



FARMERS-HERDERS CRISIS AND FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA: CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract:

The paper examines Farmers-Herders crisis and food security in Nigeria: Causes and Implications. It viewed that Farmers-Herders crisis in Nigeria threatens food security, peace and sustainable development of the nation, Nigeria. The work maintains that the incessant crises occasioned by Herdsmen and Farmers in Nigeria, has claimed so many lives and property, and displaced so many, with attendant socio-economic consequences on sustainable development of the nation, Nigeria. Using Resource Access Theory (RAT), the work explains that the crisis between Herders and Farmers can be understood as the problem of access to land for economic survival, which as a result, has caused economic, political and environmental tensions in Nigeria, especially in the middle belt and southern parts of Nigeria since the return to democracy in 1999. The theory argues succinctly that the inability of the Fulani Herdsmen to have unhindered access to land for grazing, is to a significant extent responsible for why they often go into conflict with the host communities and farmers in Nigeria as access to the resource is the main cause of the conflict and violence. With this thriving crisis and violence of Farmers and Herders in Nigeria without proper steps by the Nigerian Government to tackle it to a standstill, the work posits that it portends grave implications for Nigeria's food security, peace and national development. Therefore, in order to create an enabling environment for food security, peace and sustainable development, the paper suggests among others that there is need for the Nigerian Government to come up with a proper re-orientation programme that will breed good and social interaction, irrespective of religious and ethnic background. Government at all levels should be firm and fair in its resolution and implementation decision so as to tackle the crisis to a standstill. There is need for the Federal Government of Nigeria to invest on national orientation programme that will make herdsmen to see the need to value human lives and property in Nigeria, even as the Government should also strengthen its security apparatus and make it fully independent. The paper also recommended that there should be border policing to guide

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against illegal entry and possession of illegal arms and ammunitions for peace and development of the nation, Nigeria.

Keywords: farmers-herders crisis, food security, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Fulani is an ethnic group who are mostly shepherds and cattle herders. They are rural or pastoral, and they migrate from one area to another. They are mostly Muslims who speak the Hausa language. Over 30 million Fulani people are living in the northern states of Nigeria (Gordon, 2000).

The main Fulani sub-groups in Nigeria are: Fulbe Adamawa, Fulbe Mbororo, Fulbe Sokoto, Fulbe Gombe, and the Fulbe Borgu (Eyekpimi, 2016 in ResearchClue.com). The Fulani group has a long history of migrating, and they have built relationships with various farming populations in Nigeria. Fulanis are known for herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast dry grasslands of their environment. But today, available grazing lands are decreasing, and livestock pathways are blocked in many areas. Only a small portion of the grazing reserves were acquired, and they are poorly managed (UN Environment, n.d.). Majority of farmer-herder crisis have occurred between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian farmers. The Herder-Farmer crisis in Nigeria can be understood as a problem of access to land for economic survival, which as a result has caused economic, political and environmental tensions in the country, especially in the Middle Belt and South of Nigeria since the return of democracy in 1999. The movement of herdsmen from the North of the county to the Middle Belt and South of Nigeria for available and conducive space has pitched them against farmers and host communities, with a resultant effect being fierce resistance and monstrous killings over land. The clashes are occasioned by the destruction of farmlands of the aborigines by the herds of cattle belonging to the herdsmen. Naturally, herdsmen by their nature are migrants who leave their traditional abode in search of greener pasture for their flocks or livestock. The migration is caused generally by the absence of good and veritable land for their livestock to feed on. The rate of desertification and deforestation in the Sahara Desert for instance, is at alarming rate as Nigeria is part of the countries in Sahel region that experiences drought, desertification and deforestation (Blench, 2004; Abass, 2012; Okolie, and Atelhe, 2013).

Sequel to these challenges, it therefore forced the herdsmen who occupy the area to migrate down south for greener pasture for their cattle to graze. In the course of entering the shores of the southern and middle-belt regions of Nigeria, their cattle cause great damage to farmland, resulting to conflicts and confrontations with indigenes and farmers in particular. Boko (2007) noted that the intensity of the drought in the Sahel regions calls for worry and urgent attention.

Although the Nigerian government and some mediating agents and organizations have responded in a bid to tackling theses crises, their efforts have been criticized and considered unsuccessful as the Government's response to the violence revolves round

the use of military force and mediation by eminent persons at a crisis point. Neither the military nor mediation panels have been able to address the crisis. And in most cases where military forces are deployed to curtail the crisis, often aggravates the incidents, especially in the treatment of the civil population which itself has become a critical political and security challenges (Hoffman, 2014). With the efforts of the Nigerian government and the Mediation panels not effective enough to mitigate this crisis from the root, farmers-herders crisis has continued to thrive in several parts of Nigeria. So many lives and property have been lost as the crises continue to thrive in the Nigerian communities in spite of the duo's effort to curb incessant conflicts between farmers and herdsmen. Agbedo (2016) posits that between the year 2000 and 2016, there has been reported cases of conflicts and confrontations between the herders and the farmers and also indigenes of the communities they migrate to. Recently, the North-central states of Benue, Plateau and Nasarawa and other states in the south and middle-belt for example, have experienced crises that have led to thousands of deaths and displacement as a result of clashes between herders and local farmers in several communities. The migration of the herdsmen has caused more harm than good in all these areas, and in January 2018 alone,

Amnesty International report indicated that 168 people were killed as a result of the Farmers-Herders clashes, while 18,000 displaced, with some who were landowners, becoming tenants in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps. Conversely, the possession of illegal small arms and light weapons by these two antagonistic groups has further aggravated the conflict.

