

Implication of Fulani Herders/Benue Farmers Crises on Food Security of Benue State of Nigeria.

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Abstract: *The paper titled “implication of Fulani herdsmen benue farmers crises on food security in benue state, sought to examine the effect of herders attacks on food availability and accessibility and accessibility towards maintaining a healthy and active life in the state. the paper specifically sought to verify the level Herders/Farmers crises have affected food sufficiency in Benue State; and to ascertain the extent Herders/Farmers crises have affected access to safe food in Benue State among others. The study adopted ex-post-fact methodology. However, Eco-violence theory was chosen as a theoretical foundation. The basic assumption of the theory is that environmental changes trigger conflict. The paper concluded that herdsmen/farmers crises have directly and indirectly affected food security in Benue State. the paper, therefore, recommended as follows; that government should enact a law to provide for the establishment of ranches (restricted grazing) so as to drastically reduce Fulani herdsmen/farmers crises that threaten food sufficiency in Benue State; that the law enforcement agencies should be trained and equipped to combat the rising and continues spate of herders-framers clashes that negatively effect access to safe food in the State; that the government should provide public enlightenment campaigns, seminars and symposia to sensitize the farmers and herdsmen on the negative effect of the crises as hampers access to nutritious food.*

Keywords: Herders, Farmers and Food Security.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

According to Anter (2011), the Fulanis are traditionally a nomadic, pastoralist, tracking people, herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast dry hinterlands of their domain, keeping somewhat separate from the local agricultural population. Their origin is a matter of contestation, with some scholars claiming Judaeo- Syrian ancestry and others suggesting a North African descent. However, most scholars agree that the group may have migrated from the Middle East through North Africa and settled in the Central and West Africa from Tekruur Empire in today’s Senegal region. They are believed to be the largest semi- nomadic group in the world. In Nigeria, most of them still operate semi-nomadic herders, while others have embraced modernity and moved to the cities. Unlike the more integrated city dwellers, the nomadic groups spend most of their lives in the bush and are the one largely involved in the herders-farmers conflict. These herders usually herd the animals across vast areas, frequently clashing with farming communities.

Whit an increasing population, the need to expand the capacity of agricultural production to feed the teaming population is very crucial. Benue state therefore stands a better chance of contributing immensely to this due to her position as Food basket of the country. The state’s economy is driven by agricultural because of her rich produce which include yam, rice, bean, cassava, sweet-potato, maize, soybean, sorghum, millet, sesame, cocoyam, etc. the state accounts for over 70% of Nigeria’s Soybean production. The

state as one of the highest farming population (657,767 crop farmers as at 2010) in Nigeria is also endowed with one of the longest stretches of river (River Benue) in the country with great potential for a viable fishing industry, dry season farming through irrigation and for an inland water-way. Furthermore, in the state, the records of cassava production show that the total number of farm families involved in the production were 413159 (BNARDA, 2007). The State can boast of a great deal of livestock resources like goats, though the major occupation is crop farming, a lot of fishing activities on Rivers Benue and Katsina-ala are carried out; irrigation is widely practiced along the reverine areas during the dry season; growing vegetable crops such as tomatoes, okro, carrot, onion, pepper and amaratus in large quantities. It is also common practice to find each farming family keeping one from of livestock or the other such as poultry, rabitry, piggery, seep and goat on a small scale. Poultry, sheep, pigs and cattle are traditionally reared on free holder farmers. The strategic location of Benue State between the Southern forest regions and the Northern semi and grassland regions of the country makes it easy to have fertile land for agriculture with the estimated arable land constituting about 60 percent of the total area. Average farm size is 1.5 to 2.0 hectares (BNARDA, 2007)

