

Review

Food Security and National Insecurity: Pathways to Averting an Impending Food Crisis in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Food security and national insecurity are inextricably linked, as insecurity is a major impediment to achieving food security, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. The goals of this article are to examine national insecurity and its effects on food security in order to propose solutions to avert an impending food crisis in Nigeria. The methodology used to generate data for the study is based on secondary sources of data obtained through desk research using up-to-date sources. According to the review's findings, there were a number of incidents of national insecurity from October 2020 to September 2021. These incidents, along with others already in place, have had a negative impact on food security, which has contributed to the rising cost of food items and the inability of many families to adequately purchase food items to feed themselves. As a result, there is an urgent need for the federal and state governments to adopt and follow the pathways outlined in this article in order to avert a food crisis by the year 2022.

Keywords: Food, food security, insecurity, food crisis, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this definition, "food" refers to a material consisting of essential protein, carbohydrates, and fat that is used in an organism's body to sustain growth, repair, and vital processes, as well as to provide energy for daily activities (Webster, 2021). Every substance containing nutrients like carbohydrates, proteins, and fats that can be consumed by a living organism and converted into energy and body tissues is considered to be food (Collins, 2021).

Food is typically derived from plant, animal, or fungal sources, among the thousands of edible species found throughout the world (Cunningham and Cunningham, 2004). Humans obtain food through a process in which specific plant species are planted and managed in order to produce the highest possible yield of their consumable parts, which is then consumed by humans (Garg et al., 2007). Agriculture produces plant species that are known as crops, and cattle rearing are the practice of keeping and managing domestic animals that are derived from

these crops. Fish are caught from bodies of water by fishing and reared in fish farms or aquaculture facilities after being caught. When a country produces enough food that is evenly distributed among its states, counties, or provinces, and its citizens can afford to eat well, that country is considered to be food secure, or that country ensures that its citizens have food security. Defining food security as the ability to obtain sufficient food on a day-to-day basis in order to lead a healthy and active life is Cunningham and Cunningham (2004). As stated in this definition, food security is defined in terms of an individual's ability to provide for themselves, and poverty and a lack of social standing are the greatest threats to personal food security.

As stated by the United Nations World Food Summit in 1996, food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient quantities of safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary requirements and food preferences in order to live

an active and healthy life (FAO, 2008). Food security, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2010), is simply the availability of food in terms of production, distribution, and consumption.

National insecurity, on the other hand, is the polar opposite of national security; it refers to a situation in which there is insufficient security in various parts of a nation or federation, or in the majority of the states within a nation or federation. Insecurity, according to Udoh (2015), is defined as a state of not feeling secure or of being exposed to danger or injury as a result of the activities of criminals in a given country or nation state. Udoh (2015) goes on to define insecurity as the anxiety that a person experiences when he or she believes they are vulnerable to danger or attack and, as a result, is feeling insecure.

A number of armed groups, including bandits, religious fundamentalists and fanatics such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP), violent separatist militia groups such as the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), and others have established themselves in Nigeria, resulting in widespread insecurity (Udoh, 2015). Several crimes have resulted from the presence of these groups, including kidnappings, murders or killings, armed robberies, arson, cattle rustling, rape, destruction of property, and injuries to many civilians throughout the nation. Because of the general state of insecurity that has spread throughout the country's six geopolitical zones, food production, distribution, and consumption have all been adversely affected, resulting in decreased food security. Individuals, groups, and organizations have been observing since the beginning of the year 2021 that the insecurity that the country is experiencing will have a significant impact on food security if no adequate measures are taken to address the situation.

In March 2021, Yusuf and Idris (2021) published a report that covered all 36 states of the federation and concluded that if banditry and communal crises are not addressed, Nigeria may face an increase in food insecurity. In addition, President Buhari, who is well aware of the threats of insecurity to food production in the country, directed the new service chiefs on March 5, 2021, to find ways of putting an end to banditry, kidnapping, and other criminal activities in the country in the next few weeks before the commencement of farming activities in the country (Yusuf and Idris, 2021).

