

Agricultural Development and Communal Land Conflict in the Cross River Central Senatorial District

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Abstract

In the Cross River Central Senatorial District, land disputes between neighbors have grown to be a major obstacle to rural lifestyles and agricultural growth. The objective of the study is to investigate agricultural development and communal land conflict in the Cross River Central Senatorial District. The survey research approach was used in the study. This design or strategy is chosen by the researcher because it makes conclusions possible. The study was carried out in Cross River State's Central Senatorial District. Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas, which were specifically chosen to represent the study area, were the study's purview. The presence of community land conflict between the two local government districts led to the selection of these sites, and research showed a significant correlation between agricultural development and production in the Cross River Central Senatorial District and communal land conflict. Agricultural operations in general are impacted by communal land disputes. The output of crops and animals is impacted, which in turn affects the revenue generated from cash crops and livestock. The report argues that, the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State can eliminate communal land conflicts and encourage sustainable agricultural development, ultimately increasing both economic growth and social cohesion in the region.

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Background to the Study

The development of agriculture and, consequently, the socioeconomic well-being of communities depend heavily on land. Like in many other regions of Africa, land is more than just a financial resource in Nigeria's Cross River Central Senatorial District; it is a source of cultural identity and communal solidarity. But communal land conflicts—which frequently result from disagreements over boundaries, land ownership, and usage rights—have grown to be a major problem in the area. By restricting farmers' access to fertile land, deterring investment in farming, and escalating food poverty, these conflicts can have disastrous repercussions on agricultural production and development.

This paper investigates the relationship between communal land conflict and agricultural growth in Cross River Central Senatorial District, Nigeria, analyzing the causes, repercussions, and possible solutions to these conflicts. Given the significance of agricultural livelihood to overall economic wellbeing, particularly in limited food production, the Food and Agricultural Organization (2004) estimates that communal violence cost Africa over \$120 billion in agricultural production during the last third of the 20th century. It tends to prevent individuals from having access to food and the availability of food supplies. The socio-economic activities of the communities in the warring camps are likely to be impacted by communal conflict both directly and indirectly, according to Sambe et al. (2013).

Osunbi (2016) observed that communal conflict is becoming an increasing factor and poses a threat to food security in countries of traditional stability. Food supply and accessibility have been major issues in Nigeria, where the number of malnourished individuals is still rising. Food production suffers when there is disagreement within the community. Conflicts between communities have impacted food production in Nigeria and throughout Africa throughout the years. Civil conflict is the primary source of food shortages and scarcity in fifteen African nations that experienced an extreme food emergency, according to FAO (2002). Food insecurity is more likely to occur when there is communal conflict since it impacts food production and distribution. According to Banjo (2018), civil strife affects food security in developing countries due to its detrimental effects on the agricultural sector and the economy as a whole.

Since agriculture is the primary employment of the rural population in Nigeria, especially in the Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas, communal disputes have a significant impact on food production. Numerous Nigerians live in rural areas. Sambe et al. (2013) state quite succinctly that the main economic activity of the people is the production of crops and the rearing of livestock. Therefore, in Nigeria in the twenty-first century, communal strife has a significant impact on food production. "It is an irony of fate that rural communities in Nigeria are endowed with abundant resources (natural and human), including vast fertile land for farming, i.e. about 23% (21 million hectares) arable land, while only 0.9 million hectares (1%) are under permanent cultivation," noted Diez (2016). Accordingly, food insecurity is a result of social conflict (Messer and Cohen,

2004). The term "food production" refers to any method that ensures food is always available to people. Food is essential for both humans and animals and should always be provided, according to Oji et al. (2014). It should be highlighted in the aforementioned that access to previously produced food and foodstuffs is just as important to food security as food production. Food security was defined by FAO (2007) as people being able to obtain the food they need for an active and healthy life in an effort to support this.

Statement of the Problem

Conflicts over communal land have grown to be a major obstacle to rural living and agricultural development in the Cross River Central Senatorial District. Since farming continues to be the major source of income for many locals, land disputes frequently result in violence and displacement, interrupt farming operations, and limit access to productive land. Boundary disputes, population pressures, rivalry for land, and confusing land tenure regimes are the main causes of these conflicts. Food security, regional agricultural output, and economic stability are all at risk due to the ongoing occurrence of these conflicts. Communal land disputes hinder farmers' capacity to make investments in their farms, implement contemporary farming methods, and support regional and national economic development, even though the area has the potential for high agricultural output. A cycle of insecurity and slower agricultural growth are also caused by inadequate land governance structures and ineffective dispute settlement procedures. To maximize the region's agricultural potential and enhance rural populations' quality of life, particularly in the Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas, these issues must be resolved immediately.

