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UNDERSTANDING THE FARMERS AND HERDSMEN CONFLICT IN GUMA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE: A POLITICAL ECONOMY APPROACH

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Abstract
The 21st Century heralded an upsurge of violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen, especially in the Central part of Nigeria. The economic potential of this region for both farming and herding attracted herders from other ecological zones, leading to heightened competition for land and resources. This study employed the Marxist Political Economy approach, particularly the theories of dialectical historical materialism, to examine the socio-economic roots of this conflict, emphasizing the role of land as a material base essential for the subsistence and economic development of rural communities. This study framed the farmer-herder conflict as a class struggle over control of land—a material resource crucial for survival. Data were collected through In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with targeted respondents. Findings suggested that neo-liberal policies from the 1960s to the 1990s, which encouraged the propertied class to acquire more land and livestock, the expansion of agricultural policies, shifts in land tenure systems, and the impact of climate change were significant long-term causes of these conflicts. Immediate causes included crop damage, cattle raids, political influence, and aggressive actions by hirelings. Finally, this research suggested a ranching system as a viable solution to the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria.
Keywords: Conflict, Land, Farmers, Herdsmen, Agriculture, Development

Introduction

Land in Nigeria, as across much of Africa, is not only a critical resource for survival but also a major source of income and a deeply significant cultural asset. Rural populations depend on it for their livelihoods, and it carries profound ancestral value, connecting families to their heritage and identity. Access to land involves more than its productive use; it also reflects power relations and symbolic meanings within society. As Odgaard (2006) explains, land has historical and cultural importance that often fuels disputes over its use and ownership.

Over time, increasing population pressures, environmental challenges, and changes in rural land use patterns have reduced the availability of pasture and water for livestock. This scarcity has forced Fulani herders to migrate from traditional grazing areas in the Sudan and Sahel savannah belts toward the central, southern, and western regions of Nigeria. Historically, these regions supported coexistence between minimal crop farming and herding. However, the commoditization of land and the introduction of irrigation farming in northern Nigeria have limited access to grazing lands, particularly along riverbanks. This has prompted herders to migrate southward, including to the Benue Valley, in search of better resources for their livestock.

In Guma Local Government Area, part of Benue State, this migration has created heightened competition for land between Fulani herders and sedentary Tiv farmers. The Fulani herders' free-range system leads them to move during the dry season (November to April) to areas like Guma, which provide pasture and water. While there was a history of peaceful coexistence, with conflicts resolved locally and amicably, recent decades have seen a significant shift. The conflicts have escalated into widespread, spontaneous, and destructive violence, leading to substantial loss of lives, destruction of property, and reduced agricultural output. This has exacerbated food insecurity and social unrest in the region. The conflicts between farmers and herders in Benue State have escalated into widespread, spontaneous, and destructive violence, leading to substantial loss of lives, destruction of properties, and reduced agricultural output. According to the Benue State Government, over 1,500 people have been killed in the past five years due to these clashes (Benue State Government, 2023). Furthermore, it is estimated that tens of thousands of homes have been destroyed, with over 200,000 people displaced from their homes (International Organization for Migration, 2023). The ongoing violence has also led to a significant decline in agricultural productivity, exacerbating food insecurity, which has affected over 1.5 million people in the region (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024). This situation has contributed to rising social unrest and instability in the affected communities.

This research seeks to understand the factors driving these conflicts. Key issues include land tenure policies that often disenfranchise local populations, shifts in traditional power structures that disrupt historical conflict resolution mechanisms, political interference that aggravates tensions, and environmental pressures that force competition over scarce resources. The violence has had severe impacts on agricultural productivity in Guma, with farmers abandoning their lands, reduced crop yields, and entire communities being displaced. This instability not only disrupts local economies but also undermines long-term development goals.

Theoretical Framework

The Political Economy Approach and Marxist Dialectical Historical Materialism provide essential frameworks for examining the farmers-herders conflict in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State. These theories delve into how economic structures, material conditions, and class relations underpin societal dynamics and conflicts. The Political Economy Approach, grounded in the works of Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and later Karl Marx, views the economy as the foundation of society's political and social structures. Marx argued that the "economic base"—the system of production and ownership—determines societal relations and institutions (Marx, 1859). In A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859), Marx explained that legal and political structures are shaped by material conditions and the mode of production.

Ake (1981) reinforced this by noting the primacy of economic needs in shaping human activities and identities. This is to say, economic struggles, such as access to land, are central to human existence, as people often define themselves by their roles in economic production, such as farmers or herders. This highlights the material basis of identity and conflict in rural communities like Guma. Marxist Dialectical Historical Materialism complements this by exploring how historical conflicts arise from contradictions within the economic system. According to Marx, these contradictions drive societal change through class struggle, often linked to material inequalities. For instance, as land becomes increasingly scarce due to population growth, environmental degradation, and migration, conflicts over its control intensify.