This however appears to have been eroded by the persistent crises between Fulani herdsmen and their host communities, particularly farmers in the state. In recent times, the quest to boast food security in Benue state is threatened by conflicts that have come to be the unfortunate feature of the State. Herdsmen have continued to clash with

sedentary farming communities in Plateau, Ogun, Nassarawa, Kaduna, Benue, State in particular. In the case of Benue State, there have been highly devastating conflicts that have claimed very many lives and properties endangered by Fulani Herdsmen in communities of local government areas such as Agatu, Guma, Gwer West, Makurdi, Kwande, katsina-ala and Logo. The crises orchestrated by Fulani herdsmen in Benue State had claimed the lives of more than 5000 victims in the first half of the year 2014. They sacked more than 100 communities and have thrown thousands of refugees into Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp located at Makurdi. These losses of lives have adversely affected farming activities and other related businesses and socio- economic activities. This has resulted in a drastic reduction in farm outputs, a development that has heightened the fear of hunger. Already, most farmers in the affected local government area have abandoned farming for fear of being attacked by the herdsmen. For the predominantly farming communities of Benue and border communities of Nasarawa and Taraba state, farming is no longer a business as usual. Several farmers have been displaced and dispossessed of their farms by armed men believed to be herdsmen (Udeh, 2018).

Agricultural and development experts are unanimous in their predictions that the gains recorded in the agricultural sector of the economy, especially in the area of food production, may suffer a serious setback as result of the negative effects of terrorist activities on farmers in Benue state. Already, seven out of the 23 local governments in

Benue State, namely, Guma, Katsina- Ala, Gwer West, Logo, Kwande and the northern part of the sustained Fulani war in the affected localities have led to farmers’ reluctance to go back to their farms, even as the current farming season goes on. Resident farmers in nearby Makurdi fled the area leaving their farms unharvested and uncultivated, thereby subjecting farmer to unwarranted grazing by the Fulani herdsmen. In all the attacks, heavy casualties in human lives and prosperities are recorded on both sides. While the Benue farmers count losses in terms of houses and farm produce, the Fulani herdsmen are counting theirs in terms of cattle. Farms in the affected areas have been overtaken with weeds and those that were ready for harvest have been left unattended to. Mercy Corps 2013 and 2016, a global humanitarian organization funded by the British Department for International Development (BDID), on the causes and effects of perennial clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, revealed that the incessant attacks have drastic effects on food security and caused a loss of \$14 billion in three years. Apart from thwarting the country’s economic development to an enormous extent, other economic impacts of these clashes include impeding trade practices, reduction in crop yield, displacement of farmers, loss of lives and properties, loss of products in storage and destruction of public and private building. Below is the statistics of some of the attacks in the state.

Death tolls of due to Fulani herdsmen attacks on local government areas of benue state 2013-2017

Period	Agatu LGA	Buruku LGA	Guma LGA	Gwer-West LGA	Logo LGA	Tarkaa LGA	Turan-Kwande LGA
2013	236		92				
2014	43		78	35	50		
2015	107	12	28		100		12
2016		10	513		8	6	
2017		7	20	10	41		
Total deaths	386	29	721	45	207	6	12
Net death	1406						
Percentage (%) From net death	27.45%	2.06%	51.28%	3.20%	14.72%	0.42%	0.85%

Aluko (2017).

According to PHABC (2003), “Food security is when all citizens obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximize healthy choices, community self reliance and equal access for everyone”. Similarly, WHO (2006) defined Food Security as when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. It further explained that “Food security means that:

- All people at all times have both physical and economic access to enough food for an active, healthy life;
- The ways in which foods is produced and distributed are respectful of the natural processes of the earth and thus sustainable;
- Both the consumption and production of food are governed by social values that are just and equitable as well as moral and ethical;
- The ability to acquire food is ensured;
- The food itself is nutritionally adequate and personally and culturally acceptable; and

- The food is obtained in a manner that upholds human dignity”

This paper is therefore poised to underscore the implications of Fulani herds/Benue farmers crises on food security of Benue State.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The spate at which crises and insecurity threaten the peace of Benue State calls for attention. In spite of the tremendous amount of resources budgeted to maintain internal security, including food security in Nigeria by the government, it appears that the Fulani herds-farmers crises in Benue State is intractable leading to increase in food shortage, damage to farmlands, crops and crop yields destroyed, farm input very exorbitant, and farmers exterminated, the peaceful co-existence of communities and their hosts strained, socio-economic activities of host communities affected, all these leading to increase in the price of food items, commodities and persistent shortage of food available to consumers.

