

# Effects of Herders and Farmers Conflicts on Food Production: A Study of Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State Nigeria

Ojo, S. Stephen, *PhD*

Department of Social Development

Nasarawa State Polytechnic, Lafia, Nigeria

Email: steve234\_1@yahoo.com

## ABSTRACT

*Herders and farmers conflict exists in all the geopolitical zones of the country. The problem can easily be explained within the context of ecological factors and of migrations as well as the search for grazing field by the Fulani Herdsmen and consequently due to climate change. The increasing shortage in food production the state has remain a serious problem affecting Doma local government and Nasarawa state in general as farmers could not grow food crops again due to the fear of the herders destructive nature. The purpose of the study is to ascertain the effects of Herders/Famers conflict on food production in Nasarawa State. The research design used is descriptive survey; data were collected by the administration of questionnaire to the respondent in the sampled population (300) and were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Findings revealed that herders and farmers conflict has had far reaching consequences in terms, of dimension and loss of lives and properties and the strain it has had on food production. The study concludes that prevalence of herders and farmers crises has serious implication for the development of the community in the area of food production. The study therefore recommend among others that the local government should create a grazing field for cattles to avoid herders encroaching into cultivated farm land due to lack of grazing field and farmers should observe earmarked grazing land in the course of farming.*

*Keywords: effects, herders, farmers, conflict, food production*

## INTRODUCTION

The historical antecedent of the post colonial Africa is tinted with the menaces of violent conflicts. These conflicts, apart from crippling its socio-economic development, had redefined the fate of the continent to be known as “a very good laboratory for the study of violent conflict and its attendant effects (Aning and Atta-Asamoah, 2011). Internal conflicts have rendered Africa highly unstable and unsecured. The volatility of conflict in Africa has affected all the spheres of activities, paralyzing economic, political and social engagements in a large scale. According to Ogbogbo (1999), Africa is once again undergoing very fundamental turmoil that permeates the socio-political and economic structures of the various states.

The manifestations of electoral conflict, ethnic conflict, religious conflict, herder-farmer conflict, communal conflict, and indigene/settler conflict have become brazen characteristics of the democratic development in Nigeria. Of all these conflicts, herders-farmers conflict has manifested itself as the most pandemic issue in recent times next to communal and ethno-religious conflict in the democratic era in the country. Nnoli (2001) asserted that while democracy has not been economically kind to many Nigerians, the prevalence of herders-farmers conflict since 1999 when Obasanjo was sworn in as civilian president ranks among its most bitter disappointments. Herders-farmers conflict exists in all the geopolitical zones of the country. The concomitant effect of conflict has been the distortion of the development prospect of the country. That is, both human and material resources have been adversely affected to the extent that it resulted in systemic deficiencies in Nigeria. In Northern part of the country, the conflict is a recurring disaster. Despite this, herders-farmers conflict remains the least explored among the catalogue of conflicts plaguing the North. This is because focus is based on communal, ethno-religious and political conflicts in the region.

### Statement of Problem

In recent time, Herders/Famers conflict has been on the increase in Doma local government area. Conflicts often led to loss of lives and properties whenever there take place. The increasing shortage in food production within the state has remain a serious problem affecting Doma local government and Nasarawa state in general as farmers could not grow food crops again due to the fear of the herders destructive nature. Rather than selling to other communities and neighbouring state that normally come to buy food items from Doma to their state, the people of Doma now go to other town and neighbouring state to buy food for consumption. The stores where food crops used to be preserved are empty as no food items to store again.

Adding to this is the diminishing fortunes of agricultural productivity in the State. When the conflicts occur during the farming season, the tendency is that most farmers would not go to farm for fear of being attacked. The implication of this is the possibility of low agricultural productivity in the following harvest season. Besides, the conflicts have resulted in actual damage of farmlands and volumes of farm crops and produce. On the other hand, it has also led to killing of cows from the Fulani herd. All these damages translate into real and quantifiable material losses.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between herders and famers in Doma Local Government of Nasarawa State?
2. What are the factors responsible for Herders/Farmers conflict in Doma Local Government area of Nasarawa State?
3. What are the effects of Headers/Farmers conflict on food production in Doma Local Government of Nasarawa State?

