

Farmers -Herders Rivalry and Its Implications for Food Security and Household Income in Nigeria: Interrogating the trending issues

Okopi Okwulu¹

okwuluokoh@gmail.com

Omogbehin Esther Laraba²

omoprincesseld@gmail.com

Lugbein-Osiogbo Jennifer Ebimoboere³

Ebelosiogbo23@gmail.com

Austin Idhomi⁴

ustinesami@gmail.com

¹Institute of Governance & Development Studies, Federal University Lokoja

²Department of Public Administration, Nasarawa State University, Keffi

³Institute of Governance & Development Studies, Federal University Lokoja

⁴Institute of Governance & Development Studies, Federal University Lokoja

Corresponding Author: Okopi Okwulu, +2348036370281, okwuluokoh@gmail.com

Abstract

The persistent clashes between farmers and herders in Nigeria pose significant challenges to food security and household income, exacerbating poverty and undermining socio-economic development in rural communities. This paper contributes to the discourse by examining the multifaceted impacts of farmers-herders conflicts on food production, livelihoods, and economic well-being in Nigeria. Drawing on a review of existing literature, empirical data, and case studies, this research explores the root causes, dynamics, and consequences of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria. It scrutinizes how these conflicts disrupt agricultural activities, destroy crops and livestock, displace communities, exacerbate food insecurity, and deplete household income, particularly among vulnerable populations. Building on these insights, the paper proposes a set of recommendations for addressing farmers-herders conflicts and enhancing food security and household income in Nigeria. These recommendations encompass strategies for conflict resolution, sustainable land use policies, livelihood diversification, strengthening government institutions, and promoting inter-communal dialogue and cooperation. By implementing these recommendations stakeholders can work towards mitigating the adverse effect of farmers-herders conflict, promoting peacebuilding and inclusive development in Nigeria.

Journal of Policy and Development Studies (JPDS)

Vol. 16. Issue 1 (2024)

ISSN(p) 1597-9385

ISSN (e) 2814-1091

Home page

<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jpds>

ARTICLE INFO:

Keyword:

Farmers – Herders, Conflict, Food Security, Household Income

Article History

Received:

15th June 2024

Accepted:

15th August 2024

DOI:

<https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jpds.v16i1.11>

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a multiethnic society with diverse cultural affiliations which defines the socio-economic activities of the people. The Nigerian society is bedeviled with various security challenges with the Farmers – Herders Rivalry presenting a daunting challenge to the Nigerian Economy. Akande, Costa, Mateu, and Henriques (2017), posited that various indigenous communities in Nigeria face threats to their lives, armed conflict, and various human rights violations. These Conflicts according to Alpheaus (2023), occur as a result of the scramble for resources between farmers and herdsmen.

The Farmers/Herders conflict is currently one of the major security challenges that is slowing down economic activities in most rural communities and Nigeria at large. Usman and Sule (2020) thought that the conflict between farmers and herdsmen has reduced the quantity of food supply across Nigeria because the output from farmers and herdsmen is destroyed during hostility. This has a multiplier effect on the quantity of food supply and earned income for the two economic agents.

Farmers and Herders are the two major sources of food for the country and any negative occurrence in their activities will result in huge scarcity with negative effects on prices, household income, and economic growth of the country. When the supply of food decreases due to the conflicts between Farmers and Herders being the major suppliers of these essential commodities for human existence, the scarcity of food can lead to an increase in prices. This is driven by the basic economic principle of supply and demand: as the supply of food diminishes, with demand remaining constant or increases, prices tend to rise. A low supply of food and rising prices can pose challenges to food security, particularly for vulnerable populations with limited access to resources. This includes low-income households, subsistence farmers, and communities dependent on food imports. Food insecurity can have wide-ranging social and health implications, including malnutrition, hunger, and social unrest.

The Farmers/Herders feud has no doubt frustrated the economic activities of crop and animal production for human consumption. A lot of farming communities in Nigeria have been displaced and Herders have also lost a sizeable number of their animals to conflict which is orchestrated by the struggle for scarce resources.

This paper will examine the implication and effect of farmers' conflict on food security which is a situation whereby all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preference for an active and healthy life. It involves ensuring that food is available, accessible, and affordable for all individuals and communities.

Food security encompasses food production, distribution, consumption, and food utilization, as well as the stability of these systems over time. It is a fundamental human right and a key component of sustainable development.

Farmers – Herder's Rivalry in Nigeria has accounted for huge losses for both farmers and herdsmen. These losses have hurt farming activities as well as other related businesses and socio-economic activities, resulting in food insecurity across the country.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The Farmers – Herders Rivalry is currently one of the major security threats in Nigeria with devastating effects on food supply and astronomical increases in prices of food. It has also caused major drawbacks in the food chain and household income in Nigeria. The Farmers – Herders'

conflict has constituted a serious threat to the means of survival and livelihood of most crop farmers, nomadic herdsmen, and other economic agents in the value chain.