It is also apparent to stress that the frequent clashes between herders and farmers in the predominantly farming areas of the State have resulted in the destruction of lives and farmlands and have become a major threat to efforts to boost food security. This has also resulted in a drastic reduction in farm outputs, a development that has heightened the fear of hunger. Seven out of the twenty three local governments in Benue State, namely Guma, Gwer- West, Agatu, Logo, Kwande, Buruku, Tarkam mostly affected by the rampaging herdsmen have tables of woes to tell. The effects of the sustained Fulani war in the affected localities have led to farmers’ reluctance to go back to their farms even in this current farming season.

Against this backdrop, the following research questions are raised by the researchers

- To what extent do Herders/Farmers crises affect food sufficiency in Benue State?
- To what level have Herders/Farmers crises affected access to safe food in Benue State?
- To what degree do Herders/Farmers crises affect access to nutritious food in Benue State?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the implication of Fulani herders/farmers crises on food security of Benue State. The specific objectives include:

- To verify the extent Herders/Farmers crises have affected food sufficiency in Benue State.
- To ascertain the level Herders/Farmers crises have affected access to safe food in Benue State.
- To find out the extent Herders/Farmers crises have affected access to nutritious food in Benue State.

1.4. Implication of the Study

The study is basically aimed to interrogate the implication of Fulani herders/farmers crises in food security in Benue State. nevertheless, it is hoped that it would go a

long way to encouraging more meaningful development efforts on issues relating to implications of herders/farmers crises on food security in Benue State. The study is not going to be the first of its kind, but it is undertaken on the premise that it will add to the existing literature on the crises. The findings of the study will provide useful background information to avoid the reoccurrence of the crises.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 The Concept of Food Security

Food is mankind’s basic need, and it has shaped the course of man’s endeavour throughout history. One of the most important objectives of man at all times has been the question of how to obtain food to feed the entire family, communities, nations and indeed, the whole world, (Stamoulisk & Zessa 2003). Originally,. The concept of food security was understood to apply at the national level, with a state being food secure when there was sufficient food to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in its production and prices (FAO, 2002). However, a new definition emerged at 1996 World Food Summit. The World Food Summit (1996) defined food security as existing “when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life”.

Related to the above, the World Bank (2010) identified three cardinal elements of food security:

- Food availability (adequate supply of food items): sufficient food is available for the household members
- Food accessibility(adequate purchasing power): which also means reducing poverty, what it implies here is that one must be to purchase food.
- Food utilization (safe food for human consumption):This entails ensuring a good nutritional outcome. Good nutrition must be accompanied with other complementary resources such as nutrition, health care, safe water and better sanitation. Food security incorporates a measure of resilience to future disruption on unavailability of critical food supply due to various risk factors including drought, shipping disruptions fuel shortages economic instability and wars.

Nigeria is still characterized by high reliance on food imports. Malnutrition is widespread in the entire country and rural areas are especially vulnerable to chronic food shortages, malnutrition, unbalanced nutrition, erratic food supply, poor quality foods and high costs of food (Akinyele 2009). This phenomenon, he argues is more prevalent in the rural areas and among children. Akinyele (2009) submit that:

there is a high level of malnutrition among children in

rural Nigeria: the figures differ with geopolitical zones, with 56 percent reported in rural areas of South West and 84.3 percent in three rural communities in Northern part of Nigeria. Nationally, the overall prevalence of stunting, and underweight is 42.0 percent, and 25 percent, respectively.

