

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Farmers/Herdsmen Crisis and Sustainable Food Production in Nigeria

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Abstract:

In recent times, the most populous black nation in the world, Nigeria has been deeply engulfed by many skirmishes which undermine peace and tranquillity in the country. One such threat is the debilitating Farmers/Herdsmen imbroglio that has led to blood-bathe in several parts of the states with consequential maiming or death of many citizens and destruction of unquantifiable property in the process, especially in Benue State. The security concerns in the country presently have gotten to a point of crescendo that the nation can aptly be described as the satirical 'Animal Farm' as seen in the work of George Orwell. The study utilized secondary data and quantitative content analysis was used to analyze the data. Furthermore, structural functionalism theory was applied to direct the research. Drought and desertification, which are indicators of climate change were observed as the major reasons the pastoralist invade farmlands in arable areas and this led the plethora of the conflicts. The study recommends amongst others that the government should intensify efforts to deliver nomadic education to Fulani herdsmen and their entire households; that way, they will be enlightened on the values of peace and development; also, the government should demarcate the grazing routes for way from farm settlement to avoid frequent clashes between farmers and herders.

Keywords: Crisis, farmer, food security, herdsmen, pastoral

1. Introduction

The agrarian economy is the second major source of Nigeria's earning and employs about 70% of Nigerians. Media reports indicate that there have been increases in the cases of attacks by Fulani herdsmen on several farmers in communities. The Fulani herdsmen as were reported, brutally kill the inhabitants of the invaded farming communities, including women and children in various states across the country. The Fulani herdsmen are usually armed with sophisticated weapons when carrying out attacks on their target communities at the time they are defenseless like midnight or on Sundays when they are in their churches, killing people arbitrarily, especially women and children, burning houses and looting properties.

States like Benue, Taraba, Nassarawa, Plateau, Kaduna, Katsina, has been in the news as being the worst hit of late, having tasted the overwhelming attacks by the Fulani herdsmen. Other states like Kogi, Delta, Imo, Ebonyi and Enugu have also had some isolated cases of the sporadic attacks by the unrestrained Fulani Herdsmen whose binge for blood has remained unquenching. The brutality and impunity with which the attackers operate without regard for the law and the sanctity of life, coupled with the inability of the Police and other military establishments to defend the victims who are being mercilessly slaughtered in their homeland, is most disturbing.

The conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and the farmers usually arise when the Herdsmen overrun community farmland with their cattle and let them graze unrestricted on cultivated and uncultivated land, thereby destroying valuable food and cash crops without recourse to its implication on the farmer. Farming communities have been made to forego their farmlands, abandon their agricultural products of the farms which are the mainstay of the host communities, for the safety of their lives whenever the marauders strike. This is because when the communities try to resist them and request their exit, the Fulani herdsmen will become violent and attack the community sometimes with the aid of some alleged mercenaries from the neighbouring countries like Chad, Niger, Mali, and Cameroon. The most unfortunate aspect of the entire saga is the alleged complicity of the security agencies in Nigeria in protecting the killer herdsmen against the defenseless communities who have been attacked.

Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers have been age – long in Nigeria; this is caused by increases in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of the cattle, compelled the pastoralists to seek for more pastures beyond their geographical limited, unavoidable drought in the northern area and more pressures on the land resources (Bello, 2013).

In Nigeria, agriculture employs about 70 percent of its labour force. Small-holders in the country's centre and southern harvest most of the country's tuber and vegetable crops while pastoralists in the north raise most of its grains and livestock. Over 90 percent of pastoralists reportedly are the Fulani, a large ethnic group straddling several West and

Central African countries. Aduma, Chukwuemeka and Eneh (2019, p.54) state that 'pastoralists own approximately 90 percent of the national herd, estimated at 19.5 million cattle, about 975,000 donkeys, 28,000 camels, 72.5 million goats, and 41.3 million sheep.' Historically, relations between herders and sedentary farming communities have been harmonious (International Crisis Group, 2017, p.1). By and large, they lived in a peaceful, symbiotic relationship: herders' cattle would fertilize the farmers' land in exchange for grazing rights. But there have been seeming unending clashes between herders and farmers across the country, (International Crisis Group, 2017).