Food is an important source of man's life because its intake enhances good health, vitality, and well-being. Crop farmers and pastoralist activity is an agro-business where farmers/herders make a living from the sales of their output. Conflicts between these two economic agents constitute danger for their immediate family, community, and nation at large. Every human benefits from the output of Farmers and Herders either as a means of direct intake of their produce or in trading for income generation. The distortion in food security and household income as a result of conflict is the basis of this research and adds to the existing discourse.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How does the ongoing conflict between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria affect food security in the country?
2. What are the economic impacts of the Farmers–Herder's rivalry on the household income of those affected?
3. What role do government policies play in exacerbating or alleviating the conflicts between farmers and herders in Nigeria?
4. What strategies can be implemented to address the root causes of the conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria and improve food security and household income for the affected population?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The research objectives are:

1. To examine the socioeconomic impacts of the Farmers –Herder's conflict on food security and household income in Nigeria.
2. To identify the root causes of the conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria and their implications on agriculture, food production, and livelihood.
3. To propose sustainable strategies and interventions to address the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria, promote peaceful coexistence, enhance food security, and improve household income for the affected populations.

1.4 Farmers – Herders Rivalry in Nigeria

Nigeria occupies a land area of 923,773 square kilometers with an estimated population of over 200 million. It is important that proper planning must be undertaken by the government to optimally utilize the land resources. The government ought to plan the allocation of the arable area of these vast hectares of land between crop and animal production. According to Adelukurelu and Adisa. (2019) Resource utilization has been the reason for most conflicts among farming communities, both the crop farmers and the cattle farmers. However, Obasanmi, (2021), thinks that the dimension and magnitude of this conflict have assumed an increasing rate, with killings which has left researchers to wonder how this crisis can be resolved. In as much as resource scarcity could be attributed to the conflict between herders and farmers, climate change been experienced in Nigeria in recent times has created more of this scarcity, thereby exacerbating the conflict.

It is pertinent to note that, Herders and Farmers have lived together in relative peace and harmony, as both economic groups benefit from the output of each other. The conflict between farmers and herders escalated just two decades ago with devastating effect on the Nigerian Economy. The conflict between these two groups metamorphosed into consistent clashes, mass killings, displacement of individuals from their ancestral homes, and wanton destruction of lives and properties. Among numerous factors responsible for this conflict, as highlighted by

researchers, land ownership, encroachment of farmlands by herdsmen, and obstruction of grazing routes have been listed as some of the causes of the conflict.

A significant number of communities in Nigeria are not enjoying peace owing to the lackadaisical approach of the government towards finding a solution to restoring peace. In the various states in Nigeria where this conflict is occurring, there is the possibility of the situation degenerating into political instability. This could adversely undermine the economic growth of the country and ultimately lead to a total breakdown of law and order.

Fulani herdsmen have clashed with farming communities in Benue, Ogun, Oyo, Plateau, Kogi, Nasarawa, Taraba, Rivers, Federal Capital Territory, Niger, Edo, Kaduna, Ebonyi, Imo, Abia, Delta, Kwara, Ekiti, Enugu, Bauchi, Adamawa and Zamfara State.

The incessant attacks have a terrific effect on food security and household income of the farming communities, which also constitute a danger to the Nigerian economy. According to Abanyam (2019), despite the hazards of the conflict, there is no sign of ending as the attack has met little resistance from police and the military authorities.

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)

Abanyan (2019) reveals that herdsmen also suffer colossal damages and losses when farmers inflict physical injuries on their cattle by using cutlasses, spades, arrows, and guns or by poisoning their cattle. The conflict often leads to disunity or distrust, violence, disagreement, and bloodshed among the parties involved (Adebayo and Olaniyi 2008).

Farmers often accuse herdsmen of trespassing on their farmland to graze their cattle, contaminating the streams, indiscriminate defecation of cattle on roads, and destroying their crops. While the cattle breeders (herdsmen claim that they are being attacked by gangs and farming communities who steal their cattle and only act to defend themselves (Abanyan 2019). With the destruction of farm crops by pastoralists and the reprisal attacks by the farmers to kill the livestock owned by the herdsmen, the overall food production, both in crops and meat is grossly affected, which implies increased hunger, disease, malnutrition, and loss of income, thereby increasing the rate of poverty. The farmers-herdsmen conflict has brought about loss of means of livelihood and the impact is terrible to both parties.

The Nigerian government has made a frantic effort to find a solution to this conflict that has brought pain, loss, and emotional trauma. The government proposed to establish grazing reserves and ranches for herdsmen to curtail the conflict, but the proposal was rebuffed and criticized by southern governors and the idea was politicized by some members of the Nigerian parliaments.

Some states with high incidences of farmers-herdsmen rivalry had made efforts to cushion the imbroglio and to restore peace. Kaduna state had experienced farmers/herdsmen crisis with devastating effects on lives and property. The state government agreed to pay compensation to disgruntled herdsmen who lost their animals to stop reprisal attacks.

