



## The major causes and intervention options for sustainable resolution of conflicts among herdsmen and crop farmers in South-east zone, Nigeria.

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### ABSTRACT

This study was on the major causes and intervention options for sustainable resolution of conflicts among herdsmen and food crop farmers in South-East Zone, Nigeria. A combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques were employed in the selection of 204 respondents (180 farmers and 24 herdsmen). Primary data were sourced through field survey with the aid of a well-structured questionnaire and interview schedule. Descriptive statistics were employed in data analysis. The result of data analysis showed that destruction of the farmers' crops by cattle was the greatest source of conflict (89.4%) followed by contamination of sources of potable water (66.3%). Other activities of herdsmen that caused conflict as perceived by the crop farmers were plucking of fruits, cutting of bamboo for their tent making and defecation along the road and play grounds. Based on the herdsmen, the major causes were beating of cattle by farmers (100%) followed by killing and injuring of cattle (87.5%). However, raping of Fulani girls or women was not experienced by the Fulani community in the area. Other sources were abusing and cursing of Fulani herdsmen and blocking of roads by crop farmers. Identified consensus intervention options for sustainable peaceful coexistence among the farmers and herders included encouraging herdsmen to learn the custom of their host community, compensation of aggrieved farmers and herders, punishment of the offenders, educating farmers and herdsmen on their inter-dependence and institution of a regular meeting of herdsmen and community leaders' committee/forum. The study concluded that the institution of stakeholders to oversee the compensation of the aggrieved was very necessary. It also concluded that compensation of the aggrieved herders or farmers and punishment of the offenders should be an imperative coexistence measure. Recommendations such as restricting herdsmen to their own communities, provision of grazing reserves, as well as restricting herdsmen to particular locations were made, among others.

### 1.0 Introduction

The quest for protection and preservation of secured economic resources of livelihood appears to be the bane for continued conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in different places. In West Africa, conflicts between farmers and herders have been a common feature of economic activities for ages (1) (Tonah, 2006). The northern region of Ghana has recently experienced increased clashes between the two groups over access to land resources. (2) (Olaniyan, Francis & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). The struggle for the use of agricultural land for planting and grazing is becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria, largely due to intensification of production activities that

are necessitated by rising human population (3) (Fasona & Omojola, 2005). Prior to 20<sup>th</sup> century, cattle rearing was prevalent in the Guinea, Sudan, and sahel savanna belts where crop production was carried out on small scale only during the short rainy. This gave the cattle herders access to a vast area of grass land. However, the introduction of irrigated farming in the savanna belt of Nigeria and the increased withering of pasture during dry season has made pasture less available for cattle. The herdsmen had to move Southwards to the coastal zone where rainy season is longer and the soil retains moisture for long in search of greener pasture and fresh water for their cattle (4) (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009). As the herders migrate Southwards where the grass is much lush and often intrude into spaces long

claimed or cultivated by settled farmers, conflicts usually ensued. This conflicts is believed to have existed since the beginning of agriculture and either increased or decreased in intensity or frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors (5) (Aliyu,2015). In many places, herders have clashed with farmers and their host communities over cattle destruction of crops, farmers encroachment on grazing reserves and indiscriminate bush burning by nomads which normally leads to loss of crops (6) (Ofem & Inyang 2014, The seeming boldness of the perpetrators and mystery surrounding the real cause has continued to attract mixed perceptions. While many perceive it as a mere farming, grazing, land and water dispute; others see it as a reprisal in defence of livestock from banditry in farming communities (Eyekpimi 2016;Mikailu, 2016).In recent times, there have been prevalent cases of herders-farmers clashes in Nigeria. (Ofuoku and Isife (2009) noted that in Densina, Adamawa state, 28 people were killed, while about 2,500 farmers were displaced and rendered homeless in a clash between them, similarly, idowu(2017) submits that the violence has displaced more than 100,000 people in Benue and Enugu states and left them under the care of relatives or in makeshift internally displaced persons (IDPs) while many are still struggling to rebuild their lives. The resultant effects are usually loss of lives and crops, destruction of properties, displacement of persons, decline in income/savings ; as well as threat to food and national security. Besides the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) recently placed the Nigerias Fulani herdsman as the worlds fourth deadliest militant group for having accounted for about 1,229 deaths in 2014. While Boko Haram was associated with about 330 casualties in the first quarter of 2016, the herdsman accounted for nearly 500 deaths and have shown no sign of slowing down. As such, it has been predicted that the herdsman might well surpass Boko Haram as Nigerias most dangerous group (10) (Burton, 2016).