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to ascertain the effects of Herders/Famers conflict on food production in Nasarawa State using Doma Local Government Area as a case study.

Among the specific objectives of the study include the following:

1. To identify the patterns and trend of relationship existing among the herdsmen and farmers in Doma local government area.
2. To examine the factors responsible for Herders/Farmers crisis in Doma local government area.
3. To assess the effects of such crisis on food production in Nasarawa state.

## HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis for the study is stated in the null form:

1. There is no relationship between herders/farmers crisis and food production in Doma local government area.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Herders/Farmers conflict situation in Nasarawa State has been interrogated by scholars and analysts from a variety of analytical prisms. An exegesis of some of these contributions is germane in order to situate the subject matter on a sound analytical framework.

Conflicts between the farmers and herders in Nasarawa State have been on the rise since the 1990s. Nigeria in general and Nasarawa in particular has experienced resource related communal clashes (often misrepresented or misinterpreted as Herders/Farmers crisis, ethnic, political and religious clashes) since the beginning of the 1990s of particular concern are the clashes between farmers and pastoralists (Fulani), especially in rural areas where the dwellers are predominantly small scale farmers (Stone, 2014).

In an attempt to explain the occurrence of the conflict, Adogi maintains a perspective wherein he implicated ecological and demographic factors dialectics. Putting his perspective into focus, he asserts:

The predominant Fulani herdsmen of the lower Sahel and Sudan Savannah ecologies from the north-west and north-east of Nigeria are now migrating and gradually becoming natives in the Middle Belt region – to find greener pasture for their herds. This is not acceptable to the root and tuber farmer of the Middle Belt that is already farming close to the climatic margin of cultivation. The farmer fears that Fulani herds will destroy his farmlands. The natural result is clash over right to the lands (Adogi, 2013: para 3&4).

The observation implicit in the foregoing citation is that the herder/farmer conflict in Nasarawa State has been, in the main, occasioned by the rising migration and settlement of the Fulani pastoralists in the state in search of arable grazing fields. The movement brings the herders into conflictive relations with the native farming communities, who are often bent on asserting their exclusive right to land tenure and inheritance in that context. This movement of the pastoralists must be understood as a consequence of the global trend of climate change, leading to increasing desertification of the wider northern Nigeria (World Watch Research, 2015). WWR (2015), among other things, sought to establish the nexus between pastoral migration and increased Herder/Farmer conflicts in the ecological zone that also encompasses Nasarawa State. The outcome of this study implicated climate change, desertification and drought, land tenure and scarcity, as well as pastoral migration as factors that account for the spiral Herders/Farmers conflict in the region.

Okoli and Atelhe (2014) opines that the Herders/Farmers conflicts in Nasarawa State have copious economic undertones. According to him, these are clearly economic conflicts and are not sectarian in any way. You have migrant pastoralists on the one hand and sedentary farmers on

the other hand fighting for pastures and farmlands which are decreasing as the population of humans and cattle increase (Omeje, nd.).

From the point of view of the vast extant literature and official documents, the Herders/Farmers conflicts in Nasarawa State have been engendered by interplay of factors, prominent among which are:

- i. Disputes arising from claims and contestations regarding land ownership and use.
- ii. Struggles for grazing/farm fields in the light of the diminution of arable land in the state.
- iii. Destruction of farmlands/farm-crops by Fulani herd.
- iv. Provocation of parties' farmers and herders alike through trespass on cherished valuables.
- v. Increasing deprivation and livelihood crisis in the context of growing ecological resource scarcity and lack.
- vi. Politicization of native/nomad differences through mobilization of clannish, ethnic, religious, or other primordial sentiments.
- vii. Increasing pressure on land and resources thereof as a result of rising population.
- viii. Indigenization and sedimentarisation of grazing communities in the state.
- ix. Culture of criminal brigandage and opportunism among the youths of both sides of the conflict divide.
- x. Inefficient land use laws and administration.
- xi. Politicization of the indigene-ship question etc (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014).

