1%
Undecided	90	23.2%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

A look from the above table, it revealed that 23 respondents, representing 5.9% strongly agree that despite Farmers and herders' conflict in Bassa food supply have been stable in

the Community, 44 respondents representing 11.4% agree that despite Farmers and herders' conflict in Bassa food supply have been stable in the Community. Also, 133 respondents representing 34.3% strongly disagree with this statement that despite Farmers and herders' conflict in Bassa food supply have not been stable in the Community, 97 respondents representing 25.1% disagree with the statement that despite Farmers and herders' conflict in Bassa food supply have been stable in the Community while 90 respondents, representing 23.2% were undecided.

Table 9: Food production and supply from Bassa to other communities have been constant.

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	10	2.5%
Agree	94	24.2%
Strongly Disagree	213	50%
Disagree	34	8.7%
Undecided	36	9.3%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

From the above table 9, 2.5% of the respondents which are made of only 10 respondents strongly agree that food production and supply from Bassa to other communities have been constant, 94 respondents, representing 24.2% agreed that food production and supply from Bassa to other communities have been constant. On the other hand, 213 respondents, representing 50% strongly disagreed with the fact that food production and supply from Bassa to other communities have been constant, also, 34 respondents representing 8.7% disagree with the statement while 36 respondents, representing 9.3% were undecided about the statement.

Table 10: The State government use of military and other security personnel has helped to manage conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	101	26.1%
Agree	163	42.1%
Strongly Disagree	27	6.9%
Disagree	71	18.3%
Undecided	25	6.4%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

From the table 10 above, 101 respondents, representing 26.1% strongly agreed that the State government use of military and other security personnel has helped to manage conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Bassa Community, Kokona Local

Government Area of Nasarawa State, 163 respondents representing 42.1% agree that the State government use of military and other security personnel has helped to manage conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State also, 27 respondents, representing 6.9% strongly disagreed that the State government use of military and other security personnel has helped to manage conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, 71 respondents representing 18.3% disagree whereas 25 respondents, representing 6.4% said they are not sure as to whether the use of military and other security personnel has helped to manage conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State or not.

Table 11: The government use State laws and grazing law in resolving the farmer herder's conflict in Nasarawa State

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	123	31.8%
Agree	217	50.1%
Strongly Disagree	11	2.8%
Disagree	35	9%
Undecided	1	0.2%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

A look from the above table, it revealed that 123 respondents, representing 31.8% strongly agree that the government use state laws and grazing law in resolving the farmer herder's conflict in Nasarawa State, 217 respondents representing 50.1% agree that the government use state laws and grazing law in resolving the farmer herder's conflict in Nasarawa State. Also, 11 respondents representing 2.8% strongly disagree with the fact that the government use state laws and grazing law in resolving the farmer herder's conflict in Nasarawa State, 35 respondents representing 9% disagree with the statement while only 1 respondent, representing 0.2% was undecided.

Table 12: The engagement of religious leaders by the government is an effective approach towards resolving the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen.

Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	171	44.2%
Agree	106	27.3%
Strongly Disagree	53	13.7%
Disagree	49	12.7%
Undecided	8	2.1%
Total	387	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

A close look on the table 12 above, 171 respondents, representing 44.2% strongly agreed that the engagement of religious leaders by the government is an effective approach towards resolving the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen, 106 respondents representing 27.3% agree that the engagement of religious leaders by the government is an effective approach towards resolving the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen also, 53 respondents, representing 13.7% strongly disagreed that the engagement of religious leaders by the government has not been an effective approach towards resolving the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen, 49 respondents representing 12.7% disagree whereas 8 respondents, representing 2.1% said they are not sure as to whether the engagement of religious leaders by the government is an effective approach towards resolving the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen or not.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that the main cause of conflict between farmers and herders in Bassa Community of Kokona Local Government is the use of land for cultivation by farmers and grazing by herders. The issue of land use has not been resolved by leaders or elders, and the idea of separating farming from grazing areas was rejected. This has led to farmers viewing herders negatively and blaming them for crop destruction, land degradation, and farm encroachment. This negative perception can increase hatred between the two groups and escalate the conflict. The study supports the findings of Okoli and Atelhe (2014) and Adisa (2012), who concluded that farmer-pastoralist conflicts are associated with the conflict of land resource use exacerbated by dwindling resources. The conflict between herders and farmers in Bassa Community has negative impacts on agricultural activities, which in turn affects food security in the community. The conflict can be linked to Karl Marx's conflict theory, which suggests that the conflict is a manifestation of the exploitative economic arrangement of capitalism, where the dominant class controls the resources and perpetuates the economic class structure. Addressing the conflict requires a comprehensive approach that considers the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the issue, and the involvement of relevant stakeholders, including faith-based organizations, can play a crucial role in mitigating the conflict and promoting food security in the community.