On April 21st, 2021, the Plateau State Chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) urged the military taskforce in charge of maintaining peace in the state to provide adequate support to farmers ahead of the upcoming farming season in order to avert famine in the country (Sunday, 2021). On April 30th, 2021, a large number of farmers called on the Federal Government to

take deliberate steps to avert the looming food crisis that is now staring the country in the face as a result of increased insecurity caused by Boko Haram, bandits, and kidnapers (Yakubu, 2021). On the occasion of Eid-elFitr, which was celebrated on May 12th, 2021, President Buhari promised that security would be improved so that bandits and other criminals would not cause problems for farmers and food production in the country (ChannelsTV, 2021a). On June 10th, 2021, the Governor of Kaduna State issued a warning about an impending food crisis in the country due to insecurity. This is because farmers in banditry-affected states such as Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, and Zamfara are unable to go to work (Akhaime and Alabi, 2021). The United Nations warned on July 31st that hunger is expected to rise due to conflict dynamics in 23 global hotspots, with the highest alerts for catastrophic situations in four African locations, including northern Nigeria (Lederer, 2021).

The National Vice President of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) has urged governments to create an enabling and secure environment for farming to thrive, warning that if this does not happen next year (2022), hunger will be the order of the day, driving many people to commit heinous crimes (The Nation, 2021). Furthermore, the President of AFAN revealed that the organization had received complaints from farmers that they sometimes had to pay bandits to gain access to their farms, and that this is a serious threat to achieving food security and that there is a link between food security and insecurity (Liman and Surajo, 2021).

On the occasion of World Food Day on October 16th, 2021, one of the food suppliers in southern Nigeria lamented how they incur losses when perishable food items such as vegetables coming from the north waste away or spoil due to delays along highways caused by armed robbers blocking some roads to rob travellers. Food vendors urged the federal government to provide security to vehicles transporting food from the north to the south in order to achieve food security.

The current situation in Nigeria clearly indicates the onset of a food crisis, which will occur unless the government takes immediate action. According to Timmer (2010), a food crisis is a long-term shortage of food that causes hunger, malnutrition, and death. A food crisis occurs when hunger and malnutrition rates rise dramatically at the local, national, and global levels. Based on this, the paper aims to investigate food security and national insecurity and to propose solutions to avert an impending food crisis.

RECENT INCIDENCES OF NATIONAL INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

From 2015 to the present, it is possible to argue that the

rate of national insecurity has increased, despite gains made in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents in the north east. The spread of kidnapping from the southern to the northern parts of the country complicates security agents' efforts to protect citizens' lives and property. From December 2020 to the present, there has been a kidnapping crisis in the north west and north central states of Katsina, Zamfara, Kebbi, Kaduna, and Niger, with a series of abductions of primary school pupils, secondary school students, and even those in tertiary institutions.

In October 2020, there was a near-anarchy situation as a result of the End Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) protests that turn violent, resulting in the loss of lives and property destruction primarily in the southern parts of Nigeria. Following these protests, large-scale looting of Covid-19 palliatives stored in warehouses in many state capitals across the federation occurred. The void left by the disbandment of SARS has resulted in increased criminality in the country, as its replacement Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team was unable to take off as of the end of May 2021. This was exacerbated by attacks on correctional facilities and the release of inmates or criminals in states in the south, such as Edo, and the south east, such as Imo.

The rate of insecurity in the country increased in May 2020 as a result of attacks on Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) offices, police stations, courts, and correctional facilities by suspected members of the banned IPOB, primarily in states in the country's south east and south south. The attacks on police stations were followed by the assassination of over 100 police officers in the months of May and June 2021. (ChannelsTV, 2021b).

The dismantling and theft of narrow and standard rail tracks by railway vandals in Kaduna, Kogi, Lagos, and Oyo states increased crime and criminality in the country in June 2021. The destruction of rail tracks endangers the lives and property of the traveling public at a time when a large number of people rely on railways due to insecurity along many roads in both the northern and southern parts of the country.

Two incidents in August 2021 highlighted the country's growing insecurity. On August 13th, an armed gang of youths attacked a group of travellers in the Gida-Biyu area of Jos North LGA, killing 25 and injuring many more from Ondo and Ekiti States. On the 23rd of the same month, Nigeria's premier military university, the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) Afaka campus in Igabi LGA of Kaduna state, was attacked by bandits who killed two officers and kidnapped another. Many Nigerians were shocked by the attack and wondered where in the country was safe and out of reach of the bandits if a defense facility could be attacked.