However, with this seeming unending crisis between farmers and the host communities whose crops are regularly invaded and destroyed by the cattle during seasonal movements, the rate of insecurity and violence in Nigeria has increased, and has led many populations to create self-defence forces and ethnic militias, which have engaged in further violence. Frankly speaking, Nigeria as a nation state today is under a severe internal socio-economic and security threat occasioned by Boko Haram insurgency and Farmers-Herders conflicts even as the threat has special economic, political and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions has greatly affected the nation's stability and food security and it can be traced to the Fulani herdsmen and Farmers crises, poverty, insurgency, policy gaps and underdevelopment, armed robbery, corruption, economic sabotage and environmental degradation (Damba, 2007). Accurate account of the death toll resulting from herdsmen-farmer violence in Nigeria is difficult to come by due to the lack of a dedicated database. Therefore, most of the evidences come from newspaper reports of various incidents involving the herdsmen and farmers in settled communities. Some sources claim that since 2001, over 60,000 persons had died as a result of the conflicts, making it deadlier than the notorious Boko Haram uprising (Nwosu, 2017). BBC also reported that over 50,000 deaths were caused by the crisis between 2001 and 2004 alone. Of these deaths, women and children accounted for almost 35,000. Some accounts have it that the violent confrontations started since 1990s or earlier than that. A report showed that the economic cost of the herdsmen-farmer conflicts in only the four states of Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau is at about \$14 billion

annually and have even extended to south of Nigeria. Current figures are likely to be higher, especially with the spread of the conflict to other states. Little wonder, the Global Terrorism Index showed the Fulani herdsmen as the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world in 2014. Only the fearsome trio of Boko Haram, ISIS and Al-Shabab were adjudged deadlier.

The Farmers-herdsmen conflict remains the major issue in Nigeria and it has assumed very dangerous dimensions with unimaginable consequences for food security. States like Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Kogi, etc. are still experiencing the menace of farmers-herdsmen crises, and the implication of these crises in all these communities is that economic activities including the production of food are often threatened to result in widespread hunger and malnutrition (Okolie and Atelhe, 2013). Adisa (2012) again observed that Farmers-herders crisis remains the most preponderant resource-use conflict in Nigeria found in nearly every part of Nigeria. Today, these conflicts have constituted several threats to the means of survival and livelihood of both farmers and herdsmen and have demonstrated high potential increase in insecurity and food crisis particularly in the rural communities where most of the crises are localized, with reverberating consequences nationwide (Wudaba and Ishaku, 2017). The causes of the crises have been traceable to the policy gap and underdevelopment of grazing lands, land ownership and utilization system, increase in production due to the increase in population, climate change, induced competition for resources, poverty, insurgency, armed robbery, corruption, economic sabotage and environmental degradation. These causes by implication have resulted in internal displacement, loss of life and property, destruction of farm crops, cattle rustling and killing of cows, hunger and insecurity (Fasona, Adebayo and Olufemi, 2016). Cases of Farmers-Herdsmen crisis in Nigeria include: the Agatu Massacre in Benue State in February 2016. Over 300 persons from the communities were massacred, while some 7,000 were displaced. Some reports showed that many people died in ten Agatu communities in the hands of suspected herdsmen in early 2016. These killings were accompanied by the destruction of houses and other property as well as allegations of rape. According to their leader, the attacks were reprisals against the Agatu people for killing a prominent Fulani man and stealing his cattle in 2013 (*Nigerianeye*, 2016). January 2013, also had a reported case of Fulani herdsmen attacks in some villages, killed 10 people, and displaced over 4,000 people (Ndubuisi, 2018). Another was the heavily armed Fulani herdsmen attacked in April 2016 in Nimbo Ngwoko, Ugwuijoro, Ekwuru, Ebor, Umuome and Ugwuachara villages in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu state. Forty people died even as ten residential houses and a church were also burnt in addition to vehicles, motorcycles and domestic animals. April 2016 also saw an attack on residents and razing of houses in Dori and Mesuma villages, Gashaka Local Government of Taraba state where fifteen bodies were recorded dead.