It is in light of the above that this work intends to look into the farmers/herdsmen clashes and its implication on sustainable food production in Nigeria.

2. Theoretical Framework

The structural functionalism theory was used as an anchor for this study. Structural-functionalism is akin to the societal consensus on issues affecting it. The theory sees society as a system being built upon an agreed order, interrelation, and balance among the various parts as a means of maintaining the smooth functioning of the whole. Structural-Functionalism sees shared norms and values as the basis on which any society is being developed. It focuses on achieving or creating social order based on inferred agreements between groups and organizations and assumes that social change does occur in a slow and orderly fashion given the interaction of the various aspects of the society. Functionalists recognize that change is sometimes obligatory to correct social anomalies, but that is when such change does occur slowly so that people and institutions can adapt without creating a rapid disorderliness that can break the system.

The Structural Functionalism theory assumes inter alia:

- Every system has a property in order and interdependence of parts. This implies that societies and social units are held together in cooperation and orderliness.
- Systems tend toward self-maintaining order or equilibrium. This indicates that societies and social units work best when they function smoothly as an organism, with all parts working toward the 'natural' or smooth working of the system
- The system may be motionless or involved in an ordered progression of change
- The character of one part of the system has a consequence on the form that the other parts can take;
- Systems maintain boundaries within their environments. This means that the natural (external) environments are separate but adapt to each other. The same dynamics occur within societies and/or social units – if one or more parts significantly conflict with others, others must adapt;
- Building synergy is two necessary processes required for a given state of equilibrium within a system. This points to the fact that the division of labour and positions help maintain balance; each part interrelates to create efficiency and harmony; the most capable individuals must be motivated to fill the most important roles/positions and;
- Systems tend toward self-maintenance concerning the managing of boundaries and relationships of parts to the whole, gear sticks the environment, and manages the tendencies to change the system from within.

Concerning this study, it implies that whenever conflicts arise in the system, society will be dysfunctional because a certain part will create deficiencies in the system. The Farmers/Herdsmen crisis, for instance, means that food production and other activities connected to it on a wider scale will suffer, causing untold hardship for the direct and indirect beneficiaries and dependants on such activities.

The set of theories that differs ominously from Functionalism is the Conflict Theory. According to Akinibi and Akinola (1999), conflict describes a situation of disagreement, fighting or even outright war. Conflict theories stress the supremacy of some social groups over others, and analysis social order as maintained by manoeuvring and control by dominant groups, and visualizes social change as happening speedily and in an untogether fashion, with subordinate groups wanting to overthrow dominant groups to create equal opportunity and change in the system, where all would be equal. In these ways, conflict theory is almost the direct contradictory form of functionalism. In this case, we see the Fulani group of pastoralists, venting an unrestrained vendetta on the entire country for reasons best known to them to the extent of maiming, killing and in most cases, wiping out an entire community of farmers as a way of asserting their superiority and sending the dangerous signal of fear to potential challengers of their ideals.

A case in point is the skyrocketing prices of food items in the market. Such would not have been the case where there is surplus food produced for the consumers, but because there are fewer food items to be consumed by many, the prices are high. The activities of the Fulani Herdsmen and their sister terrorist group like the Boko Haram have created a major humanitarian crisis in the country to the extent that some farmers are now jobless refugees in other states, depending on the dwindling food production of the courageous few, left to feel the heat of the Herdsmen's fury.

3. Conceptual Framework

3.1. Food Security in Nigeria

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture (2010) cited in Abur (2014), estimated that over 53 million people in Nigeria are hungry, which is about 30 percent of the country's total population of roughly 150 million; and 52 percent live below the poverty line. However, Nigeria attained self - sufficiency in food production and became a net exporter of food to other regions of the continent in the 1950s and 1960s according to reports. The fall in food production has resulted to increase in food importation to balance the excess demand oversupply of food in the country.