Objectives of the Study

The study's primary focus is on the agricultural development and communal land conflict in the Cross River Central Senatorial District. The study will primarily look into the relationship between agricultural growth and farm productivity and communal land conflict among the residents of Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas in the Central Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses:

The study is intended to be guided by the following hypotheses:

Ho: Conflict over community land has no discernible impact on agricultural advancements or output.

H1: Conflict over community land and agricultural advancements and productivity are significantly correlated.

Literature Review

An Overview of the Cross River Central Senatorial District's Communal Land Conflicts

The rich agricultural land and varied populations that primarily depend on farming for their living are the hallmarks of the Cross River Central Senatorial District. But over the

years, the area has seen a lot of land-related disputes, frequently involving several tribes or ethnic groups. The following are the primary causes of these conflicts:

Boundary Disputes: Disagreements on the definition of community boundaries are the root cause of many disputes. Conflicts over community boundaries have increased in frequency and severity as the population and demand for land have grown.

Competition for Land: As a result of deforestation, climate change, and population growth, there is now more competition for fertile land. Conflicts between communities have resulted from this, particularly in areas where land ownership issues have historically occurred.

Customary Land Tenure Systems: In the Cross River Central region, land is frequently held communally under customary tenure systems, which are run by family heads or local leaders and can lead to misunderstandings and disputes about who is entitled to use or own particular parcels of land.

Migration and Settlement Patterns: As a result of economic opportunities or displacement from other areas, people have been moving into and out of the district, which has caused tensions between settlers and indigenous groups over land access.

Agricultural Development and Productivity Affected by Communal Land Conflicts

In the Cross River Central Senatorial District, agricultural development is significantly impacted by communal land disputes. The impacts are frequently complex, ranging from the capacity of individual farmers to cultivate land to more general concerns about food security and economic expansion.

Reduced Access to Agricultural Land: One of the most obvious effects of community land disputes is that it makes it harder for farmers to access productive land. Whole villages may occasionally be uprooted from their land, making it impossible for them to practice farming. For the impacted farmers, this results in lower agricultural yield and financial hardship.

Farmland destruction: When disputes between neighbors turn violent, crops, farmlands, and farming infrastructure are destroyed. Warring groups, for instance, occasionally use crop burning as a strategy to weaken their adversaries. In addition to causing short-term food shortages, this has long-term effects on soil fertility and the region's overall agricultural potential.

Displacement of Farmers: Farmers are frequently uprooted from their homes and farmlands during communal conflicts. Because displaced people might not have access to fresh resources, land, or farming equipment, this relocation interferes with agricultural operations. Displacement can sometimes result in communities giving up farming entirely, turning to less sustainable means of subsistence or becoming reliant on outside food assistance.

Insecurity and Investment Disincentives: Land disputes between communities foster an atmosphere of insecurity that deters both domestic and foreign investment in agriculture. For fear of losing their money, land, or equipment, investors—including commercial farmers—may be hesitant to make investments in conflict-prone areas. The region's potential for agricultural innovation and expansion is stifled by this lack of investment.

Impact on Productivity and Food Security: In the end, land conflicts' disruption of agricultural operations adds to the region's food insecurity. The food supply is greatly diminished when farmers are unable to cultivate crops, gather produce, or access land, which raises food prices and makes both rural and urban populations more vulnerable. Food security is linked to communal land conflict, which typically lowers cash crop and livestock productivity and revenue. Food security and the ability of those who rely on food resources for their livelihood to cope are significantly impacted by this decline in production and income (Chikaire, Orusha, Amanze & Asonye, 2016).

The Food Research Policy Institute (2004) states that a significant percentage of food insecure individuals reside in the majority of conflict and post-conflict areas in Sub-Saharan Africa. In rare instances, those in need of food make up a very small portion of the total population covered by food insurance. Therefore, there is a significant level of chronic food insecurity in African nations. Bolarinwa, Oyeyinka, Ajayi, and Fakoya (2010) carried out a comparative study to investigate the socioeconomic effects of communal conflict on the livelihood of cocoa farmers in Nigeria. To take part in the study, 130 cocoa producers were chosen from both outside and inside communal conflict zones. 10% of farmers made up the sample frame; 61 of them were chosen at random from conflict areas, and the remaining 69 were chosen from non-conflict areas.