The Benue state government under the leadership of Samuel Ortom passed a law prohibiting open grazing to find solution to the herdsmen-farmers conflict ravaging the state. This move motivated other state governments like Taraba state, to also work towards having an anti-grazing law. Given the challenges posed by the farmers-herdsmen crisis, there is a compelling need to find lasting solutions that would restore sanity to the affected communities.

1.5 Understanding Food Security

Food security in Nigeria has been a long-standing issue due to a combination of factors including rapid population growth, political instability, economic challenges, and environmental degradation.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with a population of over 200 million people, and this rapid population growth has put immense pressure on the country's food production systems. Additionally, political instability, farmers-herders conflict, inflation, and corruption have hindered efforts to improve food security in the country.

The Nigerian economy relies heavily on oil export which has led to neglect of the agricultural sector. As a result, Nigeria has become increasingly dependent on food imports to meet its growing population needs. Environmental degradation; including deforestation, soil erosion, and desertification, has also contributed to food insecurity in Nigeria. Climate change has further exacerbate these issues, leading to more frequent droughts and floods that disrupt food production. Despite these challenges, the Nigerian government has implemented various initiatives to improve food security in the country; including the National Food Security Council and the National Agricultural Land Development Authority. Efforts are also been made to increase agricultural productivity, promote sustainable farming practices, and improve access to credit and markets for stakeholders.

Overall, food security remains a significant challenge in Nigeria, and concerted efforts by the government, international organizations, and local communities are needed to ensure that all Nigerians have access to adequate and nutritious food supply.

The farmers-herders rivalry in Nigeria has had a significant impact on food security in the country. The conflict which stems from competition over land and resources between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders, has led to violence, displacement, and disruption of agricultural activities in affected areas.

All the geopolitical zones in Nigeria have experienced one form of these farmers-herders crisis, with a colossal effect on food productivity. One of the major consequences of the conflict is the displacement of farmers from their lands and the destruction of crops, livestock, and farmlands. This has resulted in reduced agricultural productivity and food production. Farmers are often forced to abandon their farms or are unable to cultivate their lands due to fear of attacks or conflicts with herders, leading to food scarcity and insecurity.

Additionally, the conflict has disrupted food supply chains and markets, making it difficult for farmers to access inputs. This has led to food shortages and price increases in affected regions, and negative consequences on food security and the vulnerable populations.

The farmers-herders crisis has caused social and economic instability, leading to internal displacement, loss of lives, and increasing poverty levels in affected communities. Displaced farmers are often unable to resume agricultural activities or face challenges in finding alternative sources of livelihood.

The Nigerian government and international organizations have been working to address the root causes of the conflict, improve peace and security in affected areas, and promote dialogue and reconciliation between farmers and herders. Efforts are also been made to provide assistance and support to affected communities to enhance their resilience and restore agricultural activities. Overall, the farmers-herders rivalry has had a detrimental impact on food security in Nigeria, and sustainable solutions that address the underlying causes of the conflict are needed to ensure the availability of food for all Nigerians.

Bature (2022), noted that food is an essential part of a man's life because it helps to support growth and well-being, with the farmers-herders conflict constituting a major threat to food security. The damages to the properties and even loss of lives, the decline and diminution in agricultural produce, unemployment, loss of revenue, etc have let loose fear, animosity, and hatred among the people and have also increased rural-urban migration, poverty, and social problems (Bature, 2022).

Ayegba (2022), asserted that, while the remote drivers of insecurity in the Northeast remain climate, desertification, poor food security, and governance among others, Boko Haram

insurgency is the immediate driver of chronic food insecurity in the Northeast region, as it continues to generate dire food insecurity consequences for sustainable development in the region. However, he noted that the farmers-herders conflict remains a leading factor of food insecurity in the Northeast.

Usman and Sule (2020) observed that the farmers-herders conflict is causing a huge gap in food supply across the nation because both the farm produce and the livestock are destroyed in the process. They further noted that farmers and herders are the major sources of food for the country and that any negative phenomenon that affects them will lead to scarcity in the food supply. Kwaghga (2018), noted that the farmers-herders conflict is responsible for the food shortage in Nigeria which also has endanger the economy and health of the people arising from hunger and malnutrition.

Alpheaus (2023) further buttresses the fact that farmers-herders conflict has caused apathy and reluctance to farm out of fear, thereby causing a sharp decline in the level of food production in Nigeria. He opined that the low level of production and high cost of prices of food have further increased the poverty level and heightened food insecurity in Nigeria. According to Udosen (2021), the Farmers – Herder crisis caused the deaths of farmers and herdsmen, displacement, poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity, with socioeconomic consequences on sustainable development in Nigeria.

1.6 Household Income

Household income refers to the total amount of money earned by all members of a household through various sources, such as wages, salaries, investment income, and government assistance. It is an important means of the financial resources available to a family or group of individuals to meet their daily needs, pay for expenses, save, and invest for the future.

Understanding Household income can provide insight into the economic well-being of a household and can be used to assess their standard of living. Higher household income typically means greater financial stability, access to a better quality of life, and opportunities for education, healthcare, and overall well-being. Household income can also impact housing, healthcare, education, and other essential services. It can be used by policymakers, researchers, and businesses to analyze economic trends, consumer behavior, and demographics.