Food security has been defined in different ways by different scholars. The World Bank defines food security as a condition where everyone has access to sufficient food to eat and live a healthy and productive life, (World Bank, 1986). This means that there should be the absence of other factors like crisis, drought or war that can make food unavailable for the teeming population to eat. The Africa Bureau of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID, 2015) cited in Henry (2017), goes further by defining food security as a situation where everyone has physical, social and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs, produce and stay healthy. This again points to the fact that humans must be secure physically, socially and economically to have food security.

Food sufficiency with no hunger or fear of starvation is what could be regarded as food security and it comprise availability, accessibility, adequacy of utilization and stability of supply at all times. According to Henry (2017), when these conditions are non-existent or inadequate, people are food- insecure. Food insecurity, therefore, results when not everyone has access to sufficient food to live a healthy and productive life or when they cannot meet target consumption levels yearly. The emphasis here is on access to sufficient food for a healthy and productive life that is free from hunger and the fear of starvation. People without physical, social and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs to enable them to produce and stay healthy suffer from food scarcity and insecurity. When people have food, but not enough in quantity and quality, they are still food-insecure. The mere availability of food does not guarantee food security except when it is of adequate quantity and quality. When the food supply is unstable and unreliable for one reason or another, food insecurity is said to exist. Again, if food is available, but is not adequately utilized because of egoism or self-centredness, one cannot be sure of food security.

Shehu (2018) opined that 'food insecurity exists when people lack sustainable physical or economic access to enough safe, nutritious, and socially acceptable food for a healthy and productive life.' This may also result in severe social, psychological, and behavioural consequences. On the other hand, insecurity of food may manifest feelings of alienation, powerlessness, anxiety, stress, and reduced productivity, reduced work, social performance, and reduced income earnings, and this has direct effects on the economic development of the individuals.

As Tolu, Adelakun, and Akindiyo (2018, p.208) puts it, 'Herdsman - Farmers crisis affected different facets of the economy. There are social, political instability and food insecurity, particularly in the affected areas. Most farmland and food produce have been destroyed as a result of this crisis and this is posing threat to food security. Aside from the destruction of farmland and crops, there are also physical destruction and burning of houses that have led to homelessness, displacement, and joblessness. Farmers could no longer go to the farm and harvest their farm produce for fear of attack, which invariably translates to a loss of income, resources and major source of livelihood. There is a social, economic and political tension as a result of the violence. Emotional exhaustion, trauma and social – psychological effects are evidence of instability. Educational development is impeded in the affected areas causing educational instability. Destruction of crops manifests in loss of crop yields and consequently negatively affects the quantity of supply of food to the market'.

Every part of Nigeria has one form of security problem or another because of the failure of the government through its security agencies to protect lives and property. The Southern parts (South-South, South-East, and South-West) are plagued by cult killings, kidnappings, armed robbery and other vices that successfully impeded sufficient food production because the people live in fear of their lives. The North (North-west, North-Central and North-East) are engulfed by the terrorism, armed banditry and herdsmen killing spree. There is palpable fear in all facets of national life, including the polity. This also implies that there is food insecurity in the country. As Abur (2014, pp. 34-35) sums it; 'despite successive government's efforts over the years to achieve food security in the country, through the setting up of several agricultural development institutions, and special programmes still, very large proportions of Nigerians are in hunger and poverty.

This is because, the recent events such as the crisis between farmers and Fulani herdsmen, the inter-communal crisis has been threatening the efforts of the government at attaining food security for the country. As it stands today, about 70% of the Nigerian populace still live below the poverty line with a notable incidence of hunger and food insecurity.

4. Contextualising Fulani- Herdsmen Conflict in Nigeria

Agriculture was the major sector upon which the majority of the Nigerian population depends on for their livelihood before the advent of the petro-dollar business in Nigeria. Agriculture was able to grow at a sufficient rate to provide enough food and employment for the increasing population and it contributed significantly to the foreign earnings of the State and employment generations of the teeming population. This has been a dramatic increase in the incidence and severity of poverty in Nigeria today, and this is occasioned by the dwindling performance of the agricultural sector where the majority of Nigerians now rely on the national cake (oil boom) for their daily income. The role of Agriculture in accelerating economic growth and the development process of the country is now being taken for granted even though agriculture is the bedrock upon which countries depend on for their economic growth and restructuring. The seeming neglect of agriculture as a national income generator has equally affected the growth of the economy directly. This has brought about the term food security as part of the country's vocabulary (Udemezue and Anedo, 2015).

