

# Crop Farmers-Nomadic Pastoralist Conflict and Food Security in Ussa Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria.

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**Abstract:** *Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralist Conflicts is a recurring phenomenon during raining season and during harvest in Ussa Local Government Area of Taraba State as well as other parts of Nigeria. causes of the crisis include climate change, competition over land reasons and lack of tolerance between the two groups are some of the reasons for the conflict in Taraba state and Nigeria at large. The primary objective of the research work is to investigate the effect of Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralist on food security in Ussa local government area of Taraba State. This research work adopted the theory of eco-violence by Homer-Dixon as its theoretical framework. Survey research design was used in the study for data collection. Both primary and secondary data was used. The primary data was through oral interview and the data was analyse using content analysis. The research found out that the conflict between Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralists is an interactable conflict. Some of the major causes of the conflict include competition over land resources, lack of clear demarcation of cattle routes and unwarranted attacks and reprisal attacks. Also, that the conflict affected food security in Ussa Local Government Area of Taraba State through decline in crop production, decrease in meat and milk production and decrease in meat and milk quality. The Study recommended establishing a grazing reserve, engage in adequate sensitization of both groups and demarcation of cattle routes.*

**Key words:** Crop Farmers, Nomadic Pastoralist, Food Security, Ussa, Taraba State Cattle Route

## Introduction

The intensity of the farmers-herders violent conflict has notably increased in Nigeria's middle belt and southern zones in recent years, posing a significant threat to the nation's food security and overall stability. The 2016 Strategic Conflict Assessment of Nigeria, conducted by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), identified the herders-farmers conflict as the most widespread peace and security threat in the country. Consequently, various states have implemented measures to address the crisis. In 2017, Benue State enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Establishment of Ranching Law, prohibiting open grazing and triggering heightened tensions between farmers and Fulani herdsman. Several other states have not only adopted anti-open grazing laws but have also established state or regional vigilante forces, or both (Alobo & Omenka, 2025).

Humanity's fundamental necessity, food has influenced human effort throughout history (Okoli & Appollonia, 2018). Finding enough food to feed a family, a community, a country, or even the whole planet has sometimes been one of man's most pressing goals. It was previously believed that the term "food security" only applied to states where there was an enough supply of food to support further increases in food consumption as well as to balance out variations in food prices and production (FAO, 2006).

Since the Nigerian Fourth Republic in 1999, many people had been killed in the herdsman-farmer violence due to an expansion of the agricultural population and deteriorating environmental conditions. Insecurity and violence that have led many people to create self-defense forces and militias, and they participated in further violence, especially between Muslim herdsman and Christian farmers (Bukari, Sow, & Scheffran, 2018). Recently, Christian leaders in Nigeria claimed that 6,000 people were killed at the beginning of this year by the Muslim Fulani group, and the majority of people who were murdered are women and children (Clark, 2018). The frequent attacks on the Nigeria farmers weakened the communities' growth and development. According to the International Crisis Group, the conflict between Nigerian farmers and herdsman killed at least 1,300 people in the first half of 2018. Since the beginning of 2018, more than 18 people from Benue State were killed, and thousands of people were displaced because of attacks. Pastoral-farmer conflict is still frequent in most parts of the country (Shehu *et al.*, 2020).

The crisis between Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralist in Ussa Local Government Area of Taraba state has affected food security negatively in the recent years and need for urgent attention of Government, Community leaders, Religion leaders and security agencies to take adequate measures to stop the menace of the conflict. It is in view of the foregoing this research was conduct to ascertain the impact and proffers solutions.

## Statement of the Problem

The intensity of the farmers-herders violent conflict has notably increased in Nigeria's middle belt and southern zones in recent years, posing a significant threat to the nation's food security and overall stability. Finding enough food to feed a family, a community, a country, or even the whole planet has sometimes been one of man's most pressing goals.

Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralist Conflicts is a recurring phenomenon during raining season and during harvest in Ussa Local Government Area of Taraba State as well as other parts of Nigeria. Although many reasons have been given by various scholars on the causes of the crisis, climate change, competition over land reasons and lack of tolerance between the two groups are some of the reasons for the conflict in Taraba state and Nigeria at large.