2.1.2 Fulani Herdsmen

Fulani herdsmen are nomadic or semi nomadic herders whose primary occupation is raising livestock. Fulani herdsmen engaged in both random and planned transhumance movements. A primary reason for migratory nature of the herdsmen is to reach areas with abundant grass and water for the cattle (Iro, 1994). The Fulani herdsmen are mainly found in sahel and semi arid parts of West Africa but due to changes in climate pattern many herdsmen have moved further south into the savanna and tropical forest of West Africa. The herdsmen are found in countries such as Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin and Cameroon. In Nigeria, the livestock made available by the herdsmen provide the bulk of the beef consumption in the country (Iro, 1994).

2.2 Contextual Review

2.2.1 Fulani Herdsmen Crisis in Nigeria: Causes and Dynamics

Conflict is largely a phenomenon of plural societies. In Nigeria, conflict has become a very widespread occurrence; manifesting in all spheres of human endeavors. A study of major sources of conflicts between the Fulani pastoralists and farmers shows that land related issues, especially over grazing fields, account for the highest percentage of the conflicts. In other words, struggles over the control of economically viable lands causes more tensions and violent conflicts among communities. As pastoralists and cultivators have coexisted for a long time, the complexities over the land-use system have dramatically changed and thus become the dependent variables in conflicts between herdsmen and farmers.

The expansion of Fulani pastoralism into Nigeria is unknown. It is suggested that Fulani began to settle on the plains of Bauchi Emirate transcending onto the grassland of the Jos beginnings of agriculture and increased or decreased in intensity and frequency depending on economic, environment and other factors. For example, increase in the herd sizes, due to improved condition of the cattle, compelled the pastoralists to seek for more pastures beyond their limited range. Climate change has constituted a great change has constituted a great threat by putting great pressures on the land and thus provoking conflicts between them. However, improvements in human health and population have enhanced a greater pressure on land. Since

the 1980s therefore, there has been a marked expansion of cultivation of the Fadama (riverine and valley- bottom) areas. This means that both the farmers and pastoralists have engaged in fierce struggles for access to such valuable lands which, more often than not, result in increased conflicts and violence.

Important features of the current harmony and disharmony in Pastoralism and sedentarism, reflect enhanced sedentarisation and increased pastoralism leading to constant conflict with agrarian societies (Blench, 2010). The degree of harmony and conflict between Fulani and farmers provokes a certain degree of perceptions, particularly in the patterns of the conflict and cooperation, leading to the inevitability of the breakdown of law and order (Blench, 1984).

The complexity of pastoral resource management hinges on the unstable claims and counter claims on pasture, water and other resources. This complexity is also based on certain principles of flexibility and reciprocity. Land is the major resource base of the pastoralists but is not an individuality fixed asset with specific use and accessibility (Sandford & Habtu, 2000). Since the pastoral Fulani wander ceaselessly with a herd of cattle and constantly explore new terrains in harsh and treacherous environment, they naturally surrender to nature with primary objective of securing the security of their animals. This security of pastoral livelihood depends on the condition of their herd and grazing ecosystem which symbiotically relies on the availability of razing pasture, watering hole and other ecological, socio-economic and safety conditions.

Therefore, when the state pays a lip service to the security of the means of livelihood of its citizens, like cattle and farmlands; and there is no sufficient guarantee for safety, fear and suspicions amongst them emerge. The citizens exercise no restraints in individually or collectively protecting the security and safety of their resources and lives. Since safety and security have become scarce commodities, only those that can afford them protect them with all the means available, to the detriment of others irrespective of the risks involved. The failure of the state, for example to resolve the 'settler/ 'indigene' identity and the inherent struggles over resources can be adduced to have brought dangerous dimensions of economic and political elements in the Fulani pastoralists and farmers' conflicts (Fiki and Lee, 2004)