Rural farmers and livestock breeders are the major sources of food in Nigeria. Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers have been in existence since the beginning of agriculture because a greater percentage of Nigeria's population relies so much on it for nation-building. However, the increase in the herd size due to the improved conditions of the cattle made the cattle herders look for more pasture beyond their limited ranch, on the other hand, improvements in the human health and population have imposed so much greater pressure on farming land and this be the reasons the farmers and nomads have been at incessant internecine conflicts over the limited land for grazing (Alhassan, 2013).

According to Bolarinwa, Oluwakemi, and Foloruso (2012) cited in Udemezue and Kanu (2019), Nigeria has recorded several violent conflicts in many rural communities from 1999 till date, conflicts that have resulted to over 10,000 deaths and internal displacement of over 300,000 Nigerian have been recorded and this could distort farmer's livelihood since they live and earn their living from rural areas.

It is estimated that Nigeria has about 22 million cows that consume at least 1 billion gallons of water per day and 500 million kilograms of grass and forage. The intensification of the Boko Haram crisis in the last five years has caused nomadic Fulani herdsmen to abandon their foraging grounds in the North East crops (Malcolm & Adeleke, 2016). Climate change has caused desertification in the far north, and has led to extended drought and an estimated 20% drop in crop yields across the rest of Nigeria, (Malcolm & Adeleke, 2016).

Historically, Ogbette, Attama, and Okoh (2018) recount that the first crisis between the Fulani Herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria was recorded in 1948. The second was in 1951 and this led to the migration of Fulani Bororo to Sudan. In 1955 there was a clash/genocide which led to the Sudanese Government to issue a quit notice to all Fulani Bororo to relocate to their home countries. These people were mainly from Borno, Sokoto and Kano States in Nigeria (Ibrahim, 2018). On April 1956, the Nigerian government sent a delegation comprising Alhaji Mohammad Ribadu-Minister of Lands, Alhaji Abubakar Akalai of Sokoto Native Administration, Malam Maaji Shani – Legal Adviser Borno Native Administration and Mr. J.R. Knowles- A Senior Veterinary Officer. This led to the Fulani's eventual relocation to Nigeria two years later (Ibrahim, 2018).

Ogbette, Attama, and Okoh (2018, p.45) further recount that urbanization as in the case of Federal Capital Territory (FCT) dislocated these Fulani herdsmen from these ranches or dams and power projects as in Mambila and Mokwa leading them to permanent dislocation. This led the Nomadic Fulanis to forcefully design their grazing corridors and or to acquire temporary sites which inevitably are farmlands of farmers. Furthermore, it is on record that in 1964 the government has gazetted about 6.4 million hectares of land which was enacted in 1965 in 144 locations or areas in the savannah region of Northern Nigeria with about 3 (three) between Oyo and Ogun States. This was primarily started by Malam Hamisu Kano working with pastoralists on livestock vaccination. These, however, were literally abandoned or not fully realized and have been massively encroached upon as grazing reserves.

According to Nwosu (2017) cited in Ogbette, Attama, and Okoh (2018), an accurate account of the death toll resulting from herdsmen – farmer violence in Nigeria is difficult to estimate due to the lack of a dedicated database. Some sources claim that since 2001, over 60,000 persons had died as a result of the conflicts, making it deadlier than the notorious Boko Haram uprising. A BBC reported that over 50,000 deaths were caused by the crisis between 2001 and 2004 alone. Of these deaths, women and children accounted for almost 35,000. Some accounts have it that the violent confrontations have started since the 1990s or earlier than that. A report showed that the economic cost of the herdsmen-farmer conflicts in only the four states of Benue, Kaduna, Nassarawa and Plateau at about \$14 billion annually. The current figures are likely to be higher, especially with the spread of the conflict to other states.