The sampling framework was a farmer's village list, and data were collected by direct observations and interview schedules. Frequencies, percentages, and t-tests were employed for analysis. The study's conclusions showed that farmers outside of conflict areas had a higher annual mean cocoa production level (HMCPL) of 828.4 tons, compared to farmers in conflict areas who had a lower HCMPL of 105.0 tons. According to the findings, there is a statistically significant difference in cocoa output levels between core and non-conflict areas ($P < 0.05$). This occurred as a result of 76% of farmers in conflict zones being forced to leave their farms. The impact of intercommunal conflicts on attaining food security in southeast Nigeria was examined by Chikaire et al. (2016). A multistage sampling strategy was used for the study. The study's sample consisted of 150 respondents who were impacted by intercommunal violence in the Southeast. A self-administered questionnaire served as the data gathering tool. The mean and percentages were used to examine the acquired data.

The findings showed that the effects of communal conflicts on agricultural development (food production and security) included more deaths, hunger, farmland abandonment, labor migration, low yield, malnutrition, low savings, population displacement, higher

transportation costs, higher produce prices, and more. In a 2017 study, Kughur, Dauda, and Ironenege investigated how farmers in Plateau State, Nigeria's Langtang North Local Government Area produced particular crops in relation to community disputes. Using a multi-stage sampling technique, four villages impacted by communal crises were purposefully chosen, and four communities were chosen from each local government. 24 respondents (those impacted by communal crises) were chosen at random from each of the two villages that were chosen, and 25 respondents were chosen at random from each of the other two villages, for a total of 98 respondents. A systematic questionnaire was used to collect primary data, which were then analyzed using correlation and descriptive statistics. The results showed that the amount and worth of money spent on crops produced before to and following communal crises had significantly decreased.

An investigation into conflicts and agricultural development in Northern Uganda was carried out by Rockmore (2015). By analyzing the effects of conflict risk on livestock and crop portfolios, the study expands on earlier research. A sample of over 590,000 homes approximately 75% of all rural households in the Northern Uganda was utilized in the study. Descriptive statistics and questionnaires were used for data gathering and analysis. The findings imply that a significant decline in animal productivity is linked to communal strife. All things considered, there has been a notable change in the livestock portfolio from large grazing animals like cattle to smaller livestock that may be kept in communities or compounds. Conflicts within the community also greatly enhance the proportional importance of pigs in the livestock portfolio. In Oyo state, Nigeria, Adelokun, Adurogbangba, and Akinbile (2015) investigated the socioeconomic impact of conflict between farmers and pastoralists on family farming. A total of 120 respondents, 60 of whom were farmers and 60 of whom were pastoralists, were chosen using a multi-stage sample technique. A structured questionnaire was used as the data collection tool, and descriptive statistics (PPMC, Chi-square, and T-test) were used to analyze the results. According to the results, the majority of farmers (71%) experience financial losses as a result of conflicts with pastoralists. Approximately 75% of farmers employ problem-oriented coping strategies, such as early harvesting or stock disposal, while the majority of herdsman (73%) employ emotion-oriented coping strategies, such as using charms or retaliation. Farmers and pastoralists experienced significantly different socioeconomic losses ($p=0.000$). Due to their involvement in family farming, farmers were the ones most negatively impacted by farmer-pastoralist disputes.

The Boki-Ikom Boundary Conflict Case

The long-running boundary dispute between the "Boki" and "Ikom" communities in the Cross River Central Senatorial District is a prominent illustration of how community land conflict affects agricultural development. Land ownership and usage rights along the border between the two local government districts are at the center of this decades-long controversy. Tensions arise between farmers from the two communities as a result of the region's lush land being highly valued for the production of cocoa and palm oil. Farmlands have been destroyed, farmers have been displaced, and agricultural productivity has significantly decreased as a result of the fighting. Due to their inability

to access their plantations, cocoa growers in particular have experienced a decline in productivity and revenue. Government attempts to resolve the issue have not been very successful, and farming operations are still disrupted by sporadic flare-ups. This instance emphasizes how urgently we need long-term solutions to land disputes and efficient conflict resolution procedures that put farmers' interests and agricultural prosperity first.

Opportunities for Agricultural Development in Cross River Central

Cross River Central Senatorial District is still one of Nigeria's most agriculturally productive areas, with enormous potential for expansion in important industries including cocoa, palm oil, cassava, and maize production, despite the difficulties caused by communal land disputes. There are numerous chances to improve agricultural growth while tackling the root causes of land conflicts in order to realize this potential:

Agricultural Reforms: Reforms that improve the security of land tenure can be supported by the government and non-governmental organizations. Community-led mapping projects, which offer legal acknowledgment of community-owned properties and aid in averting future conflicts, could be used to formalize customary land rights and settle border disputes.

Conflict Resolution Procedures: Establishing efficient conflict resolution procedures at the local level is vital for minimizing communal land conflicts. Traditional leaders, local government representatives, and community leaders who are able to resolve conflicts and reach mutually agreeable land use agreements should be a part of these procedures.

