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## The Effects of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers Conflicts on Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The intensification of deadly armed resource use conflict between cattle herders and crop farming communities across Nigeria and the lack of political will and/or capacity by the Nigerian Government to identify the root cause(s) and put a permanent solution to the conflicts has disastrous implications on the country's economy and development generally. This study is aimed at assessing the Effects of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers Conflict on Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria. Marxist conflict and Tragedy of the common theoretical perspectives were both used in analyzing the study. The study revealed that cattle herders and crop farmer's conflict result to loss of many lives and property. The conflict is also linked with food insecurity (famine) and high cost of food stuffs leading to deepening hunger and absolute poverty as well as social and political instability as business activities and many schools are closed down. Moreso, social infrastructural facilities including schools, hospitals, and places of worship, residential houses, roads and even airports are neither destroyed nor occupied by cattle herders' militias or crop farmer's refugees. It was recommended that herdsmen should establish ranches to curtail the idea of grazing over farmlands. Government at all levels should ban open grazing and indiscriminate movement of cattle on roads. Herdsmen and farmers should be educated on the modern practices of rearing cattle and farming activities and need for peaceful coexistence. Protection of lives and property should be the cardinal objective of government at all levels. Herders should monitor the activities of their members from within and the deviant ones should be exposed and punished. Strong and viable mechanisms of resolving conflicts should be established between herders and farming communities. The study conclude that the federal government should as a matter of urgent respond adequately to the incessant attacks and promptly deploy well trained impartial security operatives to protect lives and property in the affected communities.

**Keywords:** Effects, Cattle Herders, Crop Farmers, Conflict, Socio-economic Development

### INTRODUCTION

Nigerian communities are presently experiencing incessant frightening security challenges orchestrated by cattle herders and crop farmer's conflict, even security operatives are not spared in these attacks. It is no longer news that every day, the Nigerian media are flouted with ugly headlines such as "Callous herdsmen attacked, butcher, and raped women". Fresh attack: Herdsmen ambush, open fire on NSCD, Police, soldiers and kill 10", "Benue state grieves again 87 innocent people including catholic priest and a family of 8 with their newly born baby slaughtered by Fulani herdsmen at night in cold blood", President Buhari has not done enough to stop the killings" to mention but few. The situation is very disturbing and embarrassing to the government, people and all security agencies of this country. Despite calls from highly placed Nigerian past leaders, clergy men, politicians and renowned scholars for the federal



government of Nigeria to stop the killings, the killings has continued unabated. Farms are destroyed; farmers are killed, planting differed, farms abandoned and harvest left to rot away. One can imagine the damage that these attacks are doing to the nation's food production as well as the socio-economic development of the country. This may impede the ability of the country to reduce food imports and achieve sustainable food security.

For several decades, Nigeria has continued to witness sustained attacks on farmers and the unarmed innocent rural dwellers across the country claiming thousands of lives and damaging property worth millions of dollars, injuring scores and displacing many more people from their homes. Often times, these farmers and rural dwellers are taken unaware, overpowered, and injured; and the harden take undue advantage to steal, rape, kidnap and raze houses. Sunday (2017) contends that: the tension between Fulani herdsmen and farming communities has existed for many years. There has been a dramatic escalation in recent times to include many more attacks, kidnappings and killings by the nomads. Between 2010 and 2013, Fulani militants killed about 80 people in total, but by 2014, they had killed 1, 229 people. Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kaduna and Katsina states have been the worst hit of late having suffered devastating attacks by the Fulani herdsmen with a heavy toll on human lives and property. Fulani herdsmen brutally kill natives and invaded farm communities including women and children in various states across the country. They are armed with sophisticated weapons and usually attack their target communities at a time they are most vulnerable such as at midnight or on Sundays when they are in church, killing people indiscriminately and burning houses and looting their property. Most worrisome is the brutality and impunity with which the assailants go about expects without regards for law and the sanctity of life. The Nigerian police and even the military seem powerless to defend the victims from being mercilessly slaughtered in their homes.