An attack on Kwata community in Jos South Local Government, following a prior warning leading to twenty two deaths and six houses burnt, was also recorded in December 2015 (*Nigerianeye*, 2016). In May 2018, over 21 people were killed by herdsmen Demsa L.G.A of Adamawa state, while 32 Christians were murdered by Muslim Fulani

herdsmen (*Premium Times*, 2019). On February 2, 2019, an attack on Adara settlement named Ungwar Bardi by suspected Fulani gunmen killed eleven. But a reprisal attack by Adara targeted settlements of the Fulani killings saw at least 141 people deaths while 65 were missing. The attack took place in Kajuru L.G.A of Kaduna state (www.thisdaylive.com). March 18, 2019 also saw a coalition against Kajuru killings. Over 130 people were killed in a series of revenge attacks (Sahara reporters, 2020). A number of recent violence between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria has been alarming. Thus, many people due to insecurity and violence had to create self-defense forces and militias which have made them participate in further violence, especially between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian farmers (Bukari, Sow, and Scheffran, 2018).

The frequent attacks on the Nigeria farmers have weakened the communities' growth and food security. Besides, according to the International Crisis Group, the conflict between Nigerian farmers and herdsmen has killed at least 1,300 people in the first half of 2018. And since the beginning of 2018, more than 18 people from Benue State were killed, and thousands of people displaced because of attacks.

However, the Nigerian government has made several attempts to quell this problem in several parts of the country, but the farmers-herdsmen crises in Nigeria have continued to demonstrate a high level of insecurity and food crisis owing to the invasion of the north-central, middle-belt and southern states by herdsmen. This has forced farmers to abandon their fertile farmlands, rendering several communities deserted even as it also reduces farmers (owners of farmlands) to tenants in internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps. Many of them who resist invasion have lost their lives while others injured. Some (both farmers and herdsmen) have also experienced a decline in productivity of their crops and herds due to destruction (Nweze, 2005).

Farmers-herdsmen crisis in Nigeria has persisted and it stands a threat to national food security, livestock production and eradication of poverty, with farmers often regarded as the most vulnerable (Dimelu, Salifu, Enwelu and Igbokwe, 2017). This calls for urgent and effective intervention of the Government and other recognized and concerned agencies for peace, food security and sustainable development.

This work, however, examines Farmers-herdsmen crisis and food security in Nigeria: causes and implications.

2. Conceptualizing Food Security

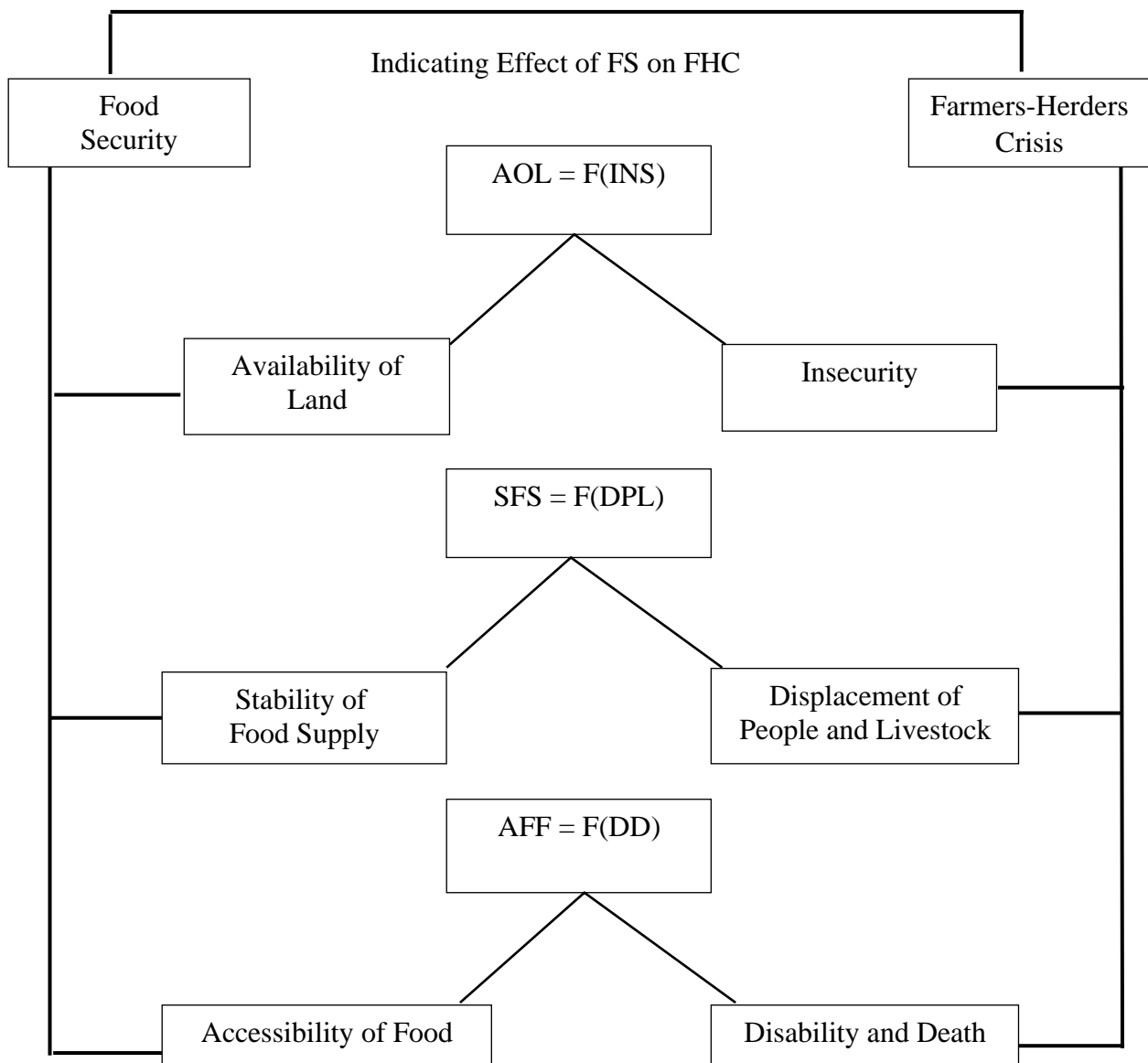
Food Security as a broad concept, cuts across many dimensions. It means access to sufficient food for healthy living. Food Security is the condition in which all have access to adequate food to live healthy and productive (World Bank, 1986). To Pottier (1999), food security involves interconnected domains with questions of agriculture, society, environment, employment and income, marketing, health and nutrition, and public policy. United States Agency for International Development USAID Bureau for Africa, (1986) (cited in Eme, Onyishi Uche and Uche, 2014) also defines food security as a situation when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life. World Bank