Unknown gunmen attacked Kabba Custodial Center in

Kogi on September 13th 2021, killing two officials and freeing 240 inmates. While some of the inmates were re-arrested, many others have yet to be arrested, raising concerns about increased crime and criminality in the state and neighboring states. Based on these concerns, the Federal Government requested Interpol assistance in arresting the freed inmates in order to prevent them from engaging in further criminal activity and worsening the situation.

In the same month of September 2021 and the first week of October, there was renewed violence and attacks on government facilities and private properties in the South Eastern States, particularly Anambra State, which is set to hold a gubernatorial election on November 6th, 2021. As a result, in order to ensure that the election is held on time, the Federal Government is considering declaring a State of Emergency or imposing an Emergency Rule in the state if the situation does not improve by the election date.

NATIONAL INSECURITY AND ITS IMPACTS ON FOOD SECURITY

National insecurity has serious impacts for food security which are highlighted below based on the geo-political zones.

North West

Banditry began in Zamfara state in 2009 and gradually spread to the other states of the zone. The banditry is accompanied by cattle rustling, which effectively makes cattle rearing and other ruminant rearing impossible, giving rise to the concept Kiwo Haram, which literally means "animal rearing is forbidden" (Ladan and Rafindadi, 2020). Apart from cattle rustling, the bandits added kidnapping to their list of activities in 2018, which essentially means that everyone is at risk as the bandits block roads to kidnap travelers. Since independence, farming and cattle rearing have become the primary economic activities and sources of income for the vast majority of the zone's population. However, banditry, cattle rustling, and kidnapping severely harmed these activities.

A committee formed to investigate the menace of banditry, led by a former Inspector General of Police (IGP), reported that between June 2011 and May 2019, 4,983 women were widowed, 25,050 children were orphaned, and over 190,000 people were displaced as a result of banditry in Zamfara State (Wodu, 2020). These widows and orphans have lost breadwinners, leaving their families unable to earn enough money to buy food. Those who have been displaced rely on government food

rations at IDP camps or share food with friends and relatives. On May 23, 2021, bandits invaded farmlands in Damaga village of Maradun LGA, shooting sporadically and killing eight farmers who were clearing their farmlands ahead of the farming season (Mwuese, 2021). Bandits' killings have spread to Kebbi state, where on June 5th, 2021; bandits kill 88 people in eight villages of Danko/Wasagu LGAs (Guardian 2021). The majority of those killed in the villages are farmers, cattle ranchers, and fishermen who work to provide food for their families, many of whom have faced food insecurity since the attack.

On May 5, 2021, the State Governor of Katsina revealed that bandits had prevented the cultivation of 50,000 hectares of farmland in 2020. (KCN, 2021). According to the Special Adviser on Agriculture to the State Governor, this 50,000 farmlands translates to 58,000 hectares of farmland not cultivated in the state, resulting in a 30% reduction in food production (Companion, 2021). An investigation conducted in August 2021 revealed that farmers in some LGAs of the state, including Batsari, Dandume, Faskari, Sabua, and Safana, were unable to access their farms to plant crops despite the fact that the planting season had ended. This was also the case in Kaduna state, where many farmers were unable to access their farmlands in the LGAs of Birnin Gwari, Chikun, Giwa, Igabi, and Kajuru. Farmers who go to their farms run the risk of being killed, kidnapped, or injured. For example, on August 14th, 2021, bandits launched a new attack, killing eight farmers in Buruku and Udawa villages of the state's Chikun LGA.

North-East

Since 2009, this region has been affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, with the military engaged in a long battle against insurgents in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, with displaced people spilling over into neighbouring states. The insurgents continue to stage daring attacks and work tirelessly to cut Borno state off from its neighbour Yobe through gruesome highway attacks. Large areas of land in northern Borno that connect to the strategically important Lake Chad remain uninhabitable for civilians, not only because of Boko Haram insurgents, but also because of attacks by Islamic State (IS) affiliate Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) (Abdulaziz, 2021). Prior to the escalation of the Boko Haram insurgency, farming, fishing, cattle rearing, and trading were the main economic activities of the three states' over 10 million people. As a result of Boko Haram attacks, a large number of farmers have fled and abandoned their farmlands and domestic animals, putting the states' food security at risk. Insurgents and security forces prevented many farmers from accessing their

farms. As a result, people who used to contribute significantly to food production in the country are now unable to feed themselves and have become reliant on the government in IDP camps or friends and relatives (Idris et al., 2014). Thousands of hectares of fertile land lay tilled and completely overrun by weeds on the outskirts of cities and towns. Over one million fishermen and their families are refugees in Niger Republic, with Baga, a once-famous fishing town on the shores of Lake Chad, becoming deserted (Idris et al., 2014).