These sustained attacks have taken a dangerous dimension as the herdsmen spare no one including women and children when they invade and inflict terror on communities. No wonder, the Global Terrorism Index (2015) ranked the Fulani herdsmen as the fourth deadliest terror group in the world comparable to Boko Haram, ISIS, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and Al-shabaab. The report further reveal that Nigeria is one of the most terrorized countries on earth, coming only after countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and one other.

The incessant attacks have a drastic effect on food security; diseases (manipulation) and socio-economic development to an enormous extent as it poses a great danger to the Nigerian economy. Despite this hazard, the conflict poses no sign of ending. The attacks have met little resistance from police and the military. The federal government's response to the crisis has been widely criticized by the Nigerian press as inadequate while Fulani herdsmen have continued to clash with farming communities in Benue, Plateau, Ogun, Oyo, Nasarawa, Kogi, Rivers, Taraba, Zamfara, Adamawa, Bauchi, Enugu, Ekiti, Kwara, Delta, Abia, Imo, Ebonyi, Kaduna, Edo, Niger and Federal Capital Territory (Daily Trust, 2017). A number of factors accounted for these conflict. Tonah (2006) asserts that since the Sahelian draught of the 1970s and 1980s, and the accompanying migration of a huge number of pastoralists into fringes of the humid forest zone of West Africa, there has been a massive increase of the incidence of farmers –



herder's crisis. Abbas (2012) posits that land related issues, especially, overgrazing fields account for the highest percentage of the conflict. In the pre-harvest period, cattle frequently destroy or eat ripened crops as they are led into the field (Tonan, 2006). This crisis has remained a major issue in Nigeria and in most times, it is not seen as a resource conflict but an ethno-religious issue. Many farmers and herders have lost their lives and herds. Most of these incidences (attacks) occur in the village communities or rural fields where there is no security pressure or where it is difficult to police. In fact, the World Bank (2012) confirms that 52% of Nigerians still live in rural areas, where they are most vulnerable to sporadic, sustained attacks. Consequently, reprisal attacks exist on both sides. Herders also suffer huge losses (damages) when farmers inflict physical injuries on the cattle by using cutlass, spares, arrows, guns or by poisoning their cattle. The conflict often leads to disunity or distrust, violence, disagreement, and bloodshed among the parties (Adebayo & Olaniyi, 2008). Farmers often accuse herders of trespassing on their farm land to graze their cattle, contaminating the streams, indiscriminate defecation of cattle on roads and destroying their crops. While the cattle breeders (herders) claim that they are being attacked by gangs and farming communities who steal their cattle and only act to defend themselves. With the destruction of farm crops and retaliation by the farmers to kill livestock owned by the herdsman, the overall food production, both in crops and meat is grossly affected, which implies increased hunger, disease and malnutrition.

Faced by these security challenges (position), some farmers have taken to burning their farm land after they harvested their farm produce (crops) to deny passing herdsman access to graze which further aggravate tension, despite the fact that such act or practice damages the soil. Worried by this trend, the federal government of Nigeria has proposed grazing reserved or ranches as a way of finding solution to the crisis but the proposal was vehemently opposed rejected by southern governors and some Nigerian parliaments. In Kaduna state, the state government has admitted to have paid compensation to aggrieved herdsman to stop further killings. While Benue State which is the most affected state in the country has successfully passed law against open grazing in order to curtail herders-farmers crisis within its jurisdiction, setting precedents to other affected states like Taraba which is currently working on its anti-grazing law. However, there seems to be little appetites to address these crisis at the federal level; rather, the federal government is concerned with finding solution to cattle rustling which could rather be a reaction to herders attacks, since most efforts seem to be taking place at the state levels with some governors keen to engaging the farmers and herders with the view to finding lasting solution and others adopting a more hostile approach. In view of this prevailing situation, it is discernible that there is a compelling need to continue to find lasting solutions to the problems posed by crop farmers and Fulani herdsman crisis in Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Explanations**

The contemporary society is characterized by various schools of thoughts, each analyzing social phenomenon from different (its own) perspectives. For this study, tragedy of the commons theory and a classical sociological theory, Marxist conflict perspective will be considered in this study.