(2007) further defines food security as a threefold concept. These are food availability, food affordability and food accessibility. Food availability for households means ensuring sufficient food for the households through production. The above definitions, no doubt, point to at least two parts of this complex concept: access to available food and adequate nutrient intake for sustainable health.

2.1 Conceptual Model

The conceptual model below was developed for the study to operationalize Farmers-Herders Crisis in Nigeria.

Figure 1: Concept Model



Source: Researcher's Conceptualization, (2020)

This model was conceptualized by researchers to explain the variables used in this study. The model examines the relationship between Herders and Farmers crisis and

food security. This implies that Farmers-Herders crisis can be linked to availability of food, stability as well as accessibility to land and food supply.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Theories help us to arrive at a better understanding of the phenomena that we study theoretically or empirically. Theory is of fundamental importance in research as it ties the current study to the pertinent body literature. This study, however, adopts an eclectic approach anchored on resource access theory (RAT).

The RAT, which originated in 1970s, was propounded by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik. They believe that man is dependent on resources as access and control over it, defines man's basis of power and success. Hence, needing these resources they opined, means that strategies must be considered and adopted in order to maintain open access to resources. Jeffrey and Gerald (1978), however, observed that conflict has ever been a recurring decimal in the history of humanity as it is more often than not a result of competition for scarce resources in human society. Sikor and Lund (2009) make a vital observation that access to natural resources is often contested and rife with conflicts at many levels. As such, the need for people to legitimize their rights and access to natural resources has remained central in competition and contestation for national resources.

According to the theorists, resource ownership and utilization have directly and indirectly defined the dimensions of most conflicts involving man since time immemorial. Of all resources, however, the land has remained an overwhelming source of conflicts among various user groups as well as individuals at varying threshold or degrees. This theory helps in giving a better understanding of the prevalent herders and farmers crisis in Nigeria. The inability of the Fulani herdsmen to have unhindered access to grazing areas/reserves is to a significant extent responsible for why they often go into conflict with host communities and farmers in Nigeria. The theory sees access to a resource as the main cause of conflict and violence (Ikezue and Ezeah, 2017). However, due to restricted access, the herdsmen have resorted to taking laws into their hands by forcing their animals into people's farmlands thereby destroying farm produce in the process. The herdsmen believe that they should have unhindered access to grazing routes which they see as their God-given right and any attempt to deny them this right will be challenged. On the other hand, farmers seem unwilling to allow the herdsmen access to their farmlands and this has always made them resort to violence to challenge the excesses of the herdsmen.

In relation to this study, farmers-herdsmen crisis in the use of agricultural land is becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria, largely due to 'intensification and extensification' of production activities that are necessitated by increasing human population (Adisa and Adekunle, 2010). Therefore, the farmers need the land for cultivation while the herdsmen need the land for grazing and rearing of cattle. The ultimate cause of the conflicts between farmers and herders lies in the general degradation of resources and the increased competition for access and resources capture (Tonah, 2006). This theory is found useful in explaining herdsmen-farmers crisis in Nigeria.

3. Insecurity and availability of Food in warring regions of Farmers-Herders crisis in Nigeria

Nigeria is under a severe internal and security threat as the threat has political, economic and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions has critically affected the stability of the nation and can be traced to many factors in which the Fulani-herdsmen appears to be major factor.