Ogbette, Attama, and Okoh (2018) also aver that the Global Terrorism Index showed the Fulani herdsmen as the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world in 2014. Only the fearsome trio of Boko Haram, ISIS and Al-Shabab were adjudged deadlier. Though herdsmen-associated carnage halved year later, herdsmen remain a formidable armed group. According to Malcolm & Adeleke (2016), as the Boko Haram sect rampaged through the North-Eastern region of Nigeria, the communities were destroyed and this spreads insecurity across the entire region. Cattle rustling increased, millions of people were displaced from their communities, farmlands were abandoned, and a landmass that is almost 15% of Nigeria's size has essentially become a no – go area for nomadic herdsmen. The North-Eastern region of Nigeria has some of the richest foraging stock in the country – and much of that is no longer available for use – because of the Boko Haram crisis. The connotation of the pillage has been a descending, southwards movement by itinerant Fulani herdsmen as they move in hunt of water and foraging resources for their animals and this has led to an intensification of resource pressures in north-central and southern communities, culminating in violent struggles that have led to an estimated 89,000 deaths since 2005. Indiscriminate cattle grazing has also contributed to the destruction of vegetation and wildlife habitats and led to the pollution of farms, rivers, and waterways with cattle manure across many communities. However, Communities have experienced ecological and economic devastation as a result of this crisis. Therefore, the combination of a growing cattle population, the effects of climate change on the availability of water and forage crops, as well as the lack of access to North Eastern foraging grounds due to the Boko Haram crisis are the proximate causes of the increasing tensions between farming communities and cattle herdsmen.

Consequently, the herders now seek means of economic survival to the detriment of the farmers who put up stiff resistance in the way and manner the herders encroach into their farms with their cattle to eat up the crops and grasses alike. The result is the ugly Farmers/Herdsmen saga as is being experienced almost daily across different parts of the country. The herders claim they have grazing rights as well as the farmers' claim of owning the land and the right to cultivate it. Several political interpretations have been given to the Farmers/Herdsmen imbroglio with tags like 'Islamisation agenda', 'fulanisation agenda' or even 'outright jihad' of the Northern hegemonies in their bid to take over other parts of Nigeria. But the recurring question is to whose advantage is the killings, lack of food production and other accompanying consequences of the clashes. The country is losing on all fronts.

Udemezue and Kanu (2019), argue that the activities of the nomad in Nigeria since the 1960s have fundamentally undermined the stability and development of the Nigerian state and economy. The social, economic, and political tension created as a result of numeral escalations of violent conflict has raised fundamental national questions for the survival of the Nigerian state. However, once conflict launches into the agricultural system as a result of the activities of cattle-herdsmen, other issues set in, farmers can lose focus on the result they supposed to achieve. Owing to this, it leads to total

conflicts between farmers and cattle-herdsmen, which in return cause low productivity among farmers. Conflicts distort the economy and worsen the income inequality of rural farmers. This has greatly affected agricultural production. However, the activities of the Pastoralist and Boko Haram insurgence on crop production are destructive to the economic growth of the nation, thereby leading State into economic brouhaha that has heightened food insecurity in general.

Mbaeze and Nnaji (2018) aver that Herders and farmers have co-existed in from time immemorial in a relatively peaceful relationship, although there have been pockets of disputes but were very minute to be spotted by history. Subsistence farming and small surplus production were in vogue as herders and farmers maintained a mutually beneficial relationship. Herders exchanged animal products for grain with farmers. Again, Mbaeze and Nnaji (2018) regretted that it was the advent of colonialism revolutionized the whole system of interaction between herders and farmers directly impacting on the social and physical landscapes. This included the introduction of the Land Use Act, which undermined the cooperative system and reduced the compatibility of the groups in question. This political twist to the farmers-herders conflict is at the heart of the entire security imbroglio that has hitherto determined the farmers/herders' relationship with the country.

According to Mbaeze and Nnaji (2018), the situation further deteriorated in the post-independence period as urbanization, demographic pressure, and increased influence of a global market economy, decreasing available pasture land and increasing competition for natural resources. The competition over the scarce resources (land) further developed into a bitter rivalry between the two groups as witnessed since the inception of Nigeria's First Republic when we started witnessing a high spate of conflict between the two groups which has metamorphosed into recurring clashes, mass killings, displacement of individuals and destruction of lives and properties. Nevertheless, several factors such as land ownership, the encroachment of farmlands by herdsmen and obstruction of grazing routes have been listed as the major causes of the conflict.