## Tragedy of the Commons Theory

The theory of the tragedy of the commons was propounded in 1833 by the Victorian economist William Forster Lloyd and developed by Garrett Hardin (1968). It assumes that within a shared –resource system (common resources collectively owned), each individual users act independently to their own self-interest and behave contrary to the common good of all users by depleting or spoiling that resource through their collective action. The word ‘common’ here is taken to mean any shared and unregulated resource such as atmosphere, rivers, streams, oceans, land, etc. originally, it was referred to a resource owned by a community, and no individual outside the community had any access to the resource. However, the concept is presently used when describing a problem when all persons have equal and open access (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/tragedy-of-the-commons>). Hardin (1968) used an example of grazing land when describing the tragedy (adverse effects) of overpopulation. According to Investopedia (2017):

The tragedy of the common is an economic problem in which every individual tries to reap the greatest benefit from a given resource. As the demand for the resource overwhelms the supply, every individual who consumes an additional unit directly harms others who can no longer enjoy the benefits. Generally, the resource of interest is easily available to all individuals: the tragedy of the common occurs when individuals neglect the wellbeing of society in pursuit of personal gain (p.1).

The implication here is that common land yields adequate food for herd’s animals and farmers. However, as long as their population increases and the resource remain unregulated, the land will be unable to support the larger population and as such each person would act in his own selfish interest and consume as much of the scarce resources as possible, making the research even harder to find (Hardin, 1968). Relatedly, open pasture used by herdsman allows their cattle to graze and each herdsman continue to add cattle to the pasture so as to expand the amount of proceeds coming from their herds. Thus, the common tragedy is the damage done to the atmosphere that causes global warming, climate change and scarcity of resources shared by all and as the resources become scarcer competition over the resources increases leading to conflict (Audu, 2013).

## Marxist Conflict Perspective

This perspective views society as being in a perpetual struggle among the various interest groups in the society arising from society’s inherent inequality (the proletariat or workers and bourgeoisie or owners of the means of production). Due to the uneven outcome on the unhealthy competition among these various interest groups, the most powerful group who often win or gain upper hand in the struggle (competition) have less concern for the general social interests, against less powerful group. Karl Marx is the main proponent of this perspective, the biggest problem from conflict point of view is the system itself and the inequality it creates. With regards to cattle herders and crop farmer’s conflict in Nigeria, conflict theory explains that the powerful group (herders) deliberately employ extreme violence against crop farming communities to take over their lands for grazing purpose. The problem of desertification has affected cattle rearing in far



north and herders are forcefully moving downward for greener pasture therefore, they employ all sort of violence in order to have their way or advance their selfish interest. Social inequality is a major problem in Nigeria. Fanon (1976) captured the picture of this situation when he warns that:

The soldier of an adult nation is not a simple mercenary but a citizen who by means of arms defends the nation. That is why it is of fundamental importance that the soldier should know that he is in the service of his country and not in the service of his commanding officer, however great that officer's prestige may be. We must take advantage of the national military and civil service in order to raise the level of the national consciousness, and to detribalize and unite the nation (p.162).

It is imperative to seek out ways to bring a permanent solution to cattle herders and crop farmer's conflict in Nigeria.

### **Causes of Incessant Herders Attacks on Crop Farming Communities in Nigeria**

The Fulani herders (pastoralists), whose primary occupation is the raising of livestock indulge in random movements across the West African region aimed at reaching areas with abundant grasses and water for their cattle, avoid tax collectors, harmful insects, hostile weather and social environment, are often engaged in intense competition for the limited amount of land with farmers who use their land for agricultural purposes. A number of factors have been attributed to those conflicts. Some of the causes may include:

**Competition for Scarce Resources:** Competition is the main cause of every conflict. Persistent antagonism over scarce resources is the fundamental cause of conflict between economic agents since all conflicts share common qualities (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009). From the words of Manu et al (2014), conflict originates from the insatiable nature of human wants: competition for scarce resources is the foremost causes of common intergroup conflict. Farmers-herders crisis is basically caused by competition since farmers increasingly compete with Fulani herders for farmland, pastures and water. Conflict of value exists among these two contending causes. Fabiyi & Otunuga (2016) estimated that "Nigeria has 22 million cows that consume about 1 billion gallons per day of water and 500 million kilograms of grass and forage crops. The stock value of Nigeria's cattle population is about ₦3.4 trillion or \$16.3 billion at ₦150, 000 per head" (p.1). There is therefore, no iota of doubt that the growth of human and livestock population gives rise to an increased pressure on natural resources and a stiff competition for available resources between farmers and herders. The increasing population of cattle competes with farmers for land. The migration of large number of herds and herders into the fringes of the humid areas has been a massive increase of the incidence of farmers-herders conflict.

**Hostile Weather and Environmental Factors:** Shifting weather patterns attributed to climate change has transformed vast tracks of grassland into desert, driving large number of herders southwards. Nfomi et al (2014) assert that environmental issues like desertification, land degradation and climate change are becoming major factors in conflict. According to the International Regional Information Network (2009), over a third of land that was cultivable 50 years ago is now desert across 11 of Nigeria's Northern states: Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Yobe,





Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi. Climate change has constituted a great threat by putting great pressure's on the land thus provoking conflict. There has been a great increase in the presence of Fulani herders in central and southern Nigeria due to climate change. Again, the International Regional Information Network (2009) posits that in addition to population growth and continued felling of the forest for cooking fuel, northern nomadic communities are increasingly moving southwards as once-green pasture becomes desert. Climate change has caused desertification in the far north, and has led to extended drought and an estimated 20% drops in crop yields (Fabiya & Adeleke, 2016). Ojo (2016) maintains that:

Desertification in the savannah region of northern Nigeria, due to low rainfall, has substantially reduced the grazing land and water sources for cattle. Thus, the herdsmen in order to feed their animals have to migrate to where they could get grass to nurture them. In the cause of doing that, the cattle swoop on farmlands and destroy crops planted by farmers. Of course the farmers have to fight back over the destruction of their means of livelihood (p.1).

In raining season, cattle rearing were mainly prevalent in the far north and this gave the cattle herders access to vast areas of grassland. However, as dry season sets in, herdsmen had to move southward where the raining season is longer and the soil retains moisture for long, in search of pasture and water (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009). Another environmental factor that influences their movement has to do with the fear of losing the cattle to rustlers, wild animals and harmful insects (tse-tse flies) which cause diseases such as trypanosomiasis. Furthermore, the intensification of Boko Haram terrorist activities over the years has caused nomadic Fulani herdsmen to abandon their foraging grounds in the northeast (Fabiya & Otunga, 2016). More so, the recent rise of large scale cattle rustling may be another factor. These volatile situations have been aggravated by influx of herders escaping deteriorating environmental conditions and causing soil erosion; destroying agricultural crops and overgrazing on farmlands which remains a major contention hence farmers often accuse nomadic Fulani herdsmen of destroying their crops and with the herders insisting they have nowhere to graze. This disagreement usually leads to serious conflict that claims many lives and property worth millions of dollars.

**Expansionist Policy and Land Grabbing Agenda:** Most communities in Nigeria, especially in Benue, Plateau, Taraba and Kaduna state are expressing fears that the Fulani herdsmen's attacks could possibly have a hidden agenda aimed at taken over their land completely and occupying for their economic purpose. This assertion is in agreement with ideas of Musa et al (2017) who argued that conflict between farmers and herdsmen have become a common feature of economic livelihood. Similarly, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century an Ngoni group, Zulu led by shaka, a warrior wanted to expand their territory at the expense of their other Bantu neighbours since the Boers (African word for farmer, which came to denote the descendants of the Dutch speaking settlers) were seen as no pushover. Encouraged by the attraction of the area (South Africa) because of the favourable climate for living and farming with unrestricted movement into South Africa and the extensive use of land by the whites, land was becoming scarce. The aborigines-the San and Hottentots wo were not able to confront and resist the invaders into their territory because of slim demographic and poor physical strength were quickly displaced and their