Most worrisome in the present development is the pillaging, raping, killing and kidnapping by the so-called Fulani herdsmen. Stories are found in the national dailies on daily basis of how these shepherds strategically attack several communities and houses, with sophisticated assault guns-AK-47.

According to Okereke (2012) and Bello (2013), the conflicts in most part of Nigeria especially between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash, are largely uncalled for. Farmers can no longer farm peacefully because of Fulani herdsmen. These Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash have pitched Christians and Muslims against each other. Recent studies conducted by Okereke (2012) and Kasarachi (2016) have shown that, serious conflict erupt between Fulani herdsmen and farmers leading to loss of lives, valuable properties and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands thereby posing serious threat to food security since farmers for fear of attack could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce. The latest attacks by Fulani herdsmen are on the upsurge, with the most latest attacks in February 2018 happening in Benue State, Taraba State, Nasarawa State and few cases of attack in other states.

In recent times, the killings recorded by Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash has rampaged most communities displacing them of their farmlands and loss of their major source of livelihood. This is becoming unbearable with the Fulani herdsmen always having their ways leaving the farmers at their mercy. Herdsmen attribute the roots of the crisis to religious differences resulting in the killing of their cows while the farmers see the herdsmen as a threat to their crops and agricultural produce since the herdsmen allow their cows to feed on the farmer crops.

This recent wave of violence in Nigeria as observed by Kasarachi (2016) has disrupted socio-economic, religious and educational activities, political instability and threatened the national unity in Nigeria. These extra judiciary killings have forced thousands of people to abandon their homes and farmlands for safety. The rate of insecurity occasioned by Farmers-Herders crisis in the north-central, middle-belt and southern parts of Nigeria has reduced the rate of food production in the country, thereby making farmers not to produce food in surplus as a result of fear of being killed in their various farmlands. As such, it reduces the chances of food availability in the country (Osumah, 2018). Therefore, the work ascertains that the crisis of Farmers and Herdsmen in Nigeria threatens peace, security and sustainable development of the nation.

Farmers-Herders crisis has threatened Nigeria's peace and development. This crisis is widespread and a formidable challenge to food security in Nigeria. Herder-Farmer crises have not only directly impacted on the lives or livelihoods of those involved, but have also disrupted and threatened the sustainability of agricultural and

pastoral production and invariably the sustainability of livelihoods of rural communities (Moritz, 2010). Again, the crisis have reinforced circles of extreme poverty and hunger, destroys social status, food security and affects mostly the most marginalized groups which include women and children (Ikezue and Ezeah, 2017). The livelihood structure, food security and wellbeing of farmers are threatened and compromised as it further contributes to poverty, food and nutrition insecurity and poor health of farming in communities, with further escalation of conflicts. The instability caused by the incessant conflict between farmers and herdsmen, will likely lead to food shortages for the communities that depend on subsistence farming. Ibrahim, Ismaila and Umar (2015) further observe that the farmers-herdsmen crises have caused a sharp and substantial increase in prices for crucial northern agricultural crop exports such as cowpeas, maize, millet, rice and sorghum, and to the rest of Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. The rise in prices is mainly due to a decrease in agricultural output, uncertainties in markets and an increase in transportation. This therefore becomes a widespread and formidable challenge to food security in Nigeria as urgent and sincere steps are needed to be effectively taken by the Nigerian government to end these crises.

4. Food Insecurity, displacement, death and disability in communities of Farmers-Herders crises in Nigeria

The Farmers-Herders crisis in Nigeria has become alarming as it becomes a widespread phenomenon. These crises are considered as a negative phenomenon which has often led to the loss of many lives and property (Adams, Atelhe and Emmanuel, 2017). Adebayo and Olaniyi, (2008) posited that the impact of the herders-farmers conflict is one of such that has led to the displacement of the farmers from their places of origin as they have thus become Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) with far-reaching impact on farming activities. Olabode and Ajibabe (2010) further stressed that farmers-herders crises lead to widespread displacement of farmers from their farms following the destruction of farms by the invading pastoralist and subsequently a fall in farm yield as farmers abandon their more fertile farmland in avoidance of conflict and death. This shows that Herders-Farmers crises lead to unsafe environment for farming, forceful relocation of farmers, and increase in the number of widows and orphans and migration to marginal areas (Ukamaka, Mbadiwe, Danjuma, Mbolle and Achonam, 2017). With this negative effect of the crises, scarcity of food items which often leads to poverty and disease is bound to prevail. The North-central, middle-belt, southern parts and some other parts of Nigeria have been characterized by chronic food insecurity driven by the crisis between local farmers and cattle herders (World Food Programme, 2019). Sequel to this, food production in Nigeria has faced severe obstacles, coupled with adverse climate shocks, unpredictable rainfall, lack of modern farm inputs and technologies, government neglect and lack of policy directions (Adebayo and Ojo, 2012; Verter, 2016; MBNP, 2017; FAO, 2018).