Today, what seemed like pockets of violence in some parts of the country, especially the northern region of Nigeria, has degenerated into a major national security crisis in the country, defying several solutions. Some states that have been affected by the Herder-Farmer conflicts, according to Mbaeze and Nnaji (2018) include:

- Kaduna State, Kebbi State, Sokoto State, Zamfara State, Katsina State (North West)
- Yobe State, Adamawa State, Taraba State (North East)
- Nasarawa State, Kogi State, Benue State, Kwara State, Plateau State (North Central)
- Ekiti State, Oyo State, Ogun State (South West)
- Enugu State, Imo State, Abia State (South East)
- Delta State, Cross River State, Edo State (South-South)

The non-affected states are currently being viewed as lucky, but there is a likelihood of the herders going on an unwarranted and an unrestrained rampage on the remaining states in Nigeria, especially with the proposed implementation of the Rural Grazing Annex, RUGA, by the Federal Government of Nigeria under the cover of the Livestock Transformation Plan as has been reported in the media. This proposition was met with severe resistance from several states of the federation, especially with the south-south, southeast and southwestern regions of the country with a singular clause of 'No land for the implementation of RUGA' and the Federal Government had to suspend the plan in the face of stiff public outcry against it. Some states, like Ekiti, have gone ahead to create the anti-grazing law which criminalizes open grazing within the state. Some media report also indicates that the Northern Elders have asked the Fulani Herders to return to the North from their southern enclaves where they are currently birthing. This is because the available record shows that there have been several killings perpetrated by the herdsmen in several parts of the country and there is no guarantee that there will be no reprisals against them in the process of time. When the reprisals come, the result will be a total war that will signal the second civil war in Nigeria but this is avoidable if the government creates avenues for the herders to engage in ranching as an alternative to open grazing.

Instead, the Federal Government has rebranded RUGA into the national Livestock Transformation Plan, which has been approved by the Federal Executive Council with the take-off grant of One Hundred Billion Naira. This move is still being viewed by some section of the country as an ethnic agenda meant to favour the Fulanis with its attendant crisis waiting to happen.

5. Causes of the Farmers' – Herders' Conflict in Nigeria

According to Hussaini (2018, p.359-361), several reasons can be adduced as to why the farmers'-herders' clashes have persisted. Below are some of the probable causes:

5.1. *Climate Change: Drought and Desertification*

The root cause of the herdsmen-farmers' conflict may be attributed to climate change which necessitates the Fulani and their cattle to migrate further south. The shortage of annual rainfall led to drought and desertification, which contribute immensely to the occurrence of herdsmen-farmers' conflict in Nigeria. The country's Northwestern and North-eastern states lay within arid and semi-arid zones, which are characterized by the prolonged dry season. According to a special report by the United Nations Institute of Peace (2018), the reduction of animal feeds and water in the Sahel region caused by desert encroachment and drought, which has pushed nomadic cattle rearers to drift southward outside their normal grazing route while a mix of weather-related factors has pushed farmers to cultivate more land each year, and this leaves the wanderers access to water to graze their stock. Also, the report of the National Meteorological Agency, 2008, states that for the past three decades the yearly wet season has diminished from an average of 150 to 120 days. The report

indicated that for the past 60 years, over 350, 000 sq. km of these northern states had either become a desert or a semi-desert. The report further stated that the desert is rapidly encroaching southward at the speed rate of 0.6 km per annum. A report by the FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF) (2013- 2017), also cited in Hussaine (2018), espoused that 50-75 percent of the land area of four north-eastern and six northwestern states were becoming a desert, and unfortunately, these seem to be the areas where these Pastoralists groups resided. These states are; Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and the Zamfara States. This environmental degradation affects agricultural production and the amount of water for the human and animal used forcing the pastoralist to move southward in search of productive land.