Persistent conflict between Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralist in Ussa Local Government of Taraba state has led to reduction in Farm yields as well as reduction in milk and beef production in the area which will continue to affect food security negatively hence the need for concerted efforts by all stake holders to tackle the menace to restore food security.

## Research Questions

1. What are the causes of crop farmers and nomadic pastoralist crisis in Ussa local government area of Taraba State.?
2. What are the effects of crop farmers and nomadic pastoralist crisis on food security in Ussa local government area of Taraba State?

### Objectives

The primary objective of the research work is to investigate the effect of Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralist on food security in Ussa local government area of Taraba State.

Specific objectives include:

1. To find out the causes of crop farmers and nomadic pastoralist crisis in Ussa local government area of Taraba State.?
2. To determine the effect of crop farmers and nomadic pastoralist crisis in Ussa local government area of Taraba State.?

## Literature Review

### Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralist Conflicts

Nwankwo *et al.* (2019) reported that herders are nomadic who rear cattle and, in the process, tend to conquer communities through forceful means and make them their permanent abode.

According to Mufutau *et al.*, (2020), herders as Fulani herdsmen or pastoralists who are mostly nomadic or semi-nomadic and are known for conflicting with crop producers in Nigeria. Farmers on the other hand are seen as persons who carry out the agricultural activity of crop farming on either a small scale or a large scale and whose crops are always destroyed by herders.

The communal conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria is as old as agriculture itself. This conflict stems from competition over scarce resources, particularly land, amidst increasingly strained social relations. In recent times, the conflict has escalated, leading to a rise in casualties across various Nigerian states (Olagbaju & Awosusi, 2019).

Conflict can be defined as an opposition between social entities that is directed against one another. This opposition arises from competing for something that is limited in supply (Shittu,2020).

Similarly, Conflict can also be described as a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, where the conflicting parties aim not only to obtain the desired outcomes but also to neutralize, harm, or eliminate their rivals (Ojiagu et al., 2022).

A farmer is not only an expert but also a land manager and food producer in various ways, facing numerous challenges in farming and crop production to meet the daily needs of a growing population. However, while managing the farm, farmers must also consider the implications of their decisions on household members, as they are best positioned to understand the direct impact of conflict and its negative effects on food security, as well as how to mitigate and adapt to such challenges (Sherran & Thomas, 2018).

Pastoralists and farmers have been at odds since the dawn of agriculture. Scarcity of resources, notably land, causes conflict. The battle has recently become more unstable due to an increase in deaths and displaced persons across the afflicted nations. Animals, crops, and other valuable goods will be lost if the war continues (Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017).

Contrary to popular belief, there were not as many violent clashes between herders and farmers in the past. Between 1997 and 2011, conflict between herders and farmers was more common in particular middle belt states (Plateau, Nassarawa, and Benue),

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with isolated events in other states. Historically, the Fulani and Berom tribes of Jos in Plateau State have fought for land. This explains why on March 7, 2010, suspected Fulani herders slaughtered around 500 people in three villages in Plateau State's Jos South and Barakin Ladi local governments (Higazi, 2016).

### **Food security**

Food security as a situation where the citizens of a particular country have access to the right quantity of food at all times and where there is no malnutrition or undernourishment, or fear of famine (Idumah *et al.*, 2016).

According to Ojuederie & Ogunsola (2017), when people live healthily as a result of having the ability to acquire a sufficient, safe and nutritious, and balanced diet for their existence and the survival of others; the country in question is said to be food secure. Food security generally is built around three pillars: food availability, food access, and food use. Thus, for the sake of this study, food security is defined as the availability in terms of quantity, adequate amount of crop, and livestock products for consumption by man and other uses. Food security in this study is proxied by crop production output (CPQ) and livestock production output (LPQ) in Nigeria.

The right to food is among the fundamental human right which is championed by most national governments and international organizations, especially in war-torn areas. Food rights are therefore explicit in Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Right which states that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food. The right to food was intended to ensure food security and the UN ensures that’ this is achieved through their policies and plans such as MDGs and SDGs. For instance, goal 1 of the MDGs talks about halving hunger in the world and goal 2 of the SDGs also touches on food security.

Food security as a concept came to limelight during the world food crisis between 1972 and 1974 which called for the first World Food Conference (Maxwell and Smith, 1992).

Omonoma & Agoi (2007), reported that, there are four major elements of food security; food availability, food access, food utilization, and not losing the excess. Food security entails producing food that will go around every citizen both in quality and quantity.