These constraints, coupled with other socio-economic consequences, have nullified Nigeria's capacity to achieve food self-sufficiency and national peace and

sustainable development (UNCTAD, 2019, FSIN, 2019). And as such, the Nigerian government and other agencies need to take urgent and effective steps to end these crises in Nigeria.

5. Causes and Triggers of Farmers-Herders Crisis in Nigeria

There are a number of factors that combine to cause and escalate the crisis between herdsmen and farmers. The causes of the crises have been traceable to the policy gap and underdevelopment of grazing lands, land ownership system and utilization, increase in production due to the increase in population, climate change, induced competition for resources, poverty, insurgency, armed robbery, corruption, economic sabotage and environmental degradation (Fasona, Adebayo and Olufemi, 2016).

Accordingly, Ofuoku and Isife, (2009); Adoji, (2013) corroboratively assert that the main cause of farmers-herders crisis has been the change in climate occasioned by the absence of adequate rainfall, poor grazing land for their animals and lack of coping mechanisms by the herdsmen.

However, other causes and triggers include:

5.1 Land Conflicts

Conflicts between farmers and herdsmen can be understood as a problem of access to land. The beginning of the 21st century witnessed an expansion of agriculturist population and cultivated land at the expense of pasturelands in the Middle Belt. And in an already politically unstable region, it has never been always possible to ascertain a legal title to land for every farmer and herder. As a result, transhumance routes of herdsmen were no longer available, especially in the context of global warming as this has caused a continuous movement of herdsmen southwards in search of land or pasture for their animals. This has pitched them against farmers, eventually leading to crisis and destruction. For example, farming along the Benue River, accounts for over 20,000 tons of grain annually. This same area is also fertile ground for herdsmen to feed their cattle. Thus, farmlands within the river bank areas are the mostly affected by the movement of the herdsmen resulting in a number of clashes (Egbuta, 2018).

5.2 Climatic Crisis

Deteriorating environmental conditions, desertification and soil degradation have led Fulani and herdsmen from Northern Nigeria to change their transhumance routes. Access to pastureland and watering points in the Middle Belt became essential for herdsmen travelling from the North of the country. The climate is a critical factor in the activities of herdsmen and farmers. The changing climatic condition, generally referred to as global warming, is no doubt taking toll on the survival of herdsmen and farmers business. Besides, the herdsmen change of transhumance routes to the south in search of available space, has pitched them against farmers and host communities. This global phenomenon is currently affecting many parts of the world with attendant consequences, including the Farmer-herder crisis (Egbuta, 2018).

5.3 Population Growth

Population growth has worsened this conflict. It has pitted many southern communities and farmers against the Fulani. One cause is the growing population of Nigeria's cattle population to 25 million cows in Nigeria, and the number of cattle is expected to increase to 60 million by 2050 (Fabiya and Otunuga, 2016). A large amount of food and water is required to satisfy massive numbers of animals when they are traveling over farmers' lands. Farmers accused the Fulani herdsmen of failing to control their cattle and allowing them to damage farmers' crops. However, the Fulani herdsmen have also accused farmers of stealing their cattle and sheep (Fabiya and Otunuga, 2016).

5.4 Resource Factor

Competition over a scarce resource would increase the likelihood of the conflict (Pruitt and Kim, 2014). The cattle herders' search for land and resources became one of the major causes of the fighting. Desert and droughts have swallowed up to 70% of grassland and droughts appear more frequently. Disagreements over the use and allocation of food and resources such as grazing areas between herders and local farmers are intense because of the interest of both parties (Ismaila and Umar, 2015). Additionally, police announced the arrest of suspected Fulani militants and said they carried dangerous weapons, and farmers accused herdsmen of damaging their crops and failing to control their animals. However, the herdsmen believed that weapons were needed to defend themselves from attacks from farming communities who tried to steal their cattle.

5.5 Government Insincere Attitude

The scourge of herdsmen clashes with farmers in various parts of Nigeria has seen government display an insincere attitude whether consciously or unconsciously in their response to the issue on time. It is a painful scenario that the crises result into a sharp increase in poverty rate in the trouble area due to insincere attitude and manner the three tiers of government handle the situation from the onset. However, the rural dwellers are known to be subsistence farmers that depend on the sales of farm produce. They depend on their farm produce for survival. When their crops are destroyed, it automatically would have drastic influence on them. Therefore, as a result of the destruction, most of them are frustrated, displaced and poverty bound. But what brings or heightens conflict is that the crimes are not single handedly dealt with by the law enforcement agencies. The Law of the federal government states that nobody should possess arms and ammunitions except the government give license to such a person. But the herdsmen, however, have access to possession of arms and ammunition illegally to secure their lives and that of their herds from dangerous animals in the bush. These weapons are used erroneously as against their said claims for protection. They also refuse to pay for damages as a result of overgrazing caused by their herds and cattle on the farmland of farmers. And Government seems to be insincere in responding to these excesses with that of their illegally acquired arms and ammunitions which are not licensed by the Government. As a result, it has caused counter reaction and retaliation by the farmers to

also illegally possess arms and ammunitions used to kill herders and their cattle, thereby causing greater crises and violent reactions on the host communities (Osumah, 2018).