Sadiq, Singh, and Ahmad (2021) posited that conflict has negative effects the various kinds of incomes been earned by households. They further stated that the negative impact of conflict is more pronounced on farming income which is majorly due to the invasion of farm lands by pastoralists/nomads. Farmers – Herders Conflict has had a significant impact on rural household income in several ways;

a. Loss of livestock and crops

Conflict between farmers and herders often leads to the destruction of crops and the loss of livestock, which are essential sources of income for rural households. This can lead to reduced agricultural productivity and consequently lower income for both farmers and herders.

b. Displacement and disruption of livelihood

Farmers and Herders are forced to flee their homes during the conflict, thereby abandoning their land, or changing their livelihood activities. This can disrupt their income-generating activities, reduce their production capacity, and lead to economic instability.

c. Increased Competition for Resources

Farmers and Herders may compete for land, water, and grazing rights, leading to resource conflicts that can impact agricultural productivity and income generation. Limited access to resources can constrain rural households' ability to generate income and sustain their livelihood.

d. Rise in operating costs

Insecurity and conflict can increase operating costs for rural households, such as higher expenses for security measures; insurance or alternative sources of livelihood. These can reduce the profitability of farming and livestock-rearing activities, thereby affecting household income.

e. Reduced market access

Farmers and herders affected by conflict may face challenges in accessing markets due to disruptions in transportation routes, trade barriers, or insecurity. This can limit their ability to sell their products and generate income, leading to financial losses for rural households.

f. psychological and social impacts

Farmers-herders conflict can also have a psychological and social impact on rural households such as stress, trauma displacement, and social disruption. These factors can affect individual's ability to engage in income-generating activities and may contribute to a decline in household income.

Adebisi, Adebisi, Opakunle, Asogwa , Farayola & Daodu (2020) noted that conflict between farmers and herders in agro communities poses a serious challenge to the livelihood of the hosting communities. They concluded that the conflict increases the incidence, intensity, and severity of poverty among farming households.

Farmers-herders conflicts can have a detrimental impact on rural household income by disrupting livelihood activities, lowering productivity, increasing costs and limiting market access. Addressing the root causes of these conflicts, promoting peaceful co-existence, and implementing conflict resolution mechanisms are essential for improving rural households' income and livelihood opportunities.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 History of Farmers/Herders Rivalry

The conflict between farmers and herders has a long history that dates back to ancient times. One of the earliest recorded instances of this conflict can be found in the Bible, where conflicts between the agricultural tribes of the Amalekites and Midianites are described.

In Nigeria, the conflict between farmers and herders has a long history and has taken a different dimension in recent years leading to widespread violence, displacement from the original place of residence, and the proliferation of small and light arms between the two parties. The conflict is primarily driven by the scramble for land, water, and resources as well as ethnic and religious affiliations.

The roots of the conflicts can be traced back to the colonial era when the British colonial government implemented policies that favored agriculture and marginalized traditional pastoralist practices. This led to tensions between farmers who relied on land for cultivation and herders who depended on grazing land for their livestock.

According to Anter (2011), the Fulani is an ethnic group with a significant presence in many West African countries such as Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, The Gambia, Cote D Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Liberia, Ghana, The Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Benin.

Nwankwo (2016) thought that the Fulani rarely constitute the majority in a particular settlement owing to their Nomadic lifestyle. Their itinerant lifestyle makes them move from one place to the other in search of food and water for their animals. These movements by the Fulani's in search of resources for their animals lead to encroachment and land trespass which is rebuffed by crop farmers. The struggle between these two economic agents results in conflict and other hostilities.

Usman and Sule (2020) went down memory lane on the involvement of the government in creating a grazing reserve system in 1965 with over 417 fields separated for that purpose. Under the grazing reserve system, the government provided space, water, and vaccination for livestock, while the herdsmen paid taxes in return to the government. The discovery of oil in Nigeria and the over-reliance on it as a major source of revenue led to the neglect of agriculture as a means of survival, eventually grazing reserve areas could not be maintained as a result of urbanization and expansion into grazing land. The effect of this development was that farmers resorted to cultivating traditional grazing routes of herdsmen hence, the emergence of farmers-herders conflict (Egbuta 2018).

Abalogu and Ojukwu (2022), noted that, the farmers-herders conflict is one of the most crucial problems that have bedeviled Nigeria at the moment. According to them, it is a national issue that needs to be tackled with every sense of seriousness. The conflict is not restricted to a particular geopolitical zone, but it has engulfed almost every part of the country. This has posed a serious security threat to the existence of Nigeria as a nation, hence the need for the government to take proactive measures in mitigating this conflict and create an enabling environment for both farmers and herdsmen to thrive in the production of food crops and meat for the well-being of all.