The implication of the above cited situation is that food production will drastically reduce to its bearest minimum and across the state and even to neighboring state that usually benefits from food products from Nasarawa state. In addition it will affect the revenue generation incurred from the agricultural sector as well as creating hunger and starvation among local and the poor in the society. With reference to the herder/farmer conflicts, Adisa and Adekunle (2010) observe that the

ecological dynamics engendered by climate change tend to drag various land users into conflictive relations in the context of resource scarcity and want. Lack of land to cultivate and the fear of crisis arising by the locals and the continue destruction of already cultivated farms reduces food production of the state. This situation has been made worse by the claims and contestations over land ownership and/or tenure rights. Hence: As farmers take up more of the river-bank for farms, they come into conflict with the other users, especially the herders and fish-folk.

The herders have been coming to the river for many years for the grass and tend to consider they have ownership rights. When they arrive and find their grazing land now covered by tomatoes, they may become angry. The farmers, often desperate to feed their families in a situation where the old rain-fed systems no longer work regard the herders as dangerous and intrusive (Brown, 2008). To say the least, therefore, the relationship between climate change and Farmers/Herders conflicts is such that the former brings about conditions that make the latter not only possible but also more or less compelling. To be sure, "As Fulani pastoralists undertake their movement to the southern part of the country (as dictated by the imperative of climate change), they regularly clash with farmers as the inevitable rogue herdsmen allow their cattle to enter tilled farms and eat up the crops. Altercations that follow usually end up in violence, with loss of lives and properties by both sides" (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). When the people's sources of livelihood are threatened as a consequence of the ecological vicissitudes and vagaries associated with climate change, desperate tactics are employed to ensure survival. This arguably explains the perennial pastoralist/farmer crisis in Doma, Nasarawa State and shortage in food crop growing in the area.

### **Theoretical framework**

The theory of eco-violence is an emerging theoretical construct seeking to explicate the relationship between environmental factors and violent

conflicts (Opie, 1987). Developed by Homer-Dixon (1999), the theory holds thus:

Decreased in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests, and fish. This can reduce economic productivity, both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999:30). Implicit in the eco-violence theory is the assumption that competition over scarce ecological resources engenders violent conflict. This trend has been aggravated in contemporary times owing to the impacts of climate change, which has exacerbated ecological scarcity across the world (Brown, 2008; Adisa, nd).

In the case of Doma, Nasarawa State, which is by design the focus of this study, the situation has been accentuated by the climate change-induced migration of pastoralists from the far North to the North-Central region of Nigeria in search of grazing fields.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Doma Local Government area of Nasarawa state, which is an area that has been enjoying a degree of relative peace and calmness for a long time until recently when there are pockets of conflicts involving farmers and herders. The research design for this study use descriptive survey in ascertaining the nature and patterns of herders/farmers relationship and crises and how it has affected food security in Doma local government area of Nasarawa State. Doma local government covers an area of 2,714 Km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 139, 607 at the 2006 census report. However, using



cluster and stratified sampling techniques, a sample size of 280 residents were drawn. The study area was clustered into eight (8) wards using cluster sampling Agbashi, Alwaza, Akpanaja, Ondori, Rukubi, Yelwa, Ekye, Okpata, after which stratified sampling was adopted to select 35 respondents from each ward.

Both the primary and secondary method was used in data collection, it was the sourcing of information from literature, reviews published and unpublished materials and journal, and survey techniques by the administration of questionnaire to the respondent in the sampled population. data gathered was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

277 were duly completed and thus analyzed.

## Data Presentation and Analysis

### Perceptions of issues under study in view of research questions

#### Research Question I: What is the relationship between herders and farmers in Doma Local Government of Nasarawa State?

Table 1

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' ACCORDING TO NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP					
Nature of Relationship		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Cordial	30	10.83	10.83	10.83
	Hostile	147	53.09	53.09	63.92
	Barely tolerating one another	100	36.01	36.01	100.0
Total		277	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Field survey 2016

This table shows the nature of relationship between herders and farmers in Doma local government. Respondents that were of the opinion that the relationship is cordial were about 11 percent and 53 percent said the relationship is that of hostility. The remaining 36 percent were of the

view that farmers and herders in the area are barely tolerating one another.