5.6 Lack of Political Will

The government at all levels has demonstrated near absence of needed political will to proffer lasting solutions to the conflicting claims of different actors in the ongoing conflict between herders and farmers. Political leaders have failed to invoke appropriate legislations to be backed by actions that would define rules and limits for parties involved in the conflict, especially in the case of protocol on trans-human movement. Besides, the federal government in the past has made efforts to regulate and control pastoral activities, even till now, but it appears that adequate political will is needed to enforce laws. The government for instance, is perceived today by some quarters, particularly the opposition parties, as being sympathetic to the activities of the herdsmen. This perception is likely due to the fact that the current President is Fulani, the same ethnic group that dominates the cattle business. Citizens, especially from the most affected states expected the federal government to deal with the herdsmen-farmer crises in all parts of the state with the same vigor and determination it showed in similar internal security issues in other parts of the country. But the reverse is the case as it triggers the herders and farmers and even indigenes in the affected communities to take laws into the hands in the process of responding to the crisis (Egbuta, 2018).

5.7 Security Factor

The conflict between herdsmen and farmers is becoming a regional security threat. As a result, the local authority is weakened in the enforcement of the agreement between the groups.

According to Nigerian reports, thieves stole approximately 60,000 cattle in recent years. Many herdsmen have to arm themselves with weapons to protect their cattle and homes to ensure security. The government prioritizes the conflict as a threat to national security.

President Buhari took some swift actions and tried to control the conflict, but has not successfully battled the menace to a standstill (Ningxin, 2018). The conflict became a threat to Nigeria's national security because violent actions have caused deteriorating living conditions, and it will ultimately lead to more conflicts and breakdown of order in the region.

6. Socio-Economic Consequences of Farmers-Herders crisis on Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The crisis between herdsmen and farmers in most of the violent zones of middle-belt and southern parts of Nigeria has reduced the rate of food production in the country, thereby making farmers not to produce food in surplus as a result of fear of being killed on their various farmlands by the herdsmen. This has negative effects on the moral of farmers to plant more crops. The lives of farmers and herdsmen, women and children have been

lost while others displaced from being landowners to tenants in IDPs camps. Again, as a result of destruction of farm produce by the herds of cattle, the local farmers are exposed to poverty and unemployment for some period of time since their major occupation is on farming, and their farm produce destroyed. The youths among the farmers will probably sojourn into cities to engage in one job opportunity or the other. But the opposite will be the case as they need to survive. In the course of survival, they could involve themselves in any sort of crime as a result of psychological frustration. This depicts a scenario of a popular quote where a hungry man is an angry man (Osumah, 2018).

Ajibefun (2017) also stated both the social and economic effects and consequences of the crisis. On the social effects, he listed the following:

- 1) Sexual harassment of women,
- 2) Acquiring of weapons/arms,
- 3) Reduction in quality of social relationship,
- 4) Reduction of social support,
- 5) Loss of human life,
- 6) High cases of rape.

On the economic effects, Ajibefun (2017) listed the following:

- 1) Loss of produce in storage,
- 2) Displacement of farmers,
- 3) Reduction in output and income of farmers/nomads,
- 4) Scarcity of agricultural products,
- 5) Loss of houses and properties,
- 6) Infrastructural damages,

7. The Government's strategic response to the Farmer-Herders crisis so far

7.1 Creation of Grazing Reserves in 1965

In 1965, the northern regional government initiated one of the first attempts to respond to the herdsmen-farmer crisis in the country. The grazing reserves allocated large portions of land to be exclusively used by herders to rear their livestock. However, the grazing reserve system was not supported adequately. The government was still in the process of initiating legislations to legitimize the grazing reserves before natural factors such as population growth and other related consequences like urbanization and migration encroached on these designated areas reducing the herders' chances of accessing the reserves.

7.2 Establishment of National commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989

The federal government in 1989 established the NCNE as supported by the Nigerian legal system. The main goal of the programme was to integrate nomadic pastoralists into national life through mobile basic education and skill acquisition. The programme intended to integrate them into the society through education.

7.3 The use of Armed Forces to curb internal security

One of the federal government's immediate measures to address the farmer-herders crisis is the engagement of the Armed Forces of Nigeria as enshrined in the constitution. For example, in Plateau state, in 2001, the government deployed a Special Task Force called Operation Safe Heaven (STF-OSH) to check insecurity resulting from the farmers-herdsmen clashes. Recently, the OSH mandate was expanded to replace Operation Harbin Kunama II in Southern Kaduna state whose mandate was similar to that of OSH in Plateau. Presently, many called for a total declaration of state of emergency in Benue and Plateau state as a result of the gruesome killing and displacement of thousands of people in those states. Nigerians also expected the government to activate all the necessary sections of the constitution regarding the use of the Military in internal security. This call came as a fall-out of recent action taken by the government to suppress the Indigenous People of Biafra's (IPOB) agitations in the south-east and similar uprising in other parts of the country. The Military was deployed in September 2017 in an operation code-named Operation Python Dance to suppress the IPOB agitation and protests.