2.2.2 The Impact of Herdsmen Menace on Food Production in Nigeria

In Nigeria, most of its population resides in rural areas, communal violence or conflicts have serious implication of access and availability of food, since agriculture is the main preoccupation of rural population. The production of crops and rearing of livestock is the main economic activity of the people. Therefore communal conflicts have serious implication on food system. Often, warring communities or parties tactically resort to

manipulation over access to food and livestock. Thus, food insecurity has become an effect of communal conflict (Messer, Cohen, 2004). Communal conflict is correlated to food security and, under most circumstances, depresses production and income from cash crops and livestock. This reduction in production and income has serious implication on food security with the capacity to reduce coping capacity of those depending on food resources for their livelihood. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (2004) communal violence costs Nigeria over \$12 billion worth of agricultural production during the last third of the 20th century, given the importance of agricultural livelihood to overall economic wellbeing, especially in conflict prone areas of Nigeria. Not only has communal conflicts limited production of food, it has the propensity to also deny people access to food and availability of food supply. According to the food research policy institute (2004) most conflicts and post conflict zones of north- eastern Nigeria are home to substantial numbers of food insecure people. In most cases, population in need of food only accounting for small percentage of the total food insecure people. Specifically, herder and farmers are critical to Nigeria's food security. The Fulani indisputably represent a significant component of the Nigerian economy. They constitute the major breeders of cattle, the main source of meat the most available and cheap source of animal proteins consumed by Nigerians. The Fulani own over 90% of the nation's livestock population which accounts for one third of agricultural GDP and 3.2% of the nation's GDP (Eniola, 2010). Furthermore, the contribution of the Fulani to the local food chain and national food security cannot be overstressed.

In addition, Abughdyer (2016) stated that a total of 664.4 hectares (56.4%) of farmland were destroyed in Benue state between 2010-2014 in three local governments of Agatu, Guma and Logo as a result of farmers and herdsman crises. This development protends a great danger for food production in Nigeria since the state is the hub of the nation's food security. Also four famers interviewed for this paper were located in Benue and Nasarawa states. They reported larg drops in their average production of yam, maize, millet, rice and sorghum, from before the conflict in the period 2004-2008 to the period during the conflict; 2009-2013. This reduction in the output of crops is due to a combination of factors. First, there has been reduction in the availability of labour due to the threat of attacks on farmers on their way to their fields. Both farmers and farm labourers are afraid of attacks on the farms or on the roads to farms. The lack of labour has caused inadequate and improperly timed weeding and harvesting. Second, the four farmers interviewed have experienced a situation where they were forced to abandon their farmland leaving them to be overgrown by weeds. This result to low productivity.

As a result of the above, the Assessment Capacity Projects (ACAPS) thematic report (2017:12) stated that:

Approximately 132,818 are said to be facing IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) levels of food insecurity in Benue, 167,561 in plateau and 212,348 in Kaduna states as at December 2016, with 12,063 in Phase 4 in Plateau state. 46,000 are projected to face Crisis food security conditions in Benue, Kaduna, and Plateau states from June to August 2017, according to the report. The majority of IDPs have identified food as their most pressing need. They have limited food access as their stocks were looted and there is little access to replenish farm stocks. Staple food and cash crop production is below average in plateau state. Prices remain extremely high around the country and are expected to continue increasing due to current inflation and recession. Conflict affected households thus face additional strain in accessing stable food due to their reduced purchasing power. Any food assistance has been inadequate and irregular. Members of the Goska district in Southern Kaduna made up of about 156 households, report receiving food assistance once, and enough for only 30 families.

2.3 Empirical Review

Tersoo (2016) assessed the impact of Farmers/Herders conflict on food security in Benue State, Nigeria. The paper examined how the conflict has impacted on food security in Benue State. It adopted the theory of the tragedy of the commons which states that when a resource is group's collective interest, and thus ultimately destroy the resources. A survey design was used to obtain cross-sectional data through questionnaires, focused group discussions (FGDs) and oral interviews. A sample size of 320 farmers is selected from the population affected by this conflict. The paper used descriptive statistical tools to analyze is found that so many human lives were lost; farm lands, residences and schools were destroyed, leading to a decline in farm output (causing food insecurity) and human capital loss. The study therefore recommended a strong government policy on the localization of the pastoralists in line with the world best practices to avoid further conflicts.