2.2 Causes of Rivalry between Farmers and Herders

The conflict between farmers and Fulani pastoralists is one of the security challenges confronting Nigeria as a nation. This crisis has assumed varying dimensions with huge loss of lives and property. Researchers on the Farmers – Herders' conflict have identified some possible causes of the conflict, with occurrence in every region of the country. We shall highlight a few of these causes of farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria;

a. Struggle over scarce Resources

One of the prominent causes of the conflict between farmers and herdsmen is the competition over land, water, and grazing areas. Abanyan (2019) stressed that the farmers-herders crisis is orchestrated by the competition for farmland, pastures, and water. These resources are very essential for both farmers and herdsmen. It is pertinent to note that, the short supply of these resources is what triggered this conflict. Manu, Bime. Fon and Ajana (2014) further buttress the fact that the conflict originates from the insatiable tendency in human and their wants as these engender competition that would degenerate into conflict.

b. Environmental factor

Climate change and environmental degradation have exacerbated the competition for scarce resources between farmers and herdsmen. Environmental occurrences such as drought, desertification, and shrinking of grazing land have forced herdsmen to move their animals to crop production area which has sparked conflict. Alpheaus (2023) asserted that the drastic climate changes contribute to the high level of dry lands and low vegetation which have propelled the herdsmen in search of grazing areas for their livestock, hence the hostility between farmers and herdsmen. Apata, N'Guessan, and Ayantoye (2019) further highlighted the importance of land resources to agricultural activities and the influence of the weather and climate for the production of food and fiber necessary to sustain human and animal life.

c. Land use changes

The recent conflict between these two groups in Nigeria is attributed to the encroachment of farmland by herdsmen or the cultivation of grazing routes by farmers. Abanyan (2019), noted that some communities in Kaduna, Plateau, Benue, and Taraba had experienced fierce conflict between farmers and herdsmen due to fear that the Fulani herdsmen have a sinister plan of displacing them from their homeland. The land-grabbing agenda of the Fulani pastoralists that is propagated among crop farmers has not helped to curtail the crisis.

d. Ethnic, Religious, and Cultural differences

In most cases, the conflict between farmers and herders is fuelled by ethnic, religious, and cultural differences and intolerance between the two groups. According to Ofuoku and Isife (2019), herders and farmers groups have varying cultural features, customs, and values which makes socialization difficult.

e. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the guise of providing security against criminal elements and invaders had fuelled the conflict between nomadic pastoralists and farmers. This is in agreement with Adejumobi (2019) who reported that the prevalence of weapons has amplified the human cost of killing in most parts of Nigeria. The easy access to weapons of different capacities in the hands of farmers and herders has escalated the conflict for supremacy. This has turned minor disputes into violent confrontations with colossal effects on both farmers and herders. Arms trafficking and the increase of small arms and light weapons in conflict-laden areas have exacerbated the situation to the detriment of peace, law, and order.

f. Favoritism and Political manipulation

According to Abalogu and Ojukwu (2022), favoritism by the Nigerian government cannot be overlooked as one of the factors responsible for the farmers-herders rivalry. They further noted that the actions of the Nigerian government towards Hausa/Fulani Muslim violence and excesses have allowed the perceived culture of impunity to grow. It is believed that politicians and other actors may exploit tensions between farmers and herders for their selfish gain to the detriment of the entire populace. Recent Herdsmen attacks in some farming communities in Benue state did not show government commitment to tracking insecurity in Nigeria. In the absence of government security, most local communities have engaged the services of youth in their domain as local vigilante operatives to defend themselves against the onslaught of the Hausa–Fulani herdsmen attack.

g. Inability to prosecute Offenders

Weak governance and the inability to prosecute offenders and actors of farmers-herders conflicts have not helped to mitigate the crisis. Ndubuisi (2018) observed that the lack of political will by security agents and state actors to arrest and prosecute the offending group is essentially one of the reasons this conflict kept escalating all over Nigeria.

2.3 Food Inflation Orchestrated by Farmers – Herders Rivalry

The Farmer – Herder conflict in Nigeria significantly contributes to food inflation and food insecurity in the country as opined by Ake, Owoeye, Ajakaiye, and Ayantunji (2023). They further asserted that the conflict destabilizes local farmers, affecting food security negatively in terms of quantity and quality. The scarcity of food products results in inflation, making food items unaffordable for the citizenry. The conflict distracts farmers as they divert their energy from crop production to other unproductive engagements such as community security, which will further hamper food security. Riebe (2022) further buttresses the fact that the conflict between farmers and herders has led to the destruction of farmland, the killing of farmers and herders, and the displacement of farming communities, reducing their contribution to the market supply of available food.

Ahmed (2023) corroborates the fact that the conflicts lead to the destruction of farm inputs and outputs to the detriment of market supply which has scale up the prices of food and further exacerbate rural poverty.

In Nigeria in 2023, food inflation was a significant concern with rates reaching alarming levels. The National Bureau of Statistics reported that the annual food inflation rate in January 2023 was 24.32%, which increased to 35.41% in January 2024 (Izuaka, 2024).