The study found that herders also view farmers negatively, blaming them for cattle route encroachment, encroaching grazing areas, using more water for irrigation, water sources destruction, poor farming methods that cause land degradation, and the main cause of grazing land encroachment. This negative perception of farmers by herders and vice versa makes it difficult to resolve the conflict. Leaders in any society are responsible for maintaining peace within a particular community. The struggle over land between farmers and herders has affected crop production in Bassa Community, Kokona Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. The conflict has also affected cattle rearing, leading to the destruction of land and water resources during farmers and herders clashes, making it difficult to produce enough food in Bassa Community. The conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria is a multifaceted issue that is influenced by various factors, including land resource use, dwindling resources, poverty, ethnic and religious

differences, and climate change. Addressing the conflict requires a comprehensive approach that considers the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the issue, and the involvement of relevant stakeholders, including faith-based organizations, can play a crucial role in mitigating the conflict and promoting food security in the community.

Conclusion

The study found that farmer-herder conflicts have significantly reduced the availability of food supply and the income of rural households. The conflicts in the study areas are caused by three key factors: killing of stray cattle, increase in population, and raping and sexual harassment by the parties. The media has consistently highlighted the issue, and farmers view cattle routes and grazing reserves as land not possessed by anyone and can, therefore, be freely encroached. Herders, on the other hand, believe that feeding their cattle at whatever circumstances is a superior and uncompromising right given to them by nature, leading to clashes between the competing parties.

The study shows that using power to solve the conflict between farmers and herders does not yield good results, and conflict kept occurring despite extra power used, especially by the police force. The study suggests that sustainable resolution is obtained by creating awareness among community members about the importance of peacekeeping in their society and involving the conflicting groups to find out the causes and suitable strategies to end the conflict. The study indicates that farmers perceive herders negatively, blaming them for crop destruction, land degradation, and farm encroachment. This negative perception can increase hatred between the two groups and escalate the conflict. The study also indicates that herders perceive farmers negatively, blaming them for cattle route encroachment, grazing area encroachment, water sources destruction, and poor farming methods that cause land degradation and grazing land encroachment. The perception of farmers towards herders and vice versa makes it difficult to resolve the conflict. The study highlights the need for government involvement in resolving the conflict between farmers and herders, as they are most respected in a democratic state and can provide constructive ideas to mitigate the conflict. The conflict has negative impacts on food production and food stability, and the strategies set to manage the conflict and the resolutions obtained are not sustainable but short-lived.

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. To address the impact of the conflict between farmers and herders on crop production, the government should set up conflict management committees in collaboration with farmers' and herders' unions and associations. The committees should create comprehensive awareness and compliance with designated stock routes at the state, zonal, local government, and village/community levels through jointly established committees. This approach can help mitigate the conflict and promote peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders. To mitigate the conflict, conflict management committees should be set up by the

government in collaboration with farmers' and herders' unions and associations. The committees should create comprehensive awareness and compliance with designated stock routes at the state, zonal, local government, and village/community levels through jointly established committees. The involvement of relevant stakeholders, including faith-based organizations, can play a crucial role in promoting peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders and mitigating the conflict.

- ii. In order to make sure that conflict is managed effectively all stakeholders in the particular conflict must be involved to find out suitable strategies which will effectively handle the concerns of conflicting groups because the conflict is based on their concerns, this will facilitate to having sustainable resolution to ensure effective stability on food production and supply.
- iii. The government should ensure that security personnel are adequately supported to help in the management of the conflict. This can help prevent violent clashes and promote peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders. Sustain the Anti-Open Grazing law to curtail the menace of unaccounted wandering of herdsmen and cattle encroaching on farmland leading to conflict. This can help avoid competition for the available few resources of land and water and enhance farmers and herders to make effective use of their respective areas

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