**Table 2**

Distribution of Respondents' According to the Prevalence of Crises among Farmers and Herders					
Variable		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low	120	43.32	43.32	43.32
	High	157	56.68	56.68	100.0
Total		277	100.0	100.0	

**Source:** Field survey 2016

The table indicates that about 57% are of the view that there is high prevalence of crises between farmers and herders in the area while about 43% considered the rate of crises as low.

**Research question 2: What are the factors responsible for Herders/Farmers conflict in Doma Local Government area of Nasarawa State?**

**Table 3**

**How strongly did you agree or disagree with the following statement regarding disputes arising from claims and contestations regarding land ownership and use?**

Statements	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Not agree/ Not disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Struggles for grazing/farm fields in the light of the diminution of arable land in		58				58

the state.						
Destruction of farmlands/farm-crops by Fulani herdsmen				65		65
Provocation of parties' farmers and herders alike through trespass on cherished valuables.	74	25				99
Increasing deprivation and livelihood crisis in the context of growing ecological resource scarcity and lack.	40	15				55
Total	114	98		65		277

Source: Field survey 2016

Table 4

Distribution of Respondents' Reasons for having Conflict among Herders and Farmers					
Reasons		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Indigenization of the nomadic grazing communities	7	2.53	2.53	2.53
	Extreme climate variability and volatility	22	8.30	8.30	10.83
	Desertification/desert encroachment	30	10.83	10.83	21.66
	The rise in indiscipline and crime wave	38	13.72	13.72	35.38
	Inadequacy of rainfall/droughts	180	64.98	64.98	100.0
Total		277	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field survey 2016

The table above shows distributions of respondents based on the question on reasons for conflicts, in which most of the respondents stated that it was because of inadequate rainfall and droughts that tend to drive the herdsmen to farmlands which cover almost about 65 percent of the respondents' responses in various wards of Doma local government of Nasarawa State. This is followed by those that advance the reason of rise in indiscipline and crime wave among herders and farmers (Cattle rustlings, stealing of farm crops etc) with about 13.72 percent. For some, it was as a result of desertification and desert encroachment which represent 10.83%. Some of the conflicts can be attributed to extreme climate variability and volatility, represented by

8.3% while 2.5% represent respondents that opined that indigenization of the nomadic grazing communities led to conflicts.

**Research question 3: What are the effects of Herders/Farmers conflict on food production in Doma Local Government of Nasarawa State?**

**Table 5**

Distribution of Respondents' to Whether Herders and Farmers Conflict Constitute a Barrier to Food Production					
Variable		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	80	28.88	28.88	28.88
	Yes	197	71.12	71.12	100.0
Total		277	100.0	100.0	

**Source:** Field survey 2016

The table indicates that 71% are of the view that conflicts constitute a barrier to food production in the area while about 29% says it does not. The implication of the above cited situation is that food production will drastically reduce to its barest minimum and across the state and even to neighboring state that usually benefits from food products from Nasarawa state. In addition it will affect the revenue generation incurred from the agricultural sector as well as creating hunger and starvation among local and the poor in the society.

## Test of Hypotheses

### Hypothesis 1

$H_0$ : There is no relationship between herders/farmers crisis and food production in Doma local government area.

$H_1$ : There is no relationship between herders/farmers crisis and food production in Doma local government area.

Table 6: Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
crisis * food production	3	23.1%	10	76.9%	13	100.0%

crisis * food production						
			Food production			Total
			very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	
Conflict	not at all	Count	1	0	0	1
		Expected Count	.3	.3	.3	1.0
	a substantial amount	Count	0	0	1	1
		Expected Count	.3	.3	.3	1.0
	some what	Count	0	1	0	1
		Expected Count	.3	.3	.3	1.0
Total		Count	1	1	1	3
		Expected	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0

	Count				
--	-------	--	--	--	--

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.04	2	.0024
a. 9 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .33.			

Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	1.414	.199
	Cramer's V	1.000	.199
N of Valid Cases		3	
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.			
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.			