The Nigerian Army revealed in August 2021 that Boko Haram insurgents are using fertilizer to make improvised explosive devices (IED) to carry out bombing attacks, causing further insecurity in the region and threatening farming, fishing, and cattle rearing activities. On September 9th, 2021, the Nigerian Army dismantled two Urea fertilizer syndicates in Borno and Yobe States, which supplied the insurgents with material to make IEDs (Agency Report, 2021) The use of fertilizer is a direct threat to food production because it restricts fertilizer supply to farmers for security reasons, as Boko Haram occasionally seizes fertilizer meant for farmers in the zone. Based on this dire situation, the United Nations Resident Coordinator stated on August 3rd, 2021, that over 4 million people in north eastern Nigeria face hunger and starvation (Maina, 2021). Furthermore, military offensives against insurgents have harmed food production in the zone. On September 20th, 20 fishermen were killed by a Nigerian Air Force jet air strike operation along the shores of Lake Chad near ISWAP camps (AFP, 2021).

North Central

Conflicts between crop farmers and pastoral nomads, particularly in states such as Benue and Plateau, have impacted this region. There have also been communal clashes among some of the zone's tribes, such as the Jikun-Tiv conflict in Taraba and Benue states. Furthermore, in states such as Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, and Taraba, the political crisis over indigenous rights and political representation has devolved into a protracted conflict and banditry. Niger state, in particular, has recently been severely impacted by bandit attacks that resulted in killings, injuries, robberies, and kidnappings, with thousands of people fleeing as internally displaced persons, primarily from village settlements. The creation of IDPs in this zone as a result of a series of communal clashes has resulted in destitution and poverty, which causes food insecurity because the displaced persons rely on food handouts, distributed by the government and some donor agencies. In Benue state, for example, which is regarded as the nation's food basket, ongoing attacks on rural dwellers

are causing a shortage of food production (SEMA, 2021). As a result of the constant attacks by gunmen, many farmers have abandoned their farmlands. This has sparked fears of a food crisis if nothing is done to address the situation urgently not only in Benue but also in Nasarawa state (Emmanuel and Muhammad, 2021).

According to Governor of Benue state, Benue state has 1.5 million people as displaced persons out of the projected population of 7 million. The displaced persons are presently at camps and elsewhere. They could not engage in farming activities due to attacks by gunmen. Most of the land available for farming is no longer accessible due to the prevailing insecurity as even the displaced persons who attempted to return back to their villages and farmlands were attacked. I see danger ahead in terms of food production in the state ahead of the farming season.

In Plateau state, on July 9th, 2021, a group of militias destroyed over ten large maize farms in Jyol and Kiwi villages of Riyom LGA. The land grabbers destroyed millions of Naira worth of farm crops between 2020 and 2021 (Sampson, 2021). Most attacks on rural communities in Niger state target farmers, either in their villages or farms. Fearing being killed or kidnapped for ransom, most farmers have abandoned their farms. Cattle rustling have impoverished most of the villages attacked by bandits in Niger state. The rural poor cannot afford to feed three times daily due to high poverty rates. Farmers who went to their farms risked kidnapping. For example, on August 7, 2021, bandits kidnapped the APC zone C Chairman in Mariga LGA while he was supervising farm workers working for him (GUN, 2021).

South West

In this region, communal clashes, kidnappings, gunmen attacks, and sea piracy are all common occurrences. Communal clashes are most frequently experienced between the Yoruba and Hausa tribes, as was the case on February 12th, 2021, at Shasha market in Akinyele LGA of Oyo State, according to reports. Community clashes between Yoruba separatists and Fulani cattle herdsman have also occurred in the region, resulting in the deaths of several people and extensive property damage. Kidnappings have become more common in this region, particularly in the states of Ondo, Ogun, Osun, and Oyo, among others. According to some reports, Fulani herdsman who live in the forests of these states are to blame for kidnappings in some cases, which further complicate the already difficult situation. The Governor of Ondo State even issued a directive stating that Fulani herdsman should vacate the forests of Ondo State on the basis of this information (Kabir, 2021). Armed robbery cases are common in some states, such