lands was taken over by the Boers (Charles, 2011). The Boers continued to consolidate land hood through their superior weaponry because they introduced new farming techniques and advanced technology to work the land and produce cash crops. More and more space was being acquired for farming and land was becoming scarcer and costlier. The Boers were never satisfied with land they had acquired. Eventually the land meant for grazing of Ngoni cattle was encroached upon and taken over by the Boer farmers and settlers. This negatively affected the chances of the Ngoni speaking South Africans getting sufficient land and tends and grazes their cattle as was the tradition before the coming of the whites. It was quite obvious that cattle rearers could not profitably go to war with their stronger white neighbours. The strategy was to wage war of territorial expansion on their immediate black nieghbours. The major reason for this war or movement was inadequacy of land due to population increase which was caused by fertile soil for crop production and high quality of posture. Given the rate of the population, people could no longer fit on the land that was available. In order to get land, people started to fight for it. The defeated ones had to migrate to other places (Abanyam, 2016). With much hunger for land to graze their cattle, Shaka the Zulu began a war of land reclamation and restoration from 1820 which lasted for about 30 years (the war/movement ended in 1850). The period 1820 is always referred to in South African history as the period of trouble rendered in Ngoni language as *Mfecane*. It was a period in which much havoc and destruction took place in South Africa so that land would be secured by the Zulu nation to accommodate their cattle. The effect of his atrocious war was felt throughout Africa. The war caused many African nations to fight each other in the cause of defending themselves and territories against Shaka. Three powerful group that arose up at that time and started fighting each other were Sobhuza'a Ngwane, Zwide and Ndwande and Dinigiswayo's Mtethwa (Abanyam, 2016). The Sotho people for instance, fought the Tswana of Western Petoria as well as Bostwana throwing them into great disorder and confusion (Charles, 2011).

**Ethno-Religious and Political Factors:** Farmers-herders crisis in Nigeria is not only seen as resource conflict but it also takes ethno-religious and political dimension. Herder and farmer groups have different values, customs, physical and cultural features, differences between them are often tagged as ethnic conflict (Ofuoke & Isife, 2009: Tonah, 2006). Herders are therefore united in the sense that they belong to one ethnic group. This strong sense of belongings (in-group feelings against out-group or farmers) among herders is a unifying force that enable them to organize themselves to protect their economic interest and protect their cultural value as an ethnic group. Again, Ofuoku & Isfe (2009) explain that:

The Fulani nomadic cattle rearers being a minority in host communities have a unique culture and strange sense of solidarity. They are often isolated from the farming population. In such cases, conflict between them and the farming population of the host communities is regarded as having an ethnic colour (p.48).

Conflict between farmers and Fulani herders unite Fulani ethnic group who view an attack on a fellow Fulani as an attack on all. Whenever crisis erupted between Fulani



herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, those from Niger Republic, Chad, Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea and other West African countries including those living in Cameroon will find their ways to Nigeria to fight the host communities to protect their interest, thus taking ethnic dimensions. This assumption has been validated by the governors of Benue and Kaduna States respectively and the Nigerian military who argues that the violent herdsmen that attack and kill rural farmers, burnt their houses, rape and destroy property are not from Nigeria (Vanguard, 2017; Ojo, 2017). The main contention here is that the Fulani herdsmen incessant attacks are viewed by the Christians as an agenda to Islamize Nigeria and to completely takeover their land for political reasons and to further their economic interest. This version is common among the Tiv people of Central Nigeria, who perceive herders invasion as a fresh plan to take over their land and forcefully convert them to Islam. They often argue that when the Muslim commander of faithful, Usman Danfodio waged a jihad in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to Islamize the Tiv people, it was met with stiff resistance. Therefore, they viewed the invasion as a fresh plan to relaunch another jihad thus labeling it as a religious war. Wilmot (1985) opined that conflict is the interaction of independent people who perceive incomputable goals and interaction from each other in achieving goals.