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study was to analyze Herdsman-Crop farmers conflicts and food production in South-East, Nigeria. While the specific objectives were to:

1. identify major causes of farmers and herdsman conflicts in South-East, zone of Nigeria.
2. analyze intervention options for sustainable coexistence

2.0 Methodology

The study was conducted in South-East Geo-political zone of Nigeria The choice of this region was informed by the that there had been reports of herdsman and crop farmers

conflicts in the zone In addition, the zone is at the center of the oil belt in Nigeria. The South-East zone is located between latitudes 04° 15 and 7° 25” north and longitudes 05° 50” and 09° 30”east (OBI,2013). The South-East region is bordered on the East and south-East by Cross-River and Akwa-ibom states, on the South by River state, on the north by Kogi and Benue states (Come to Nigeria, 2011) . The zone covers a land area of 109,524qkm which is about 11.9% of the total area in Nigeria Multi-stage sampling techniques were used in selection of the respondents. Three states namely Abia, Ebonyi, and Enugu out of five states were purposively selected because of the endemic reports of farmers and herders conflicts in the states. In the first stage, three states Abia, Ebonyi and Enugu were purposively selected out of the five states of South-East geopolitical zone because farming and rearing activities take place there In the second stage, two agricultural zones were purposively selected from each of the three states because of the reports of herdsman and farmers conflicts in these areas of the zone. The agricultural zones selected were Umahia and Ohafia zones from Abia state, Ebonyi north and Ebonyi central zones from Ebonyi state, and Agbani and Nsukka zones from Enugu state In the third stage, two extension blocks were purposively selected from each of the six agricultural zones on the basis of their high level of involvement in farmers and herders conflicts. In stage five, 5 circles were proportionately selected from the blocks to make 8 circles selected in Abia, 28 circles selected in Enugu and 16 circles selected in Ebonyi states. From the circles, 8 farmers were selected from Abia, 32 were selected from Ebonyi and 140 selected from Enugu to give a total of 180 farmers .On the part of the herders, 8 herders were randomly selected from the three states to make a total of 24 herders. Thus a total of 240 respondents were used for the study. Primary data were sourced by the use of structured questionnaire and interview schedule. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages and means scores derived from 4points Likert type scale with decision point of 2.5 were employed in data analysis. Focus group discussion (FGD) was also conducted to compliment and affirm the findings from data analysis with qualitative information.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Data analysis and results discussion of the study were presented according to specific objectives of the study.

Sources of Farmers-Herdsman Conflicts in the Area sources of farmers-herdsman conflict were sought and analyzed. The result obtained is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Percentage distribution of Arable Crop farmers according to Perceived sources of conflicts

	Frequency	Percentage
Crops destroyed by herdsman/cattle	143	89.4
Your sources of potable water contaminated by herdsman/cattle	106	66.3
Herdsman violated local customs	71	44.4
Herdsman involved in raping young girls/women	27	16.9
Herdsman did set fire on farm plots	101	63.1
Herdsman fought children relations	64	40.0
Herdsman stole crop/properties	48	30.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

The result of data analysis in Table 1 actually presented the percentage distribution of crop farmers' responses on the causes of crop farmers-herdsmen conflicts. The study revealed that the major causes of the conflicts were destruction of crops by herdsmen and their cattle (89.4%), contamination of sources of potable water (66.3%) by

herdsmen/cattle and setting of fire on farm plots (63.1%). This is in line with Blench (1994) report, that the major cause of herdsmen-farmers' conflicts in Nigeria is the destruction of farmers' crop by herdsmen cattle. Other activities of herdsmen/cattle that caused conflicts as revealed.