To achieve food security, agricultural production needs to be enhanced with adequate knowledge of the environment, climatic condition, the market and its operations.

Food insecurity is the direct opposite of food security. It is the poor access to sufficient quality and quantity of food for an active and healthy life. It is the inability of households or individuals to meet the required consumption level in the face of fluctuating production, price, and income (Maharjan & Chhetri, 2006).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research work adopted the theory of eco-violence as its theoretical framework

Eco-violence theory was propounded by Homer-Dixon. The fundamental theoretical assumption of the theory is that resource scarcity is the product of an insufficient supply, too much demand or an unequal distribution of a resource as a result of environmental hazards that forces some sector of a society into a condition of deprivation and violence. These four sources of scarcity are in turn caused by variables such as population growth, economic development, pollution and obviously climate change. Thus, environmental resource scarcity will constrain agricultural and economic productivity, further inducing the disruption of economic livelihoods, poverty and migration. Migration can occur either because the environmental quality of a habitat has become unlivable or, more commonly, because the migrant’s economic outcome is likely to be better in areas with greater resource availability. Both constrained productivity and migration are likely to strengthen the segmentation around already existing religious, class, ethnic or linguistic cleavages in a society and thus precipitate conflicts (Homer-Dixon, & Blitt, 1998).

Implicit in the eco-violence theory is the assumption that competition over scarce ecological resources engenders violent conflict. This trend has been aggravated in contemporary times owing to the impacts of climate change, which has exacerbated ecological scarcity across the world (Blench, 2004; Onuoha, 2007).

In effect, ecological scarcity raises the competitive stakes and premium that the various societal groups may place on available ecological resources. This condition tends to precipitate violent conflicts. Applied to the purpose of the present discourse, the theory of eco-violence offers insights into the nature and dynamics of the herdsmen/farmers conflicts in Nigeria. In this regard, it is to be observed that the conflicts have been driven by the desperation of the affected groups to protect and advance their livelihood interests in the context of an ever-shrinking ecological space, characterized by resource-scarcity, livelihood crisis, population explosion, and resource competition (Blench 2004).

As the population is increasing, definitely there will be as well increase in demand for land, water, forest products and grazing land within the territories inhabited by Fulani herdsmen and farmers; these groups are forced to find new ways to cope with different types of conflict at once because of competition over marginal resources (Adogi, 2013).

In the case of Ussa Local Government Area in Taraba State, which is by design the focus of this research work, land is the scarce resources and the situation has been necessitated by increased in farming activities by the crop farmers due to increase in human population. This trend resulted to decrease in grazing fields hence there is competition over ecological resources and resulted to the persistent conflict between crop farmers and nomadic pastoralist that were living together peacefully for many years.

## **Methodology**

Survey research design was used in the study for data collection and for the purpose of describing, interpreting, evaluating and analysing the data that was obtained. The data for the research was generated from crop farmers, nomadic pastoralists, Community leaders, Nigeria Police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps and other individuals within Ussa local government area who are consumers of both crops and animal products, a purposive sampling technique was used to identify crop farmers, nomadic pastoralists Nigeria Police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps and other individuals within Ussa local government area who were the respondents.

Both primary and secondary was used. The primary data was generated through oral interview with the target respondents while the secondary data was generated from journals, periodicals and research papers. The reason for using primary data was because the primary data is regarded as the most authentic source of data that can be collected from the variable of interest in two principal modes: Ask respondents questions about the subject of interest and observe the behaviour of the research variable (Akpa, 2011).

In order to ensure validity and reliability of the data collected, the interview checklist was carefully designed and was checked and validated by other research experts to ensure that the interview checklist can provide suitable responses to answer the set research questions.

### **Crop Farmers and Herders Conflict in Nigeria**

The interactable conflict between farmers and herders has been occurring in the northern part of Nigeria in past, but gradually extending into the south lately. The conflict between these two groups has instilled fear and anxiety in households, disrupted farming activities, displaced farmers from their homes, increased food prices, and led to incidents of cattle rustling, among other issues. Herders now carry dangerous weapons, such as poison-laced daggers, machetes, AK-47s, and other firearms, and are prepared to attack farmers at the slightest provocation while conducting their daily activities in the bush where both farmers and herders operate (Okoli & Igata, 2016).