**Nigerian Porous Borders and Poor Immigration Surveillance:** The proliferation of arms to the nation's porous borders is one of the factors for the attacks. Many concerns have been raised regarding the true identity of Fulani herdsmen who perpetuate violence across Nigeria with many including the Nigerian military believing that they are herdsmen from other parts of West Africa, while others see them as members of Boko Haram terrorist masquerading and Fulani herdsmen. However, the Nigerian porous border and poor immigration surveillance and West African policy on free movement within its region may have been responsible for the incessant herdsmen attacks on rural farmers across Nigeria. Farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria is an old phenomenon (Tonah, 2006). However, the conflicts were amicably resolved by the traditional rulers (authorities). Therefore, the Fulani herders and crop farmers were living in peace and their relationship was very cordial and beneficial. However, the clashes have become wide spread in recent times by the arrival of hostile herders from other neighbouring countries that move with sophisticated weapons. The Fulani herders claim there is freedom of movement of men and cattle, interaction and appreciation in the country while the farmers see the farmland invasion as not acceptable and infringement on their personal and communal property (Idowu, 2017).

**1. Overgrazing:** Overgrazing is a source of conflict between herders and crop farmers. Rural dwellers and farmers often accuse the herdsmen of overgrazing on their lands. Overgrazing causes land degradation, soil erosion and lose of useful species. According to Ofuoku & Isefe (2009), continues overgrazing causes erosion on the plot of land thereby making it infertile and difficult to cultivate by farmers. Overgrazing removes the vegetal cover over the soil and the exposed soil gets compacted due to operative soil depth declines.





2. **Destruction of Crops and Cattle Theft (Rustling):** Destruction of crops by the cattle during grazing and cattle theft is one of the major causes of conflict between Fulani herders and crop farmers in Nigeria.

3. **Indiscriminate Defecation and Causing of Accident by Cattle on Roads:** Defecation on roads and causing of accident by cattle when herders are crossing with herds on roads is also a cause of conflict between herders and farmers. It is considered as a minor cause, though (Ofuoke & Isefe, 2009).

4. **Contamination of Streams and Rivers:** In most rural communities, streams and rivers are the main source of water supply. Many communities have the notion that contamination leads to outbreak of cholera, typhoid fever and lever fluke. Ojo (2016) alleged that:

When these herdsmen take their cattle to drink at Community Rivers, the water is polluted by the animals and they indiscriminately urinate and defecate in them. Thus, women and children who source for water for household use are put through a lot of stress seeking clean water for drinking and cooking (p.1).

Some of these Fulani herdsmen even kidnap, beat up, rape and murder some of the women that dare to challenge them about the destruction of their farm land or pollution of their water sources. Fresh water scarcity has equally been blamed for conflict. Audu (2013) affirmed that:

It is obvious that the world water demand grows every year in order to meet with its increasing population. Exhibited by climate change, fresh water scarcity is creating security concerns in some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the semi-arid region. Visible sign that show intensification of water scarcity includes hitherto flowing rivers running dry, wells going deeper to reach water, lakes shrinking, diminishing rainfall, shrinking arable lands for farmers, and less pastures and the drying up of drinking water. Water resources like rivers and streams for pastoralists. The availability of water, a major source needed for agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa, is a result of changes in global climatic conditions. Agriculture provides the means of livelihood and economic sustenance for a majority of the population of the region. Farmers and pastoralists, who are the main agricultural practitioners, make significant contributions in meeting the nutritional needs of the region and thus contributing to food security. They are almost wholly dependent on water resources to sustain their vocations. In recent times, access to water and grazing land has become more competitive and has led to the farmers and pastoralists into violent conflicts on a regular basis. This is a worrisome trend because both have coexisted inter-dependently for centuries, sharing the same fields for farming and grazing with a manageable level of tolerance and accommodation (p.25).

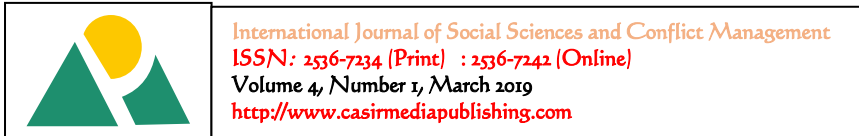
Thus, conflict ensues when the community's main source of water is contaminated by the cattle.