5.2. Loss of Grazing Reserve

Hussaine (2018) reports that the expansion of farming on pastures and grazing reserves is another causative factor of the Fulani- Herdsmen conflict in Nigeria. According to him, upon Nigeria's independence in 1960, the government of the Northern region formulated the law which demarcated grazing reserves and transhumance routes throughout the old northern region. These grazing reserves and routes meant in the passage of animals have been severely annexed; the encroachment has eventually led to the outbreak of the deadly crises of which some scholars attribute to the inability of the government to implement the grazing reserves Act of 1968. There already exist 4125 grazing reserves in the country, unfortunately, only one-third is utilized, while the remaining part has either been built on or converted to farmland, and this has annoyed the herdsman and may be one of the things fuelling the crisis. The cattle pathways close to urban areas were taken over by business structures like filling stations and mansions. The crisis mostly happened during the dry season where the bush and grasses get dry and at the same time in preparation for the next farming season, farmers clear their farms and burn the grass residue which the herdsman used to feed their cattle. Grass burning and the scarcity of water push nomads to cross the line and at the same time enter farmers' land and this action ignites the crisis.

5.3. Crime: Rural Banditry and Cattle Rustling

Cattle rustling and rural banditry are a serious problem which causes Farmers Fulani conflict in Nigeria. The herders see their herd as life because every nomad life is worthless without his cattle. They, therefore, react violently whenever their source of livelihood is threatened. Cattle theft is called to war by every nomad. The recurrence of the crime has also led to a threat to the country's security where so many lives and properties were lost. Sometimes the crime of rural banditry and cattle rustling do occur within Fulani pastoralist themselves, especially the happenings in the North-west and North-central zones. It is rather unfortunate that the rustlers have formed armed groups moving and attacking rural communities in reaction to the stealing of their cattle. The bands formed are based in a remote bush where there is less presence of state security agents within three months (February to May) in the year 2018 alone, over 600 people were reported to be killed in the crises in Talatan Mafara, Shinkafi and Dansadau Local government areas of Zamfara, Birnin Gwari LGA of Kaduna, Numan LGA of Adamawa, Gwer West in Benue respectively and some were held for ransom. According to Spotlight an international review for peace initiative (2016), the areas that are mostly affected are Taraba north-west, south-east Plateau, Zamfara and some rural areas of Borno State. Another criminal gang that engages in cattle rustling is Boko Haram terrorists who based in remote areas of Borno State. It has been reported that from 2011 - 2016 the sect has killed over 1,900 Shuwa Arab pastoralists and took away over 227,000 livestock.

5.4. Changing in Pastoralism and Farming Practice

Historically, the herders completely engaged in pure nomadism where they live together along with their cattle wherever they go. Today, some pastoralists are gradually changing to a sedentary lifestyle, leaving for the younger men or boys aged 9 to 25 years to control the herds. These younger generations cannot control the cows and in the event, they enter into the farms, they lack technicalities to amicably resolve the conflict in a polite manner. The negligence by the Fulani nomads to put more attention on their animals when grazing in the field during the wet season, make their animal mostly eat and destroy the farmers' crops. This action escalates tension between them and the farmers and results in a crisis in the event of a lack of proper control mechanisms.

Dwelling on the probable causes of the farmers-herders' crisis in Nigeria will only create a litany of claims and counterclaims with all sides annexing righteousness in the process, but the implications of these clashes are dire on the various strata of societal well being.

According to Tenuche and Ifatimehin (2009) cited in Mbaeze and Nnaji (2018), the State has played a key role in the conflicts over land from three critical levels, viz: (i) The State inability to address the indigene and settler phenomenon in the Nigerian Constitution; (ii) The unresolved issues on grazing land and water spots that are central to the economic survival of both the herd's men and the farming communities; (iii) The Nigerian land tenure system which has had serious implications for land acquisition by the peasants and the lower class. It is the responsibility of the government to maintain security and ensure the safety of lives and property in the country. The Farmers/Herders imbroglio is a serious indictment on the government's ability to fulfill its constitutionally assigned role.