7.4 Establishment of the National Grazing Reserve Bill 2016

The National Grazing Reserve Bill was sponsored in 2016 at the parliament to address the herdsmen-farmer conflicts. The Bill did not survive due to opposition from different stakeholders. Those that opposed the Bill hinged their rejection on the provision of the Land Use Act of 1978 which vests all powers related to the regulation ownership, acquisition, administration, and management of Nigerian land with the state governors. Thus, the Land Use Act is an Act of the National Assembly, and by implication, a binding legislation, unless it is amended. States government and their representatives at the parliament have always opposed any attempt to establish grazing reserves in their domain. They consider it to be usurping the constitutional powers vested in them.

7.5 Proposed Cattle Ranching System 2018

In reaction to increasing conflicts and mass killings resulting from seasonal pastoral movements, the government in 2018, as a matter of policy, approved a 10-year National Livestock Plan at a cost of about 179 billion naira. The plan would culminate in the establishment of 94 ranches in 10 pilot states of the federation. Again, the state governments, especially in the South and North-central areas rejected the proposal on the grounds of not having enough space for such projects.

7.6 Legislation Prohibiting Open Grazing

As part of measures to end the persistent crisis between Farmers and Herdsmen in various states, government at state level began enacting legislation prohibiting open grazing in their state. This, they hope, would reduce risk of herdsmen destruction of farmlands and the associated conflicts. Benue, Ekiti and Taraba states are leading this opposition by enacting state laws prohibiting open grazing. On May 22, 2017, Benue state enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law (2017) and its

implementation began on November 1, 2017. Ekiti and Taraba states have also signed Bills prohibiting open grazing in their states. This makes open grazing under any guise, an illegal activity punishable by law.

7.7 The Great Wall Agency of the Federal Government

In 2013, the Federal government established the Great Green wall agency to tackle desertification. This was in response to the 2007 African Union Great Green Wall initiative that aimed at encouraging member states to plant 8000km of trees along the Southern Sahel to counter the effects of desertification along the area.

Continued desert encroachment along the Sahel region as a result of climate change, is a major factor responsible for seasonal migration of herdsmen from one region to the other in search of water and vegetation for cattle grazing.

Besides, the recent RUGA settlement initiative introduced in Nigeria, even though met with serious criticisms by Nigerians, is also part of government's response to the crisis. But all are yet to register a lasting success.

8. Conclusion

The Farmers-Herders crisis in Nigeria is critically observed that such crisis is majorly caused by destruction of crops on farmland by the cattle belonging to the herdsmen in the host communities. However, the work explains in details that the Farmers-Herders crisis has caused deaths of farmers and herdsmen, displacement, poverty, unemployment and food insecurity, with its socio-economic consequences on sustainable development in Nigeria. Based on the issues of food insecurity and poverty that has major implication on national security, peace and development in the country, the work recommends that sincere and urgent steps should be taken by the Government and other concerned agencies and organizations in order to calm the menace caused by Farmers-Herders for peace, security and sustainable development.

8.1 Recommendation

From the study, the following recommendations were made:

- 1) Representatives of the host communities and Fulani herdsmen should be conveyed under a public forum and involved in the decision making and permitted to take part actively in the planning procedure of restoring peace to most of the affected communities. And Participatory planning process that involves all stakeholders (herdsmen and farmers) in the dispute resolution mechanism should be adopted.
- 2) Ranching method of cattle rearing should be properly and unanimously adopted at rearing location across the states of the country while the herdsmen should be given needed training for effective and efficient management of the ranching.
- 3) There is need for proper re-orientation of the essence of social interaction irrespective of the religious and ethnic background.

- 4) Government should be firm and fair in its resolution and implementation of decisions. More so, sincerity in tackling Farmer-Herder crisis to a standstill, with good political will by politicians, is needed to curb this crisis.
- 5) The Federal Government of Nigeria needs to invest on National Orientation programs for the need to value lives in this country. The National Orientations Agency should be strategic in this direction.
- 6) As a matter of urgency, the Federal Government should strengthen the security apparatus and most importantly make them fully independent. Again, state and community policing should be encouraged because it will go a long way to arresting these incessant killings in the country.
- 7) Sentiments should be taken away when fighting this ugly problem by Nigerians. Meaning that, ethnic/religious sentiments should be boycotted in order to quell these crises in the affected communities of Nigeria.
- 8) Finally, the Law enforcement agencies in Nigeria should rise to its responsibility of prohibiting those in possession of illegal arms and ammunitions for peace and development of the nation, Nigeria.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author, whose name is listed below, certifies that apart from submitting this manuscript in European Journal of Political Science for publication, there are no other affiliations with or involvement in any other organization or entity with financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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