5. **Indiscriminate Bush Burning:** The burning of bush by farmers often creates tension between farmers and herders.

6. **Rape and Sexual Harassment:** Most nomads are single, therefore, in a bid to satisfy their sexual desire (thirst), the resort to rape and sexual harassment of females, the underage ones, married and the unmarried as well as the widowed, and this angered the host community thereby leading to conflict.

7. **Poor Control of Cattle:** Conflict erupts when livestock are poorly controlled and when herders wander on the cultivated fields.

8. **Political Factor:** There are some insinuations that the conflict is sponsored by politicians to discredit the government in order to takeover.



## The Effects of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers Conflicts on Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

The socio-economic implications following Fulani herdsmen incessant attacks on farming communities in Nigeria is very alarming. The attacks causes' food insecurity, it leads to depending poverty (absolute or primary poverty) situation and more social instability as well as political damage. Government's hardiness to put a stop to the armed Fulani herdsmen atrocities has created a situation in which farmers are unable to harvest what is left on their ravage farms because they are neither in refugee camps or are on the run for their lives. Most of them are also not planning for the season. With millions of farmers not harvesting now and not planting for the next season famine will be very imminent in many Nigerian communities including urban areas because most of these crops are harvested and taken to urban centers where they are consumed. No wonder, a recent study (survey) conducted in March, 2018 across 16 states of the federation (Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Plateau, Jigawa, Adamawa, Yobe, Kaduna, Kano, Taraba, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi, Zamfara, Niger, Gombe) and federal capital territory, FCT by World Food Programme, WFP, Food and Agricultural Organization, FAO, United States Aid for International Development, USAID, Mercy Corps, Famine Early Warning System Network, Save the Children, Oxfam revealed that: "A total of 3.5 million people are currently in full crisis in Nigeria, while 999,959 people are in emergency situation in need of urgent assistance". The report projected that the number of people caught in the food crisis could increase to 3.7million people during the lean period of June – August, 2018.

Incessant killings have very serious implications on the social stability of the country as people are always afraid of going about their business activities, schools are closed down, and many infrastructural facilities including houses are destroyed. The overall effects of farmer-herder violence in Nigeria have disastrous implications both on socio-economic development, political and religious aspects. Some of the implications includes:

1. **Loss of Lives and Property:** Incessant attacks by the herders and reprisal attacks of herders by the host communities have led to the loss of lives and the destruction of property worth thousands of dollars. The Global Terrorism Index indicates that over 90% of the attacks carried out by the group are on private citizens, accounting for 81% of deaths in the area. And these attacks have mainly been through armed assaults, killing and average of 11 people per attack. 1, 229 people were killed in 2014, up to 63 in 2013 and Benue State seems to be the hardest hit in recent times. More recently, more than 400 Nigerians were massacred by suspected Fulani men in Benue, Niger, Enugu, Delta, Taraba, Plateau, Ekiti, Ondo and Ebonyi States. The Global Terrorism Index 2016 indicates that more people died in clashes with herdsmen than in Boko Haram attacks.
2. **Reduction in Output and Income of Crops:** Farm produce is often destroyed during the crisis. This has distorted the development of agriculture in Nigeria. Ofuoku & Isefe (2009) pointed out that the crisis tends to negatively affect savings, credit repayment ability, as well as food security and economic wellbeing of urban dwellers that depend on these farmers for food supply and this discourages the farmers and



rural agricultural development. The attacks by the herdsmen on farmers may affect the more the efforts of the present government to diversify the Nigerian economy which is centered on agriculture due to unstable oil prizes in the international market. This violence disrupts farming activities, reduce crop yields and retard the efforts at modernizing Nigeria's agricultural sector. This agricultural low output may result in malnutrition and diseases. No wonder, a recent study (survey) conducted in March, 2018 across 16 states of the federation (Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Plateau, Jigawa, Adamawa, Yobe, Kaduna, Kano, Taraba, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kebbi, Zamfara, Niger, Gombe) and federal capital territory, FCT by World Food Programme, WFP, Food and Agricultural Organization, FAO, United States Aid for International Development, USAID, Mercy Corps, Famine Early Warning System Network, Save the Children, Oxfam revealed that: "A total of 3.5 million people are currently in full crisis in Nigeria, while 999,959 people are in emergency situation in need of urgent assistance". The report projected that the number of people caught in the food crisis could increase to 3.7million people during the lean period of June – August, 2018.