Table 2: Distribution of Herdsmen according to perceived Sources of the conflicts

Sources of Conflict	Frequency	Percentage
Cattle killed by crop farmers	14	87.5
Cattle injured by crop farmers	14	87.5
Properties stolen by crop farmers relations	6	37.5
Cattle were beaten	16	100.0
The boys raped young girls/women	-	-
Children were harassed and beaten by crop Farmers/relations	3	18.8
Cattle trespassed their farmland	16	100.0
Cattle drank from their sources of water	14	87.5
Did not pay or complete the payment after buying your cattle	9	56.3

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

The result of data analysis in Table 2 indicated that, among the sources of conflict perceived by the herdsmen, beating of the cattle by farmers and Fulani cattle trespass over farm land recorded 100% each. The herdsmen equally indicated that killing and injuring of their cattle, as well as potable water contamination by their herd were among the major causes of farmers-herdsmen conflicts (87.5%). The study also revealed that raping of Fulani girls or women was not experienced by the Fulani community in the area. This is in conformity with Nweze (2005) findings that killing and injuring of herdsmen cattle are among the causes of herdsmen-farmers conflicts. Other activities by crop farmers in focus group discussion with the crop farmers were; destruction of fences, stepping on incubating fowls by cattle, dropping of wastes on their playground and compacting of farmland thereby making farmland harder during cultivation.

### 3.1 Sources of farmers-Herdsmen Conflicts as indicated by the Herdsmen

**Table 3:** Arable Crop Farmer's Perceived Intervention Options for Sustainable Resolution of Crop Farmers-Herdsmen Conflicts in the Study Area

Intervention Options	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
Each community to provide adequate grazing reserves for Herdsmen.	36	27	47	50	2.3	Rejected
Herdsmen to rear their cattle along federal Roads only.	46	22	34	58	2.5	Accepted
Restricting the number of cattle to the carrying capacity of host community grassland.	36	63	42	19	3.4	Accepted
Curriculum of nomadic education to include the sustainability of ecosystem farmland.	72	55	25	8	3.2	Accepted
Encourage Fulani to learn the custom of the host community	79	48	18	15	3.1	Accepted
Legislation to confine cattle to particular locations.	56	72	20	12	3.2	Accepted
Compensation of aggrieved farmers and herders.	86	50	16	8	3.4	Accepted
Punishment of the offenders.	89	57	4	10	3.5	Accepted
Educating farmers and herdsmen on their Inter-dependence	88	62	8	2	3.5	Accepted
Institution of and regular meeting of herdsmen community leaders' committee forum.	77	59	12	12	3.3	Accepted
Leasing out grazing land by the community to herdsmen.	36	30	33	61	2.3	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

**Note:** SA – Strongly Agreed, A – Agreed, D- Disagreed, SD –Strongly Disagreed

Result presented in Table 3 showed that almost all the intervention options for sustainable resolution of crop farmers-herdsmen conflicts were accepted by the respondents. This is

Most of the herdsmen respondents indicated that they have been involved on conflicts many times within the period. The result obtained is shown in Table 2. As revealed by focus group discussion with herdsmen that contributed to conflicts included, abusing and cursing of Fulani by crop farmers and blocking of roads by crop farmers, thereby preventing them and their cattle from passing.

### 3.2 Intervention options for sustainable coexistence of Crop Farmers-Herdsmen Conflicts

Intervention option for sustainable resolution of crop farmers-herdsmen conflicts was determined by mean score obtained from 4-point likert scale. The result of data analysis is shown in Tables 3 and 4.

**Table 3:** Arable Crop Farmers' Perceived Intervention Options for Sustainable Resolution of Crop Farmers-Herdsmen Conflicts in the Study Area

confirmed by the fact that the mean score obtained from the respondents (crop farmers) were higher than or equal to 2.5 in accordance with the decision rule. The result indicated that punishment of the offenders had the highest mean score of (X = 3.5) and closely followed

**Table 4:** Herdsmen Perceived Intervention options for Sustainable Resolution of Crop farmers-Herdsmen Conflicts in the Study Area