Support of Sustainable Agricultural Practices: Supporting sustainable agricultural practices can help to boost the productivity of available land in addition to resolving land conflicts. In addition to increasing yields, methods like agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and climate-smart farming help protect the environment and lessen competition for limited resources.

Access to Agricultural Finance and Technology: Providing farmers with access to loans, modern farming technologies, and extension services can help them boost production even in the face of land constraints. By giving farmers the tools, they need to get the most out of the land they have access to, these investments can also lessen the chance of conflict.

Government Policies and Assistance: Resolving land disputes amongst communities and promoting agricultural growth are important tasks for the Nigerian government. Stabilization and agricultural growth can be achieved by policies that support fair land distribution, rural infrastructure investment, and assistance for displaced farmers.

Theoretical Framework

Resource Conflict Theory and Institutional Theory can be combined to create a theoretical framework for comprehending the connection between agricultural development and communal land conflict in the Cross River Central Senatorial District. The causes of land

disputes, the function of institutions in resolving disputes, and the wider effects of such disputes on rural livelihoods and agricultural productivity will all be clarified by these theories.

Resource Conflict Theory:

According to the Resource Conflict Theory, conflict arises when people compete for limited resources, such land, especially when those resources are essential for survival and financial support. Land is a vital resource for agricultural development in the Cross River Central Senatorial District, and conflicts frequently result from rivalry between villages for fertile land. Communities may clash over land ownership, access, and boundaries as the population rises and the need for agricultural land rises. According to this idea, conflicts over common land are influenced by a wider range of socioeconomic issues, including population pressure, economic inequality, and environmental deterioration, in addition to ownership disputes. Deforestation, land degradation, and climate change all contribute to the lack of arable land, making it harder to find productive ground for farming and escalating intercommunal rivalry and violence. According to this perspective, disputes over common land are viewed as a fight for dominance over scarce resources that may lead to economic disruption, bloodshed, and relocation. Conflicts can limit access to land, ruin crops, and jeopardize the agricultural livelihoods of impacted populations, all of which have significant ramifications for agricultural growth.

Institutional Theory

Formal and informal institutions' roles in controlling resource access and settling disputes are the main focus of institutional theory. Both official and customary legal systems regulate land tenure in many African communities, including Cross River Central Senatorial District. In order to manage common land and settle conflicts, customary institutions including family heads, elders, and traditional rulers are essential. Conflicts may be exacerbated by the uncertainties and overlapping land claims that result from the interaction of official and customary legal systems. Institutional theory emphasizes how crucial strong governance frameworks are to averting and settling land disputes. Land conflicts and agricultural development can be made worse by weak institutions, corruption, and unclear land policy. Agricultural productivity can be increased and conflict can be avoided with the support of robust institutions that uphold land rights, resolve conflicts, and provide fair access to resources. According to this idea, resolving conflicts and fostering sustainable agricultural growth in the Cross River Central Senatorial District depend on strengthening the ability of formal and customary institutions to handle land disputes. For farmers to have safe access to land – which is required for long-term agricultural investment and productivity – effective land governance, distinct property rights, and inclusive dispute resolution procedures are crucial.

Methodology

The survey research approach was used in the study. This design or strategy is chosen by the researcher because it makes conclusions possible. The study was carried out in Cross

River State's Central Senatorial District. Boki and Ikom Local Government Areas, which were specifically chosen to represent the study area, were the study's purview. Due to the high frequency of community land conflicts between the two local government regions, these locations were chosen. Adult male and female farmers and dealers who mostly reside in these research locations make up the study population. Purposive sampling and stratified sampling were the methods of sampling employed in this investigation. Communities in Boki LGA were divided into two groups based on stratification: those that had not encountered any serious communal conflicts and those that had. Communities in Ikom LGA that have recently been embroiled in communal land disputes made up the sample. The questionnaire was the main instrument for data gathering. The hypothesis was tested and analyzed using chi-square (χ^2) analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

The chi-square statistical tool was used to evaluate and display the primary data obtained from the questionnaire, and the results were discussed.

Table 1: Responses to the Question: Do farming and agricultural operations in your community suffer during communal land disputes with another community?

Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Yes	227	75.7%
No	73	24.3%
Total	300	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

According to Table 1, 227 (75.7%) of the 300 respondents agreed that farming or agricultural activities in their community are impacted during communal land conflicts, while 73 (24.3%) disagreed. First hypothesis: H_0 : In the Cross River Central Senatorial District, there is no discernible correlation between agricultural productivity and communal land conflict.