as Osun and Ekiti, where the robbers target commercial banks, whereas traffic robbery along major roads is the most recent form of insecurity in Lagos state, according to the police. Cultism is another form of insecurity in this region that has resulted in the deaths of people, the injuring of others, and the destruction of property. Apart from that, sea piracy is prevalent along the coasts of Lagos and Ondo states, posing a threat to fishing operations in the two states' coastal regions. Concerned and alarmed by the numerous forms of insecurity that exist in the south-west, the state governors met and decided to establish a regional security organization known as Operation Amotekun to combat the situation (Leopard). Nonetheless, despite the presence of Operation Amotekun, the majority of forms of insecurity continue to exist in the region, including terrorism. A total of about 5,000 people have been displaced due to clashes between Hausa and Yoruba traders at Shasa market. The vast majority of those displaced are women and children who have taken refuge at a traditional rulers house (Daily Trust, 2021). The majority of Hausa traders lost their life savings, making it difficult for them to provide for their families on a daily basis, and as a result, they suffer from food insecurity.

On August 2nd, 2021, a bloody clash between Hausa and Yoruba commercial motorcyclists at the Dangote Cement Factory junction in Ibese, Yewa Local Government Area of Ogun State resulted in the deaths of seven individuals (Oludare, 2021). Those who died in this clash were working to earn a living and also to provide for their families in order to ensure that they have enough to eat during this period of rising food prices.

Kidnappings are becoming more common, posing a serious threat to crop farming and poultry farming in the region, threatening food security in the region. To give an example, one of the agribusiness ventures in Ogun state, Animal Care Services, has raised concerns about the threat of kidnapping, which is a threat to the poultry industry in the region. Kidnappers have turned their attention to the poultry value chain in recent years. Chicken farmers, chicken owners, chicken farm managers, chicken feed millers, suppliers of drugs and vaccines to the poultry industry, and poultry transporters have all been victims of kidnapping in recent years (Olatunji, 2021). The kidnappings have had a negative impact on poultry production, resulting in lower than expected production.

Armed robberies and house burnings in the south-west have resulted in the eviction of heads of household and their wives, as well as the theft of their cattle and other valuables. They become food insecure as a result of their poverty, which makes it difficult for them to purchase food on a regular basis. A case in point is the attack on a Fulani cattle rearers settlement near Ogamakin village in Oluyele LGA of Oyo state on June 11, 2021 by gunmen,

who burn 52 houses and other properties, including cattle and ruminants, which they have stolen from the Fulani cattle rearers (Dalibi, 2021). Furthermore, the threats made by some of the people in the region, as well as the revocation of the forest order in Ondo state, prompted several cattle rearers to leave the southwest region of the country to seek refuge elsewhere.

It has been reported that five farmers from Modakeke, Osun State, were killed on their way to their farm in Toro village on August 20, 2021, as a result of gunmen attacks in the area, which has had a negative impact on food security. On September 9th, 2021, gunmen abduct three workers from Obasanjo's farm in the Kobape area of Owode LGA of Ogun State after their Hilux car was shot at by the gunmen. The farm is located at Kobape in the Owode LGA of Ogun State (Agency Report, 2021b).

Pirate ships pose a significant threat to the sea fishing industry in Lagos State, with negative consequences for fish production and consumption in the region's south-western region and beyond. Sea pirates launch attacks on fishing trawlers, resulting in the shooting, maiming, and death of crew members. As a result of the pirates' attacks, fewer fishing trawlers are willing to go fishing, resulting in higher sea food prices as a result of a scarcity of available fish (Usman et al., 2019). In some areas, sea food prices have more than doubled, and in others, they have quadrupled, putting this important source of protein beyond the reach of the majority of the general public and working class (Usman et al., 2019). At the time of writing (October 2021), the price of fish in northern Nigeria has more than doubled, with a packet of herring fish selling for N9,500 in 2020 now selling for N1900.

South East

This region has been severely impacted by the violent agitations of IPOB members who are fighting security forces in order to establish a separate country or secede from Nigeria. The violence perpetrated by IPOB members has created significant insecurity in the region and has spread to some states in the South South geopolitical zone, including Edo and Rivers. IPOB members also carry out violent attacks on people who live in the area but are not members of the Igbo tribe. They also target vehicles and traders delivering agricultural products to the region. Imo, Abia, Anambra, Enugu, and Ebonyi are the states affected by the IPOB violent agitations (Abdulaziz, 2021).