Some of the other factors that contributed to the surge in food inflation in Nigeria included a weakening naira, insufficient domestic agricultural production as a result of farmers-herder rivalry, and heavy reliance on expansive imported food items. The current food inflation in Nigeria has a severe consequence on low-income earners where most rural farmers belong, leading to challenges in meeting rising food expenditures and causing concerns about civil unrest if the situation persists without government intervention.

2.4 Food Insecurity in Nigeria

Food insecurity in Nigeria has been a persistent issue since the farmers-herders conflict assumed a towering dimension. UNICEF reported that 25 million Nigerians were at high risk of food insecurity in 2023, with an estimated 2.9 million people critically food insecure. The latest food security report of the World Bank projected that seven states in Northern Nigeria, including Borno, Adamawa, Kaduna, Katsina, Yola, Sokoto, and Zamfara would face severe food crisis in 2024 due to insecurity caused by farmers-herders. Food insecurity in Nigeria has a profound effect on the populace which might lead to a range of social problems and challenges. The failure to ensure food security by the Nigerian government would lead to civil unrest, riots, and a high poverty rate with over 70% of the population surviving on less than a dollar per day.

3. Methodology

The study used a descriptive qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. Secondary sources of data collection were relied upon in the research. Data were obtained from journals, books, reports, and internet sources. The data obtained were analyzed, discussed, and interpreted to address the theme of the research which is to contribute to the discourse on the impact of farmers-herders rivalry in Nigeria.

4. Discussion of Findings

4.1 Implication of the Farmers–Herders Rivalry on Food Security

The Farmers – Herders conflict has significant implications on food security particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria. Nnaji, Ma, Ratna, and Renwick (2022) think that the rivalry between farmers and herders arises when itinerant herders graze their animals in farmers cropping land, leading to yield and income losses for farmers. They further noted that the conflict directly influences rural household food security by limiting their ability to cultivate land and access food through the market. The conflict impacts the four main pillars of food security; availability, accessibility, utilization, and stabilization. The conflict reduces food security by adversely affecting agricultural labor supply, production decisions, and outputs. Erunke, *et al* (2022) agreed with the fact that the conflict affects physical and economic access to food by destroying infrastructure like roads, markets, and farms.

4.2 Economic Impact of the Farmers–Herders' Rivalry on Household Income

The farmers-herders conflict has a significant economic impact on household income, particularly in rural areas. Sadiq, *et al* (2021) discovered that the conflict led to a 37.5688% decrease in farm income and a loss of non-farm income due to discrimination. The study by Mbah, Jiriko, and Amah (2020) identified factors such as the destruction of crops, loss of productive resources, and poor income as consequences of the conflict, leading to food insecurity and poverty. They further

reiterated that the conflict affects the physical and financial livelihood assets of farmers, causing them to abandon crops and resort to unsustainable agricultural practices.

The farmers–herders rivalry has led to the displacement of people and the burden is on the government to provide food, clothing, housing, and other basic amenities which further exacerbates the economic impact of the rivalry on the economy (Obasanmi, *and Enoma*, 2021).

Therefore, the government must address the farmers-herders conflict to improve agricultural productivity, household income, and overall economic development.

4.3 Government efforts in addressing the Farmers – Herders' Rivalry in Nigeria

According to the Nextier SPD report of November 2021, the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria has resulted in significant loss of lives and properties, with the North–Central region being the hotbed for these incidents. The Nigerian governments through some state governments have allocated designated grazing reserves to cushion the conflict. Other measures taken by the federal and subnational government in Nigeria include; the introduction of the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP), the deployment of the military to conflict-prone regions, community dialogue and peace-building initiatives, and economic support for both farmers and herders. Overall, while the government effort has shown some progress in resolving the conflict, more still needs to be done to address the root causes of the conflict and ensure sustainable peace and security in the affected region.

4.4 Suggested Strategies in Addressing the Farmers/Herders Rivalry in Nigeria

Several strategies have been suggested to address this conflict which include but are not limited to the following;

i. Policy Strategies

a. Providing pastoralists the right to secure access to grazing lands can help reduce conflicts over land use (Brottem, 2021).

b. Infrastructure Development

The government can invest in infrastructural projects, such as irrigation systems and livestock watering points, which can help alleviate the pressure on resources and reduce competition between farmers and herders (Taylor 2017).

c. The government should enforce policies that protect pastoralist resource rights and prevent encroachment of cultivated land into grazing areas can help mitigate grievance and conflict.

ii. Community–based Strategies

a. Building fences/pegs around farms.

b. The use of local vigilantes to monitor and enforce peace.

iii. Conflict Resolution Strategies

a. Third-party Intervention: The engagement of mediators and arbitrators can help resolve disputes and prevent escalation into violence (Adams, Thill, and Kuusaana. 2023)

b. Direct negotiation: Encouraging farmers and herders to negotiate directly can help them reach mutually beneficial agreements and build trust.

c. Compensation: Providing compensation for damages as a result of the conflict can help alleviate grievances and promote reconciliation.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this research paper underscore the critical impact of the farmers-herders rivalry on food security and household income in Nigeria. It has shown how this longstanding conflict not only disrupts agricultural activities but also poses significant challenges to the livelihood of households.