Dimelu, et.al (2017) carried a study on livelihood issues in herdsman-farmers' conflict among farming communities in Kogi State, Nigeria. The study assessed the causes and effects of herdsman-farmers' conflicts on livelihood of agrarian communities in Kogi State. A total of 135 randomly selected crop farmers were used. Data were collected by use of structured interview and focus group discussion, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and

factors analysis. The result showed that crop farmers were predominantly male (85.2), married (85.9) and with mean age of 51 years. They were small scale farmers with average farm size of 2.9 ha and were engaged in the production of yam (97.8%), cassava (92.6%), maize (92.6%) and other arable crops, mainly for income and household food supply. The farmers indicated that violation of laws/tradition; livelihood interference and cultural factors were the major causes of conflict between crop farmers and herdsmen. Consequently, the socio-economic life, production outcome and settlement of crop farmers are affected, cumulating to breakdown in livelihood assets of farmers. The study recommended that there should be strategic and regular orientation of resource users on the need for co-existence and adherence to regulations regarding use of resources and that multi-stakeholders' efforts exploring grass root participation should be promoted by government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in policies and strategies for management of conflict among others.

A related study was conducted by Olobatoko & Amusain (2017) titled, "effect of Fulani herders' intrusion on the economic livelihood of crop farmers in Yagba East Local Governemnt Area of Kogi State, Nigeria". The study investigated the effect of Fulani cattle herders' intrusion on the economic livelihood of crop farmers in Yagba East Local Governemnt Area of Kogi State. Both purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select the villages and 120 respondents from the Local Government Area. The primary data were generated through the administration of structured questionnaires and was analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics and Ordinary Least Square regression. Results showed that majority of the crop farmers are males (91.00%), married (89.90%) and in their productive age of between 41 – 60 years (46.84%). Majority (51.90%) of the farmers had more than 20 years of farming experience but are still predominantly small scale farmers engaged in growing cash crops (51.90%) and arable crops (48.10%). All the crop farmers (100%) in the studied area agreed that there were intrusions of Fulani cattle herders into crop farms particularly during the dry season periods of the year. Majority (97.4%) of the Fulani cattle herders reported that there are no designated cattle grazing routes in the study area. Furthermore, the intrusion of cattle herders into crop farms have a significant effect on the crop farmer's output/income. It is recommended that proper identification of cattle grazing routes, provision of adequate stock grazing reserves and water reservoirs along stock routes be put in place by the government in the area of study.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The paper is anchored on eco-violence theory. The theory examines the inter-linkage between environmental changes and possible conflict situation. The eco-violence theory derives its epistemological foundation from the political ecology perspective (Okoli and Atelhe 2014). The basic assumption of the theory according to Homer-Dixon (1999:26) is that:

Decrease in the quality and quantity of renewable resource, population growth, and resource access acts singly or in various combinations to increase in scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests, and fish. This can reduce economic productivity, both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional national economies. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts.

The relevance of the theory therefore lies with the fact that the manifestation of militant posture of the Fulani pastoralists should be understood with reference to their individual and collective worldviews vis-à-vis group subsistence and survival; that has a lot to do with pastoralism. In effect, any threat to his herd probably due to decrease in renewable resources amounts to a threat, not only to his survival but also to his common destiny. This is in consonance with the following citation credited to a Fulani-nomad. In the words of Abbas (2012:42)

Our herd is our life because, to every nomad, life is worthless without his cattle. What do you expect from us when our source of existence is threatened? The encroachment of grazing field and routes by farmers is a call to war.