This region is also affected by communal clashes with people from neighboring states such as Cross River over land and other resources. There has been a long-standing feud between the people of Ukelle in Yala LGA of Cross River state and their neighbors in Igbe Agu and Izzi LGA of Ebonyi state over land, which has resulted in

death and destruction for both communities (Ojoye, 2019). In the region, there are also clashes between farmers and herdsmen. For example, on January 31, 2020, four herders were killed and over 138 cattle belonging to them were stolen in a clash between herdsmen and farmers in the Anaku and Ifite-Ogbar communities of Anambra State's Ayemelu LGA (Okafor, 2020). The proscribed members of IPOB's violence have put agricultural activities and investments in jeopardy across the south-east geopolitical zone. Several farmers have fled for safety, and many agricultural businesses have long withheld their employees from the conflict zone. On occasion, IPOB imposed sit-at-home orders, depriving daily wage earners of the opportunity to earn an income to buy food, and as a result, many of these people go hungry on such days, making them food insecure. IPOB members also attack the homes and businesses of people who are not from the region, particularly those from northern Nigeria. These attacks deprive such people of their means of subsistence and food sources.

Members of the IPOB also launched attacks on transporters who transport food from the north to the south-east of Nigeria and vice versa. On May 31, 2021, IPOB members in Nsukka, Anambra state, set fire to two trucks carrying palm oil purchased in Akwa Ibom state on their way to Kano, Kano state. The palm oil was valued at N80 million, and the burning has resulted in the loss of the Kano traders' business capital as well as a source of income to support their families. Members of IPOB intercepted a truck carrying 500 sacks of onions in Imo state, then sold the onions and pocketed the money. Following this incident, many truck drivers became fearful and refused to transport onions and other products to Nigeria's south-eastern region. On September 27th, 2021, a vehicle transporting tomatoes and vegetables was set ablaze by persons suspected of enforcing IPOB's sit-at-home order at Edem Junction in Enugu East LGA, involving a truck coming from the north.

Communal clashes in Ebonyi and Cross River states have resulted in the destruction of farmlands and livestock, reducing food production in both states. Some attacks occur frequently during the planting season, while others occur during the harvesting season, when farmers were about to harvest yams when their farms were destroyed (Ojoye, 2019). These attacks during the planting and harvesting seasons have harmed food production and food security in both states. Furthermore, the burning of village settlements and the injuries sustained by victims have caused people to become destitute, resulting in personal food insecurity.

South-South

Militancy, cult theft, cultism, and sea piracy are all

problems in this region. These forms of insecurity have existed for a long time in the history of the region and, more broadly, Nigeria. This is due to the fact that the region produces the majority of the crude oil and natural gas, which has become the primary source of foreign exchange earnings and national budget financing. The Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta Avengers are two well-known militant groups (NDA).

Oil theft, also known as oil bunkering, is a type of insecurity that involves stealing oil from pipelines, refining it in illegal refineries, and then selling it in local, regional, and international markets (TIDS, 2019). Cultism in the south has spread from university campuses to residential areas in towns and cities over the years, thanks to the formation of affiliate groups by major cult groups and students expelled for cultism (Owonikoro and Ifukor, 2016). Sea piracy is a new form of insecurity in the region, perpetrated by criminals in the Niger Delta and the Gulf of Guinea. Sea piracy is a global crime that impedes the free movement of ships carrying people and goods, with serious economic consequences (Nwakozie, 2020).

Oil spills on a regular basis, caused by oil theft and sabotage, have polluted the waterways in many riverine communities, making fishing difficult. Also, oil spills contaminate crops grown on farmlands and other food sources, and then toxic chemicals are released into the air, causing air pollution that bothers fishermen and farmers (TIDS, 2019). The illegal refineries established by oil thieves cause additional air pollution due to the use of fire in the illegal refining process, which also causes forest fires, destabilizing the ecosystem and making fishing and farming activities difficult and ineffective. The presence of militant groups makes the Niger Delta region unsafe for traders who transport food. On August 28th, 2021, for example, there was a shooting incident involving a civilian market boat ferrying foodstuffs and other household goods in the Dutch Island area of Rivers State.