H_0 : In the Cross River Central Senatorial District, agricultural advancements and production are significantly correlated with community land conflict.

The chi-square (χ^2) test was used to examine questionnaire results (which are already shown in table 1) in order to evaluate the hypothesis. The table below displays the outcome.

Table 2: Chi-square (χ^2) analysis of how community land conflict affects agricultural productivity and development.

Cell	O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
1	227	150	77	5929	39.5
2	73	150	-77	5929	39.5
				Calculated	$\chi^2 = 79.1$

Source: *Significant at 0.05; df = 1; critical $\chi^2 = 3.84$

The computed chi-square (χ^2) value of 79.1 is greater than the critical value of 3.84, according to the analysis's outcome in table 4, 10 above. At the 0.05 level and with one degree of freedom, the hypothesis was examined for significance.

The result is noteworthy since the computed value (79.1) is greater than the crucial value (3.84). As a result, the null hypothesis—which holds that there is no meaningful connection between agricultural development and production in the Cross River Central Senatorial District and communal land conflict—was rejected. This indicates that disputes over community land have a detrimental impact on agricultural growth.

Discussion

According to the results of the aforementioned investigation, agricultural development and productivity in the Cross River Central Senatorial District are significantly correlated with communal land conflict. Agricultural operations in general are impacted by communal land disputes. The output of crops and animals is impacted, which in turn affects the revenue generated from cash crops and livestock. According to Chikaire et al. (2016), this decline in revenue and output has major ramifications for food security since it may make it harder for those who rely on food resources for a living to cope. The study's findings are consistent with those of Bolarinwa et al. (2010), who looked at the socioeconomic effects of communal conflict on the livelihood of cocoa farmers in Nigeria and found that farmers in conflict areas had lower annual turnover than their counterparts outside of conflict areas. This was due to the fact that 76% of farmers in conflict zones had to leave their farms. The results are also consistent with those of Chikaire et al. (2016), whose research showed that communal land conflicts led to detrimental outcomes like fatalities, farmland abandonment, labor migration, low yield, increased hunger, malnutrition, low savings, population displacement, higher transportation costs, higher produce prices, and more.

Conclusion

In the Cross River Central Senatorial District, disputes over communal land pose a serious obstacle to agricultural growth. These conflicts displace farmers, limit access to fertile land, and foster an atmosphere of insecurity that deters agricultural investment. A multifaceted strategy involving land tenure reforms, dispute resolution procedures, and sustainable agricultural methods is needed to address these issues. Cross River Central

Senatorial District has the capacity to overcome these obstacles and develop into a center of agricultural growth and productivity in Nigeria with the correct policies and assistance.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthening Land Tenure Systems:** To guarantee equitable access to and ownership of land, the government must establish clear and equitable land tenure policies, which will lessen conflicts over ownership and boundaries. To formally establish land ownership through appropriate paperwork, governments must to collaborate closely with communities and traditional leaders.
2. **Creating Conflict Resolution processes:** In order to resolve land conflicts and stop them from getting worse, the government should immediately establish community-based conflict resolution processes. To encourage communication and amicable talks between disputing parties, traditional leaders, local government representatives, and civil society organizations should work together.
3. **Inclusive Development and Stakeholder Engagement:** Farmers, community leaders, and local authorities are just a few of the stakeholders that the government should make sure are included in agricultural development programs. Misunderstandings and opposition to development projects can be avoided by involving the community in decision-making.
4. **Building Farmers' Capacity:** resources for training and assistance in contemporary farming methods, land management, and dispute resolution should be made available to farmers. Giving farmers the information and abilities, they need to boost output and enable them to resolve land-related disputes amicably.
5. **Government and NGO Collaboration:** To execute policies and initiatives that support agricultural development and conflict avoidance, the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and development partners should work together. This entails giving nearby farmers access to markets, financial support, and technical help.
6. **Improving Agricultural Infrastructure:** To increase agricultural output and lessen the strain on land, the government should make investments in infrastructure like roads, storage facilities, and irrigation systems. A well-built agricultural infrastructure can increase farm productivity and economic opportunities, which can lessen competition for land.
7. **Legal and Policy Reforms:** Laws that uphold the rights of communal land and encourage agricultural investment ought to be passed. To make sure that they handle the unique issues in the Central Senatorial District, such as agricultural development and conflict avoidance, the government should examine the current land laws and policies.
8. **Monitoring and Early Warning Systems:** To identify warning indications of approaching conflicts and act before they worsen, the government should set up monitoring and early warning systems. Community leaders, law enforcement,

and local governments should routinely identify possible flashpoints and take preventative measures.

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