The conflict between these two groups who were staying together for many years arguably threatens farmers' productivity and safety which poses a significant risk to food security at both the state and national levels because such crisis will affect crop quantity during harvest, meat quantity, meat quality, milk quantity and milk quality (Ndubuisi, 2018).

Nigeria as a country is facing an increasing food security challenge due to farmers' complaints about how herders destroy their farmlands and crops through excessive grazing of cattle. Farmers have also reported being assaulted, injured, or even killed by herders when they prevent grazing on cultivated land, leading to serious consequences, including

the displacement of farming community members as well as loosing the crops during such crisis (Ojiagu & Ajubiga, 2024).

A farmer is not only an expert but also a land manager and food producer in various ways, facing numerous challenges in farming and crop production to meet the daily needs of a growing population is activities is very crucial to the human security. However, while managing the farm, farmers must also consider the implications of their decisions on household members, as they are best positioned to understand the direct impact of conflict and its negative effects on food security, as well as how to mitigate and adapt to such challenges (Sherran & Thomas, 2018).

Over half a billion farmers are smallholders, most of them are found in developing countries, which economically provide food support for two billion people. Globally, women constitute more than 40% of agricultural employees (National Geographical Society (NGS), 2023). Farmers also support and maintain the health of the land and ecosystem by making use of sustainable farming practices to reduce the use of pesticides to have side effects on the land and other harmful chemicals and they also take steps to conserve land, water and other natural

resources, they are also concerned with providing access to food security and work hard to keep up with the changing market demands, consumer preferences and meet up with the demand of food to the increasing population (Oti, Onyia & Umaintyang, 2017). its worthy to note that crop farmers are very important in the country, in view of these anything that affected farming it means the whole country is affected.

The activities of farmers in the cultivation of land and provision of farm output contribute about a 57% increase to the Gross Domestic Product in Nigeria, and also provide employment opportunities amounting to 70% of the rising population (National Bureau of Statistics, (NBS), 2020). The total farmer's contribution to the GDP from 2019 to 2020 were 145,639.14 and 154,25.32 billion naira

(Ojiagu et al, 2022). This shows how important farming is even economically by contributing to the GDP like wise rearing of animals is equally important.

Herders are individuals, or groups who care for and manage livestock like cows, goats, sheep, donkeys and many more. Herders live a nomadic lifestyle or semi-nomadic lifestyle. The pure Fulani Pastoralists live a nomadic lifestyle which involves the random movement of cattle from region to region while the semi-nomadic pastoralist makes a transhumance movement and return to their camp or places of abode (Egodike, Nnamani, Pius, Okeke & Martin, 2020).

The Fulani people of Nigeria have traditionally been nomadic herders, moving their cattle from one area to another as they graze on scrub and grasses in lands unsuitable for farming. They depend on their cattle primarily for milk and seldom slaughter them for meat. However, nomadic herding is declining due to various factors such as conflicts with farmers, natural disasters, loss of grazing land due to development, and government pressure to settle in permanent locations. The abandoned grazing route by the state governments gave room to the federal government plan to reveal its new plan of setting up cattle colonies across the country in 2018 in order to deal with the problem of grazing route so that farmers and herders will peacefully go about their normal business without interfering in each other parts which causes conflict to rise.

Furthermore, the cattle colonies are to cover 5000 hectares containing resources and grasses, water, veterinary services, milk feed and many more. In this regard, the federal government stated that the establishment of cattle colonies will protect herders from cattle rustlers, reduce farmers/herders conflict, increase livestock, high meat production and dairy production and improve revenue for state government (Idris, 2019).

#### **Causes of Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralist Crisis in Ussa local government area of Taraba State.**

Findings from the Oral Interview conducted with crop Farmers, Nomadic Pastoralist, Community leaders, Security agencies and other individuals within Ussa Local Government revealed that some of causes of crop farmers and Nomadic pastoralist crisis in Ussa local government area of Taraba state include: Competition over land which is the resources that both crop farmers and pastoralist, encroachment into farm by the nomads, lack of clear demarcation of cattle routes, inadequate compensation by herdsmen in event of destruction of farm produce, over estimate of damages cause animals by the farmers and unwarranted attacks and reprisal attacks by both crop farmers and pastoralists. Almost all these factors mentioned are avoidable except the competition over land resources which is already scarce due to increase in population.