Cultism complicates life for local communities in cities, towns, and villages alike. This happens because people are on the run from the cultists, making it difficult to settle or stay at home to prepare food to eat, and local food restaurants and stalls are closed during this time. As a result, many people go hungry during cult wars or fighting among cult members. Sea pirates attack fishing boats and trawlers operating in Nigerian territorial waters and the Niger Delta. Because fishermen are afraid of fishing in deep waters where there is an abundance of fish, the insecurity caused by pirate activity results in a poor fish harvest and production (Toakodi, 2018).

Table 1 depicts national security and its implications for food security in each of the six geopolitical zones. From the (Table 1), it can be observed that all the six geo-

political zones have at least three forms of insecurity which affects the availability of foods in terms of production, distribution and consumption and in essence food security. The level of insecurity has been increasing which has directly affects food security in certain instances there is even willful destruction of food crops and food products in some geo-political zones. There is therefore the need from the state and federal government to follow pathways to avert an impending food crisis as outlined below.

PATHWAYS TO AVERTING AN IMPENDING FOOD CRISIS IN NIGERIA

The discussions above make it abundantly clear that the various forms of insecurity prevalent in the six geopolitical zones have contributed significantly to the current high cost of food across the federation. If these forms of insecurity continue into 2022, there are clear indications of a looming food crisis in Nigeria. To avert an impending food crisis, the government at both the state and federal levels should follow the following paths:

- (i) In the North East, a continuous and intensive military operation against insurgents should be carried out in order to finally defeat them and restore the security of lives and property. After that, displaced people and refugees should be encouraged to resume their farming and fishing activities.
- (ii) The North East Development Commission should make more efforts to rebuild and rehabilitate people's livelihoods. This can be accomplished by assisting farmers, cattle ranchers, and fishermen with soft loans to enable them to re-start their food production activities. The NEDC's recent empowerment of 2,000 farmers is commendable and one of the paths to take to increase food production.
- (iii) Farmers who have been displaced by banditry should be able to return to their villages and farmlands in safety. This can only be accomplished if the bandits are chased out of their forest hideouts. As a result, the President and Commander-in-Chief should direct the Nigerian Army to conduct a simultaneous operation against the bandits in the forests and states of the North West in order to eliminate them once and for all.
- (iv) The Federal Government should continue to intervene to rehabilitate irrigation projects, such as the recent case with the Hadejia-Jama'are River Basin Development Authority, in order to bring more land under cultivation. In addition, the National Land Development Authority (NALDA) should continue to establish integrated farm estates, as has been done in some federation states, in order to boost food production and avert a food crisis.

Table 1: National Insecurity and Its Impacts on Food Security.

S/N	Geo-Political Zone and States	Form of insecurity	Impacts on food security
1	North East Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe	1. Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgent attacks. 2. Communal clashes 3. Farmer-herders clashes	Decline in food production, creation of large number displaced persons who depend on Government for their food needs and threats to hunger and starvation.
2	North West Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara	1. Banditry 2. Cattle rustling 3. Kidnapping 4. Communal clashes	Decline in food production, loss of cattle rearing opportunities and inadequate food for consumption in many families
3	North Central Abuja FCT, Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau states	1. Banditry 2. Communal clashes 3. Farmers-herders conflicts 4. Indigenes-settler conflicts	Loss of food production and difficult access to food items for many families, poverty and destitution has increased.
4.	South West Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo states	1. Communal clashes 2. Gunmen attacks 3. Kidnappings 4. Armed robbery	Creation of displaced persons who become food insecure, loss of cattle and source of income. High prices for fish and other sea foods which become unaffordable to many families.
5.	South East Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States	1. Violent separatist movements by members of proscribed IPOB. 2. Communal clashes over land 3. Military crackdown on IPOB members	Obstruction to food distribution between the geo-political zones, loss of food crops and creating difficulties in accessing foods.
6.	South South Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States	1. Militancy 2. Oil theft 3. Cultism 4. Sea piracy	Difficulty in fishing and farming activities, low production of food crops, and fish and other sea foods. High cost of food stuffs making food unaffordable to many families

(v) A reconciliation meeting should be held between local communities/tribes in Southern Kaduna State and other states affected by communal clashes in the north central geopolitical zone. Furthermore, the Federal Government should take harsh measures against those who engage in tribal or religious attacks and killings in states like Kaduna and Plateau. The federal government should ensure that justice is served by ensuring that those arrested in connection with the August 13th, 2021 attack on travelers in Jos, Plateau state are tried and punished as a deterrent to others.