Intervention Options	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
Each community to provide adequate grazing reserves for Herdsmen.	4	4	6	2	2.7	Accepted
Herdsmen to rear their cattle along federal roads only.	0	2	9	5	1.8	Rejected
Restricting the number of cattle to the carrying capacity of host community grassland.	0	0	4	12	1.3	Rejected
Curriculum of nomadic education to include the sustainability of ecosystem farmland.	0	4	7	5	2.0	Rejected
Encourage Fulani to learn the custom of the host community.	2	8	3	3	3.0	Accepted
Legislation to confine cattle to particular locations.	0	0	4	12	1.3	Rejected
Compensation of aggrieved farmers and herders.	6	10	0	0	3.4	Accepted
Punishment of the offenders.	5	5	2	4	2.8	Accepted
Educating farmers and herdsmen on their Inter-dependence.	4	8	2	2	2.9	Accepted
Institutions of and regular meeting of herdsmen community leaders' committee/forum.	2	9	2	3	2.7	Accepted
Leasing out grazing land by the community to herdsmen.	10	2	2	2	3.5	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2018

**Note:** SA – Strongly Agreed, A – Agreed, D- Disagreed, SD –Strongly Disagreed

Analysis presented in Table 4 shows that respondents (herdsmen) accepted some of the intervention options and rejected others. The result indicated that leasing out grazing land by the community to herdsmen recorded the highest followed compensation of aggrieved farmers and herders (X=3.4). The respondents (farmers) rejected two options as means of resolving crop farmers-herdsmen conflicts. The options were each community to provide adequate grazing reserves for herdsmen (X=2.3) and leasing out grazing land by the community to herdsmen (X=2.3). mean score of 3.5 and closely followed by compensation of aggrieved farmers and herders (X = 3.4). other acceptable options included encouraging Fulani herdsmen to learn the customs of the host community (X = 3.0), educating farmers and herdsmen on their interdependence (X= 2.8) and institution of and regular meeting of herdsmen community leaders committee/forum (X= 2.7). however, the rejected intervention options were; restricting the number of cattle to the carrying capacity of host community grassland (X=1.3), legislation to confine cattle to particular locations (X=1.3), herdsmen to rear cattle along federal roads only (X=1.8) and curriculum of nomadic education to include the sustainability of ecosystem/farmland (X =2.0).

#### 4.0 Conclusion

The study identified the major causes of conflicts between the herdsmen and food-crop farmers as both social and economic in nature. The economic perspective to the conflict included destruction of farmers' crops by the Fulani cattle, stealing and non-payment or incomplete payment of cattle by the host community . Violation of women and the customs of the farm community by the herdsmen and blocking of roads, thereby denying herders and their cattle access through the community by the farmers. These constituted the major social challenge for peaceful co-existence of the Fulani herders and the farmers. Consensus measures for sustainable resolution of herders-farmers conflicts in the area included the institution of stakeholders' forum made up of both groups to supervise, oversee and resolve issues affecting the farmers and herders, compensation of aggrieved herders or farmers and punishment of the offenders as well as educating farmers and herdsmen on their inter-dependence. Unless these issues are handled, conflicts will continue.

#### 5.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were added were made to ensure sustainable and peaceful coexistence among the Herders and the farmers;

1. Access to land resources is a major cause of herder-farmer conflicts in South-East zone of Nigeria that leads to crop destruction, government should ensure that there is equity and accessibility to arable and grazing land to avert constant conflicts.
2. Enforcement and restriction of the number of animals (cattle) to the carrying capacity of the grassland of a given area should be enacted in order to avoid over-grazing and destruction of ecosystem in South-East zone of Nigeria.
3. Government at all levels should provide grazing reserves to accommodate the interest of herdsmen since cattle is one of the major source of protein (meat) in Nigerian markets,
4. The leaders of nomadic Fulani should encourage their community to learn the customs guiding their host community to avoid violation which often leads to conflict,
5. The Livestock Transformation Committee already set up by Federal Governments should transform the rearing pattern of the herders to be the same with that of the developed countries
- (6) Herdsmen should be properly educated or re-oriented on the sanctity of human lives and better ways of handling grievances
- 7) Establishment of stake holders committee that will be made up of leaders of the host community and herders to reconcile the aggrieved, to ensure and decide on adequate compensation of victims,

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