3. **Ethno-Religious and Social Tension:** Conflict breeds tension in the society. The fact that majority of farmers-herders are Muslims and Christians may exacerbate ethno-religious and social hostilities between the two groups.
4. **Socio-Economic Stagnation:** The conflict has crippled (paralyzed) socio-economic activities in the affected states. For several months; schools were shut down and pupils withdrawn, business were shut down and movement was very difficult as people flee to safer places to become refugees in their own communities.
5. **Decrease or Low Quality of Life:** Herders-farmers' crisis reduces the capacities of people to live the kind of life they value, and the real choices they have (Musa et al 2014).
6. **Spread of Arms and Weapons:** Farmers-herders conflict led to the spread of sophisticated (heavy) arms and other dangerous weapons shaking the security and stability of communities as people are always in perpetual fear of attacks and reprisal attacks by armed groups.
7. **Political Instability:** Conflict between farmers and herders are creating political instability and tension as many people are accusing the Federal Government of inaction.
8. **Mistrust and Strain Social Relationship:** The relationship between herders and farmers used to be cordial and reciprocal but the conflict has created serious level of mistrust among the groups.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is obvious that cattle herders and crop farmers incessant conflicts across Nigeria has a tremendous socio-economic implications on the country's development as these attacks leads to loss of lives and property, political and social instability, closure of businesses and schools, destruction of social infrastructural facilities and depending poverty, hunger and famine. There is therefore urgent need for the federal government to stop the killings and the anomie situation and deploy well trained impartial security



operatives to end the incessant attacks on farming communities in the country. From the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

1. Cattle herdsmen should establish ranches for herdsmen in their respective states and provide adequate facilities and security that will surmount the challenges of desertification and terrorist attacks, cattle rustlers and harmful insects.
2. Government at all levels should ban open grazing and indiscriminate movement of cattle on roads.
3. Cattle breeders association, traditional institutions, farmers association, national orientation agencies and other related bodies must educate herders and farmers on the hazardous effect of conflict and the need for peaceful coexistence among them.
4. The Nigerian borders are porous and there is the need to strengthen security along the borders. The Nigerian porous borders should be adequately manned by well trained personnel and sophisticated modern surveillance facilities to be procured urgently in order to curtail the movement of hostile Fulani herders from neighboring states entering the country illegally. Effective border control is needed to ward off Fulani herdsmen who migrate from other countries to wreak havoc in Nigeria.
5. Protection of lives and property should be the cardinal objective of government at all levels. The government should provide adequate security to both herders and farmers both in the rural areas and in urban areas. All the security agencies should strengthen their intelligence networks in order to dislodge killer herdsmen.
6. Both the host communities and the herders should monitor the activities of their members from within and the deviant ones should be exposed and punished. This will serve as a deterrent to other potential offenders and will go a long way to minimizing the level of distrust, cases of rapes, sexual harassment, indiscriminate burning of bushes, hostilities, unnecessary killings and destruction of property.
7. Farmers and herders should establish a viable, strong and effective method (system) of resolving disputes.
8. The federal government should respond adequately to the escalation of conflict between herders and farmers by promptly deploying adequate security measure and placing well trained security personnel on the highest level of alert.
9. The federal government should establish a task force comprising all security agencies aimed at recovering illegal arms from people in the country. The proliferation of small arms and weapons is a serious threat to our security. A situation where suspected herdsmen are allowed to carry dangerous weapons is a dangerous development.
10. The security agencies should also begin to stop and search herdsmen and other people not authorized to carry arms, the operation should not only be limited on the high way.
11. Leadership of All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) and the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) should work together to end the farmers/herders conflict.

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