(vi) Cattle ranches should be developed in states that are willing and able to provide the necessary land for the settlement of cattle rearers. The

Fulani cattle rearers should be educated to recognize the value of ranching and accept that nomadic herding is currently problematic, necessitating the need for ranching. This is important for reducing herder-farmer conflicts, and ranching can help improve cattle production.

(vii) The Federal Government, in collaboration with the Governors of the South West states, should increase the presence of security personnel to confront perpetrators of communal attacks and gunmen who attack communities, farmers, and farm estate workers. The Amotekun security corps should be well trained and equipped with modern weapons to assist and supplement security agents in reducing crime and criminality in the region to a bare minimum.

(viii) In the event of an attack on police stations or any other location targeted by IPOB, security agents in the South East should be well prepared to counter the membership of IPOB. The arrests of the group's members should continue, and those arrested should be prosecuted and punished. Security forces should be professional and humane when cracking down on members of the group in order to halt the group's activities in the region.

(ix) Communal clashes between Ebonyi and Cross River have raged on since 2005, despite peace treaties arranged by top officials and governors from both states. The Federal Government should warn and compel the clan heads in both communities to ensure that there is

long-term peace so that farmers can plant and harvest crops such as yams peacefully (Ojoye, 2019).

(x) Operation Delta Safe seeks to rid the Niger Delta of all acts of militancy, cultism, and kidnapping that endanger farming and fishing activities in the South-South geopolitical zone. The Federal Ministry of Environment should continue to ensure that clean-up operations are carried out in areas of land affected by oil spillage, as well as in waterways affected by pollution, in order to allow farming and fishing activities to resume in such land areas and waterways.

(xi) As the chief security officers of their respective states, state governors must work hard to ensure the safety of people and property. Governors must be creative, innovative, and re-strategize in their respective states. For example, the governor of Borno state has recruited local hunters to provide security to farmers in order to improve the state's food security. The governor of Katsina state has approved the selection of 500 vigilante members from the 34 LGAs that are currently being trained at the mobile police training center to supplement security agents in securing farming communities in the state.

(xii) The Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) should train more agro-ranger corps to be deployed in the most insecure states to provide farmers with security so that they can carry out farming activities. According to a recent study by Ladan and Matawali (2021), the formation of the agro-ranger corps began in April 2017. Some of the corps were deployed to insecure states by 2020, but the number deployed was insufficient and thus insignificant to prevent attacks on farmers and cattle rearers.

(xiii) The Federal Government should declare a State of Emergency on security, as several concerned citizens and the Senate have done on multiple occasions. Once the state of emergency is declared, security forces, particularly the Nigerian Army, should respond quickly to distress calls in the event of bandit attacks and should not wait for orders to confront the bandits wherever they encounter them.

(xiv) The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) should keep promoting maritime security and safety in Nigerian coastal waters. NIMASA should continue to collaborate with security agencies that have extensive knowledge of the maritime environment and have dealt with sea criminals such as pirates. This is necessary in order for fishing boats and trawlers to be able to travel to the high seas where there is an abundance of fish for their fishing activities (Jamoh, 2021).

(xv) The National Food Reserve Agency should ensure that enough foodstuffs are purchased during the 2021 harvesting season to be stored in national grain silos and then brought out for sale to the public if there is any sign

of food scarcity the following year, 2022. This will ensure that the predicted food crisis does not occur and that hunger is avoided.

CONCLUSION

Food security is important to nation states, but achieving it is dependent on a number of factors, one of which is national security. One of the current challenges to achieving food security in Nigeria is the rise in insecurity in recent years, which has hampered food production and made distribution difficult in the geopolitical zones. If not addressed, this insecurity has the potential to lead to a food crisis, exacerbating the situation. This is because there are clear signs of a food crisis at the moment, owing to the high cost of food items, which makes it difficult for a large percentage of the population to purchase adequate food to feed their families. There is also an increase in destitution as the less fortunate go to public places such as mosques, churches, and markets to beg for money to buy food or food items to feed their families because they do not have food at home. As a result, there is an urgent need for the federal and state governments to rise up and follow the pathways suggested in this article to avert an impending food crisis in Nigeria. The recent mass surrender of Boko Haram members in the North East should be handled with caution in order to ensure the rehabilitation and integration of the former fighters. The current military offensive and strict containment measures in the North West should be carried out to their logical conclusion in order to put an end to banditry in Nigeria as a whole.

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