The escalation of tension between farmers and herders exacerbates food insecurity by disrupting agricultural productivity, displacing communities, and hindering access to vital resources such as land and water. Moreover, the economic repercussions are profound, with households experiencing loss of income, reduced market access, and increased vulnerability to poverty.

Addressing this complex issue demands multifaceted interventions that encompass policy reform, community engagement, sustainable resource management strategies, collaborative efforts involving government agencies, local communities, and relevant stakeholders are imperative to mitigate conflicts, promote peaceful coexistence, and safeguard food security and household income in Nigeria.

This paper contributes to the ongoing discourse by shedding light on the intricate dynamics of the farmers-herders rivalry and advocating for holistic approaches toward achieving lasting solutions. By recognizing the interconnectedness of socio-economic factors and conflict dynamics, policymakers and practitioners can devise more effective strategies to mitigate the impact of the rivalry and foster sustainable development in Nigeria.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made;

1. Strengthening local institutions

Local institutions such as traditional adjudicating bodies can serve as the linchpin for mitigating farmer – herders' violence.

2. Promoting transparency and accountability

To address the issues of perceived corruption among farmers and herders in resolving conflict, promoting transparency and accountability in the dispute settlement process is essential.

3. Encouraging dialogue and negotiation

Encouraging dialogue and negotiation between farmers and herders can help address the immediate and remote causes of the conflict.

4. Implementing land use policies

Implementing land use policies that protect pastoral resource rights and ensure that pastoralists have seasonal access to resources can help address the issue of dispossession.

5. Livelihood diversification

Support initiatives aimed at diversifying the livelihood of farmers and herders to reduce their vulnerability to environmental and economic shocks.

6. Strengthening government institutions

Strengthening government institutions such as the Police and the judiciary can help address the issue of insecurity and violence.

7. Promoting inter-communal dialogue and cooperation

Promoting inter-communal dialogue and cooperation can help address the issue of ethnic and religious tensions.

References

Abalogu, D. M. and Ojukwu, N. P. (2022). Socio-Religious Implications of Farmers – Herders Conflict in Nigeria: A Security Challenge. *Unizik Journal of Culture and Civilization* vol. 1(1) 141 – 148.

Abanyam, N. L. (2019). The Effects of Cattle Herders and Crop Farmers Conflict on Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria. <https://www.casirmediapublishing.com> vol. 4(1) March 2019 ISSN: 2536 – 7224.

Abbas, I. M. (2012). *No Retreat No Surrender: Conflict for Survival Between Pastoralist*

- Adams, E. A., Thill, A., and Kuusaana, E. D. (2023). Farmer – Herder Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa: Drivers, Impacts and Resolution and Peace Building Strategies. *Environ.Res. Lett.*18(2023)123001. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/ad0702>
- Adebayo, O.O., and Olaniyi, O.A. (2008). Factors Associated with Pastoral and Crop Farmers Conflict in Deprived Savannah Zone of Oyo State Nigeria. *Journal of Human Ecology.* 23(1) 71 – 74.
- Adejumobi, S. (2019). Farmers/Herdsmen conflict: The Political Dimension. *International Social Scheme Journal.* 115
- Adebisi, L. O., Adebisi, O. A., Opakunle, A. A., Asogwa, U. G., Farayola, C. O., & Daodu, T. O. (2020). Effect of farmer-herdsmen conflict on poverty status of farming households in Kwara State, Nigeria.
- Adelukurelu, G. I., and Adisa, R. S. (2019). Land use conflict between Farmers and Herders – Implication for Agricultural and Rural Development in Nigeria, Rural Development – Contemporary issues and practice. <https://www.intecopen.com/books/rural-development-contemporary-issues-and-hersmen-implication> for -agricultural-and-rural-development-in accessed
- Ahmed, A. (2023). Understanding and Addressing Nigeria's Worsening Food Inflation Challenge.<https://agorapolicy.org/understanding-and-addressing-Nigeria-worsening-food-inflation-challenge/>
- Akande, A., Costa, A. C., Mateu, J., and Henriques, R. (2017). Geospatial Analysis of Extreme Weather Events in Nigeria (1985 – 2015). Using self-organizing maps. *Advance in meteorology* <https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/8576150>.
- Ake, M., Owoeye, G., Ajakaiye, O., and Ayantunji, K. A. A. (2023). Herders Farmers Crisis and food security in Nigeria – A case of Benue State. *Baltic Journal of Law & politics.* Vol.16 (1) ISSN 2029 – 0454.
- Alpheaus, Chika J. (2023). Climate Change and herders/farmers conflict in Nigeria: Implication on food security. *Clifford University International Journal of Development Studies (CLUIJODS)* vol.3 December 2023, 141 – 155.
- Anter, T. (2011). “Who are the People and their Origin” Accessible at <https://www.modernghana.com/news/349849/who-are-the-fulani-people-their>
- Apata, T., N’Guessan, G. Y., and Ayantoye, K. (2019). Agricultural Land-Use – Use systems and Climate Change among small farmers in Nigeria. *10.52041/SRAP.19301*
- Ayegba, S. B. (2022). Farmers – Herders Conflict and threat to Food Security in NorthEast Nigeria. Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) Abuja, Nigeria.
- Bature, E. A. (2022). Farmers – Herders Conflict and the threat to Food Security in NorthWest