Since the P-value or significant value is 0.0024 is less than the alpha value 0.01 which means our result is statistically significant, this means that we would accept the alternative hypothesis that says there is a relationship between herders and farmers crises and food production at the 99% confidence level, therefore food production is related or dependent to herders and farmers crisis in Doma local government of Nasarawa state. On the bottom of the chi-square table, it tells us what percentage of the cell have expected count less than 5 this is important because it is an assumption of the chi-square tests in this analysis our chi-square statistics is 6.000. If we look at the symmetric measure we have test of normality phi and crammer's v, the phi and crammer's v is like the correlation coefficient which tells us the size of the relationship, from the value of phi and crammer's v which is 1.414 and 1.000 is relatively a high relationship. Therefore there is high degree of

relationship between herders and farmers crises and food production in Doma local government area of Nasarawa state.

## CONCLUSION

The prevalence of crisis has serious implication for the development of any community or state. The conflicts between the Herders and Famers in these areas have resulted into enmity and hatred between the people who have lived together in peace for years. This is as a result of the spiralling migration of pastoralist from far North towards the central parts of Nigeria leading to a dialectical relationship between the Fulani herdsmen and the settled native farmers. As earlier observed in the case of Doma local government in Nasarawa State, the situation is more complicated as a result of natural ecological fortune of the region a scenario leading to a desperate and violent struggle for scares grazing field and farm lang.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Northern States government should create a grazing field for the Herdsmen to avoid headers encroaching into cultivated farm land due to lack of grazing field.
2. Security of livelihood and property requires a major reform, also better funding of security agencies to enable them, be better equipped and highly motivated to provide more effective internal security to the satisfaction of the populace and their welfare, conditions reviewed this should be focused. Community policing should be encourage and more police men deployed to villages in Doma to response and curtail any issue of encroachment before it escalate.
3. Inbuilt traditional cultural, mechanisms for conflict resolution should be explored and used. Communities which today are engaged in war have lived in peace for many years. It is important that those factors which made peaceful co-existence possible in the past should be identified and promoted. Traditional rulers should be given prominent and constitutional role to play in



this effort. This will challenge them to live up to expectation and indeed restore people's confidence in the traditional institution.

4. Lastly, effective regulation of grazing and farming activities in Nasarawa State through efficient land use laws, legislations and administration should be put in place.

## REFERENCES

Adisa, R.S. & Adekunle, O.A (2010). Farmer-herdsmen conflicts: A factor analysis of socio-economic conflict variables among arable crop farmers in North-Central Nigeria. *Journal of Human Ecology* 30,1, 1-9.

Adisa, R.S (undated). *Land use conflict between farmers and herdsmen: Implications for agricultural and rural development in Nigeria*. Available at [www.interchopen.com](http://www.interchopen.com). Accessed on September 19, 2015.

Aning, K. & Atta-Asamoah, A. (2011). Demography, environment and conflict in West Africa. *KAIPTC Occasional paper* 34, 1-27

Homer-Dixon, T.F. (1999) *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Nnoli, O. (2001); *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*: Department of Political Science University of Nigeria Nsukka.

Okoli, A.C. & Atelhe, A.G. (2014). Nomads against natives: A political ecology of herder/farmer conflicts in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* Vol. 4 No. 2; February 2014. Available at [www.aijcrnet.com](http://www.aijcrnet.com)

Omeje, K. (undated). Conflicts in West Africa. *Sorting-out-the-mess*.

Conflicts-in-West- Africa-pdf

- Opie, J. (1987). Renaissance origins of the environmental crisis. *Environmental History Review*, 11, 1, 2-17
- Osaghae, E.E & Suberu, T.R. (2005). A history of identities, violence and stability in Nigeria. *CRISE Working paper* 6.
- Stone, C. (2014). Land conflicts and lethal violence in Nigeria: Patterns, mapping and evolution (2006-2014). *Nigeria working papers series*, 38 28/11/2014. Ibadan: FRA-Also available at <http://www.ifra-nigerdf/land-conflict-lethal-violence-nigeria.pdf>
- Umar, S (Reporter) (2015, June 3). Great Green wall project will revive northern economy. *Daily Trust*, p.11
- World Watch Research (WWR, 2015). Migration and violent conflicts in divided societies: Non-Boko Haram violence against Christian in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. *Conflict security analysis network. Working paper* 1. March, Abuja, Nigeria.