6. Implications of Farmers-Herders Conflict on Sustainable Food Production in Nigeria

The farmers/herders crisis has serious implications on the country's cultural, social, political and religious life. This is because there have been several interpretations given to the ongoing carnage by the dreaded Fulani Herdsmen in several parts of the country. It is trite that Nigeria is under a severe internal socioeconomic and security threat. Specifically, the threat has special economic, political and environmental paradigms which have threatened social cohesion

in the State and led to the Fulani- herdsmen and Farmers crises, poverty, insurgency, armed robbery, corruption, economic sabotage, and environmental degradation

According to Hussaini (2018), Fulani-farmers' clashes have a direct impact on the survival of those involved, both the persecutors and victims. The conflict destabilizes the production of food and raw material for the manufacturing sector in Nigeria. It also contributes to the high rate of poverty and starvation and also leads to social disorganization amongst the families. Additionally, it destroys the peaceful symbiotic relationships that exist between farmers and nomads which have existed since time immemorial. There can be no sustainable food production without peace. Food production takes time from planting to harvest to its preparation and actual consumption. All of these times can be shortened or eliminated when there is war. Then man will only be concerned about the safety of his life, neglecting other responsibilities like planting or rearing cattle. When a man dies, all he owns or should do in life are permanently forfeited. No economy can thrive in an air of hostility, violent conflicts, crisis, and wars.

Dimelu, Salifu, Enwelu, and Igbokwe (2017) aver that conflict between pastoralists and farmers in agrarian communities presents a formidable challenge to both food and livestock production in Nigeria. It is associated with structural issues like population, cultural, political and ethnoreligious differences as well as unproductive conflict behaviours and struggle for livelihood survival by the disputants. There are problems of incompatibility of livelihood strategies, competition for access and use of natural resources such as land and water between the pastoralists and farmers in the affected areas. Pastoralist's assets, both in terms of human, physical, social, economic are affected, hence the productivity and sustainability of the sector will be compromised.

Ogbette, Attama, and Okoh (2018) report that violent crisis in Nigeria, like other parts of the world, has created a rift in human relations, caused a serious threat to peace, unity and food security among many other effects. They further aver that crisis is inescapable as long as men live together, especially in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious countries like Nigeria. Consequently, violence leaves us with various forms of hindrance and underdevelopment resulting from the destruction of lives, farmland, and property. The menaces of the violent crisis have been on the increase in most Nigerian cities in the last two decades. Most of these crises are generally regarded as ethnoreligious bigotry and antagonistic.

Sustainable food production in Nigeria is at risk with continuing friction between farmers and herdsmen and other security challenges plaguing the country if left unchecked. Climate change is unrelenting in its rampage and making farmlands diminish in value. The harsh economic realities are biting and there is a need for a solution to the farmers/herdsmen clashes because the future is very bleak.

7. Concluding Remarks

Nigeria is fast losing its agrarian prowess both as a meat producer and in terms of arable crops. The farmers/herdsmen clashes are beginning to erode the people's passion for agriculturally productive activities. The country is rapidly urbanizing and westernizing at all fronts without recourse to developing the traditional means of sustaining livelihoods. The Government at all levels is focused on petroleum as a source of revenue, but agriculture can do more than generate revenue for the government. Agriculture can create more employment, food, raw materials and foreign exchange for the country, but the Federal Government has continued to pay lip service to its development by not tackling the farmers/herdsmen crisis effectively. There is a need to prevent a second civil war in Nigeria, especially with the religious dimensions being ascribed to the clashes.

In light of the above, the following recommendations are put forward:

- The government should intensify efforts to deliver nomadic education to Fulani herdsmen and their entire households; that way they will be enlightened on the values of peace and development
- The government should demarcate the grazing routes from farm settlement to avoid frequent clashes between farmers and herders.
- The government should deploy agricultural extension workers to educate farmers on how best to protect their crops from attacks;
- Communities should use day and night guards to guard the farms against attacks;
- The Government should be firm and fair in its resolution and implementation of its agricultural policies and programmes;
- The government should amend the Laws relating to grazing reserves to meet the realities of the time and enforced firmly by the government at the state and federal levels.

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