- Nigeria. Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) Abuja, Nigeria. ISBN: 978 – 978 – 790 – 091 – 8
- Brottem, L. (2021). The growing complexities of Farmer – Herder Conflict in West and Central Africa. Africa Centre for Strategic Studies. July 12, 2021.
- Egbuta, U. (2018). Understanding the Farmer–Herders Conflict in Nigeria. ACCORD: Africa Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes.
- Erunke, C., et al (2022). Farmer – Herder Conflict and its implication on food security in Benue State North Central Nigeria. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360947695_May_2022.
- Izuaka, M. (2024). "Nigeria's Inflation hits 29.9% amid high food prices. Premium Times February 15, 2024. Premium timesng.com/business-news/668583-update-Nigeria-inflation-hits
- Kwaghga, J. (2018). Herdsmen/Farmers Crisis: A Threat to Democratic Governance in Nigeria. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 8 (11). 100 – 108.
- Manu, I. N., Bime, M. J., Fon, D. E., and Ajana, N. J. I. (2014). Effect of farmer – grazer conflicts on rural development: A socio–economic analysis. *Journal of agricultural science, vol.4. No. 3 pp 113 – 120.*
- Mbah, E. N., Jiriko, R. K., and Amah, N. E. (2020). Socio-economic impacts of conflicts between farmers and cattle Herdsmen in Rural Households of Benue State, Nigeria. *Journal of Agriculture and Sustainability. Vol.13, 2020.ISSN 2201 – 4357.*
- Ndubuisi, C. I. (2018). A critical Analysis of Conflict between Herdsmen and Farmers in Nigeria: Causes and Socio-religious and political Effects on National development. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74 (1).
- Nnaji, A., Ma, W., Ratna, N., Renwick, A. (2022). Farmer – Herder Conflicts and Food Security: Evidence from Rural Nigeria. *Agricultural and Resource Economic Review* (2022), 51, 391 – 421.
- Nwankwo, A. A. (2016). “The National Grazing Reserve Bit and Islamization of Nigeria: Matters Arising" The Sun Newspaper, August 15.
- Obasanmi, J. O., & Enoma, A. (2022). The effects of farmer/herder conflict on socioeconomic development of Nigeria. *Saudi Journal of Economics and Finance*, 6(4), 118-125.
- Ofuoku, A. U., and Isife, B. I. (2009). Causes, effects, and resolution of farmers – nomadic cattle herders conflict in Delta state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology. Vol 1 (2)*
- Resolving Farmer–Herder Conflicts. Nextier SPD 2nd November, 2021.

- Riebe, Charis. (2022). The Geo-political impact of conflict on food security in Nigeria. Independent study project (ISP) Collection. 3527 <https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp-collection/3527>
- Sadiq, M. S., Singh, I. P., Ahmad, M. M. (2021). Impact of Farmers – Herders Conflict on the Livelihood of Farming Household in Nigeria Middle – Belt Region. *Moroccan Journal of Agricultural Science 2 (1): 14 – 24.*
- Taylor, R. Z. (2017). These age-old disputes IN 21st Century Nigeria Require a New Solution. [https:// 2017– 2020.usaid.gov/news-information/frontlines/July – August – 2017/these-age-old-disputes-21st-century-Nigeria.](https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/news-information/frontlines/July-August-2017/these-age-old-disputes-21st-century-Nigeria)
- Tonah, S. (2006). Managing Farmers – Herder Conflict in Ghana’s Volta Basin. *Ibadan Journal of Social Sciences 4 (1): 33 – 45*
- Udi, A. (2024). "World BANK Projects Seven States in Northern Nigeria to Face Severe Food Crisis in 2024. [Nairametrics.com/2024/02/06 . world-bank-projects-seven-states-in-northern-nigeria-to-face-severe-food-crisis-in-2024.](https://nairametrics.com/2024/02/06/world-bank-projects-seven-states-in-northern-nigeria-to-face-severe-food-crisis-in-2024)
- Udosen, N. M. (2021). Farmers – Herders Crisis and Food Security in Nigeria: Causes and Implications. *European Journal of Political Science Studies. Vol. 5(1)*
- UNICEF 2023: 25 MILLION Nigerians at high risk of food insecurity in 2023, [unicef.org/press-releases/25-million-nigerian-high-risk-food-insecurity-2023.](https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/25-million-nigerian-high-risk-food-insecurity-2023)
- Usman, S., and Sule, B. (2020) Farmers versus Herders Conflict and its implications on Nation – Building in Nigeria: A contribution to the Discourse. *United International Journal for Research & Technology. Vol. 2(1) 2020. ISSN: 2582 – 6832.*