The implication of the preceding citation is that a typical Fulani-Pastoralist would care less to live if the survival and sustenance of his herd come under serious threats. This explains the magnitude of aggression and vindictive violence that the Fulani pastoralists often manifest in their disputes with settled farming communities.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Issues/Findings

It has been observed that the violent disposition of Fulani herdsmen has given rise to anti-Fulani comments in some parts of the country and has equally continued to instill hatred against them (Idowu, 2017). Some persons have cited a Fulani expansionist agenda as being behind these attacks. Moreso, a twitter hashtag to that effect #MAFO "Movement Against Fulani Occupation" has been launched and there have been allegations of possible government collusion in this perceived agenda (Nwosu, 2017).

3.2 Gaps

Various authors cited in this work strongly agreed that herders/farmers crisis in the country could be as a result of economic or environmental factors. Their opinions are

quite in order in tracing the causes of herders/farmers crises in the country. For instance, (Blench, 2010) specifically submitted that increases in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of the cattle, compelled the pastoralists to seek for more pastures beyond their limited range and that climate change has constituted a great threat by putting great pressures on the land, thus provoking conflicts between the herders and farmers.

However, there is pertinent factor that is yet to be addressed. This is the coincidence between spiraling rise in killings by the Fulani herdsmen and the assumption of office by President Muhammadu Buhari, also a Fulani. About three years, Buhari administration has been in power, over 50 percent of the casualties recorded have been in the South-East and North-Central geographic regions. Farming communities in Benue, Taraba and Nassarawa in north-central and Enugu and Abia in the south-east have incurred the highest casualties.

3.3 Outcomes

Over the years, the presence of the nomads and their cattle has provoked violent clashes in several communities across the country. Apart from the language and cultural barriers which usually spots out the nomads as strangers, the audacity with which they shepherd their flocks to graze on available vegetation on their route has often attracted protests from the host communities. This scenario has given rise to an unhealthy rivalry between farmers and herdsmen leading to violence, loss of lives and property. In some cases, a good number of community residents, mostly farmers are wiped out and those fortunate to escape have become refugees in other places. Between the year 2000 till date, there have been reported cases of conflicts and confrontation between the nomads and the indigenes of the areas they migrated to with their flocks. The truth is that in many cases it has broken down and minor skirmishes have escalated into deadly conflicts between the hosts and strangers. The escalation of such conflicts which is usually driven by the very entrenched considerations other than just the destruction of crops by herds of cattle have resulted to food shortage in most states of the Middle Belt with Benue State as the most affected. The food production capacity of Benue State known as 'Food Basket of the Nation' has reduced to from production capacity of 100% to about 65%. This is because agro inputs are rarely found because marketers have taken to their heels, crops on the farm lands destroyed, most farmers especially those whose lives have not been exterminated have taken to their heels. One greatest consequence of this is that the economic base of and activities of the people of Benue State have been greatly affected arising from the abandonment of their various communities by the farmers for their dear lives (Nformi, Mary-Juliet, Engwali, & Nji, 2014).

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

This paper has analyzed that Fulani/herdsmen crises have both direct and indirect consequences on food production and security. It has been found to have led to food shortage, increase in price of food items and limit people's access to food through destruction of infrastructure necessary for food production and ultimately resulting to famine. Herdsmen crisis also lead to physical destruction and plundering of crops, and livestock, harvest and food reserves. Apart from this, it drives young people away from farming activities. Further, displacement of people creates acute food shortages in the receiving areas where they seek refuge.

4.2 Recommendations.

In light of the above analysis and conclusion, the following recommendations are put forward

1. Government should enact a law to provide for the establishment of ranches (restricted grazing) so as to drastically reduce Fulani herdsmen/farmers crises that threaten food sufficiency in Benue State.
2. The law enforcement agencies should be trained and equipped to combat the rising and continuous spate of herders-farmers clashes that negatively affect access to safe food in the state.
3. Finally, government should provide public enlightenment campaigns, seminars and symposia to sensitize the farmers and herdsmen on the negative effect of the crises as it hampers access to nutritious food in Benue State.

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