These findings agrees with the position of Ojiagu & Ajubiga, (2024). who reported that:

Nigeria as a country is facing an increasing food security challenge due to farmers' complaints about how herders destroy their farmlands and crops through excessive grazing of cattle. Farmers have also reported being assaulted, injured, or even killed by herders when they prevent grazing on cultivated land, leading to serious consequences, including the displacement of farming community members as well as losing the crops during such crisis (Ojiagu & Ajubiga, 2024).

#### **Effects of Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralist Crisis on Food Security in Ussa local government area of Taraba State.**

Findings from the oral interview with various respondents revealed that the crop farmers and nomadic pastoralists affects food security in Ussa Local Government area of Taraba State negatively in so many ways which include decline in crop production due to displacement arising from the conflict, destruction of farm produce by cattle leading to low yield and reduction in meat and milk production resulting from killings of Animals. Similarly, the quality of meat and milk is reduced due to inadequate grazing and fatigue as the result of the crisis the animals will be travelling for longer distance without grazing. All these factors combined together can lead to food insecurity as all the factors lead to reduction in crops, meat and milk production leading to scarcity.

These findings agreed with position of Okoli & Igata, (2016) who reported that:

The interactable conflict between farmers and herders has been occurring in the northern part of Nigeria in past, but gradually extending into the south lately. The conflict between these two groups has instilled fear and anxiety in households, disrupted farming activities, displaced farmers from their homes, increased food prices, and led to incidents of cattle rustling, among other issues. Herders now carry dangerous weapons, such as poison-laced daggers, machetes, AK-47s, and other firearms, and are prepared to attack farmers at the slightest provocation while conducting their daily activities in the bush where both farmers and herders operate (Okoli & Igata, 2016).

#### **Conclusions**

The research concluded that the conflict between crop farmers and Nomadic Pastoralists is an interactable conflicts that was predominantly in Nigeria has now move to southern Nigeria. The increasing conflict between the two groups have resulted to killings,

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burning of houses and farm produce, killing of animals, displacement of people out of their comfort zones, as well as drop in GDP as both crops and livestock contributed immensely to GDP. Similarly, causes of Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralists include competition of land resources, encroachment of farm by the nomads, lack of clear demarcation of cattle routes, lack of compensation of crops destroyed by herdsmen as well as unwarranted attacks and reprisal attacks by both parties. Also, it is concluded the crisis seriously affected food security negatively through the following ways: Decline in crops production, destruction of crops by cattle, reduction in meat and milk production as well as reduction in meat and milk quality. Finally, it is confirmed that the crop farmers and Nomadic pastoralist crisis in Ussa Local Government area of Taraba State affected food security negatively leading to food insecurity in Ussa local government area of Taraba State, Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

Looking at the foregoing conclusions, the research recommended as follows:

1. The major cause of this conflict is crop destruction hence, governments at all levels should work out modalities on how to stop crop destruction by establishing cattle tracks and grazing zones where crop farming activities will be severely restricted and prevent indiscriminate bush burning.
2. Sensitization programmes on how to maintain cordial relationships between crop farmers and Nomadic Pastoralists should be organized by the government and other stakeholders.
3. The idea of modernisation of cattle rearing which will maximize the benefits therein in terms of job creation, food security, and eventually end the vexatious farmers herdsmen crises should be adopted. India, China, USA, Pakistan and countries with large populations depend on milk and dairy products to fight hunger, malnutrition, unemployment and promote social harmony.
4. Disputes between farming communities and herdsmen should be resolved amicably whenever it arises so as to avoid reprisal attacks. The inability of traditional institutions to adequately and positively intervene in the conflict situations might inadvertently contribute to the magnitude and direction of conflict among the two groups.
5. The federal government's fight against corruption should be extended to cover activities of traditional rulers who are the first level of authorities to whom cases of herdsmen-farmers' crises are reported because corruption by some traditional rulers further fuels the menace of such crises.
6. The nomadic educational system should be revived, strengthened and modernized with added agricultural technical skills.
7. Security agencies need to be proactive in tackling Crop Farmers and Nomadic Pastoralist crisis to avoid the crisis leading to killing of people, animals, burning of farm produce, and burning of houses.

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