As it applies to Guma LGA, this theoretical lens reveals the conflict as a struggle between two groups with opposing economic needs. Farmers depend on land for crop cultivation and survival, while herders rely on it for grazing livestock. Both groups view land

as vital to their livelihoods, but their competing uses create inevitable friction. Ake (1988) underscores that such conflicts are not random but stem from systemic economic inequalities embedded in broader political and historical contexts. The Political Economy Approach situates this conflict within the structural dynamics of Nigeria's rural economy. Historically, Benue State's agrarian communities have depended on land for subsistence farming, while herding traditionally thrived in the north. However, environmental pressures and changing policies have forced herders southward, exacerbating competition for land. This economic and ecological restructuring disrupts agricultural productivity, displaces farmers, and fuels violent clashes. Marx's insights into historical materialism illuminate the structural roots of this tension. The ownership and control of land—the economic base—shape societal relations, making land disputes an expression of broader class contradictions. As Marx (1859) observed, the economic base influences the "superstructure" of society, meaning conflicts over land reflect deeper systemic issues.

Research Method

This study adopted a qualitative approach, utilizing oral, face-to-face interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and secondary sources to collect data. The interviews were semi-structured and aimed at gathering detailed insights directly from respondents. FGDs were used to supplement the interviews, providing collective perspectives and validating individual responses. Each FGD session lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and comprised 6–10 participants grouped by demographic categories such as elders, farmers, youth, women, and teachers.

The study focused on Guma Local Government Area in Benue State, with data collected from six of its ten council wards: Saghev, Nyiev, Mbabai, Mbawa, Mbayeyandev, and Yogbo. One village from each ward was selected using a list of conflict-affected areas provided by the Benue State Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (2018). Participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. This method was specifically selected to target individuals with deep knowledge and firsthand experiences of the farmer-herder conflict, including those who had served on mediation committees or possessed historical understanding passed down through generations. Responses were audio-recorded with the consent of participants, then transcribed for analysis. However, the study faced limitations, particularly the inability to include herders due to security concerns and language barriers. This exclusion, while necessary for safety, might be interpreted as potential bias and is acknowledged as a limitation of the study. Despite this, the perspectives of the selected respondents, who had direct experiences and roles in mediating the conflict, provided substantial and reliable insights into the dynamics of the farmer-herder conflict.

Historical Dynamics, Underlying Factors, and Root Causes of the Conflict in Guma Local Government Area, Benue State: Impacts on Agricultural Development

The historical relationship between the Tiv people and the Fulani herdsmen in Benue State has been one of cooperation, mutual respect, and shared understanding. According to tradition, the two groups coexisted peacefully for over a hundred years, even before the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1803. Their relationship was based on kinship, where practices like sharing goods, including cattle, were governed by mutual respect and agreements. The "cow debt theory" and other cultural tales, such as the exchange of fire-damaged items, illustrate the deep interdependence between the groups. The Tiv and Fulani were seen as brothers, bound by historical interactions that fostered a unique form of understanding. Despite occasional tensions, these groups relied on each other for trade and shared resources, reinforcing their long-standing bond. Even today, the "munchi" story remains a symbol of this relationship, reflecting both the harmony and the challenges they

have faced together over time (Unongo, 2017; Women Environmental Programme, 2020). A group of respondents in Guma Local Government Area reflected this understanding, emphasizing how these connections fostered reciprocity and strengthened their interactions over time. They stated;

> Prior to independence, there existed no conflict between the farmers and herdsmen. Previously, the herdsmen only visited the area during dry seasons up to the period (April) which marked the commencement of farming seasons where they would move up North to allow the farmers to farm. After harvesting, the herdsmen would return back with their cattle' to graze on the remaining grass and plants. To substantiate my argument, during the peaceful olden times, whenever the herdsmen celebrated 'Biki', after slaughtering and preparing rice, we would be invited to make merry with them, which we did happily. Their wives and daughters frequently visited our homes to grind their maize, corn and other things with our wives grinding stones. We also exchanged our millet for their "nunu". There was no conflict; such were the nature of our relations. It was when they wanted to show us that they own our land and, therefore, will dictate to us what to do that the problem arose. (Focused Group Discussion, 2024)

The historical relationship between farmers and herdsmen in Africa was once harmonious, marked by equitable resource sharing under communal land systems. However, neoliberal policies like Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in the 1980s and 1990s disrupted this balance. These reforms privatized communal resources, leading to land scarcity as elites acquired significant tracts, leaving smallholder farmers and herders marginalized. This economic restructuring intensified class struggles and resource competition, fueling conflicts. While religion and ethnicity are often used to frame these disputes in Nigeria, economic inequalities and land ownership remain the root causes. Sensational narratives and political manipulation amplify tensions, but in localized contexts, such as the one studied, respondents affirm that the conflict is fundamentally about land, not religion or ethnicity. Despite the complex socio-political backdrop, the primary driver of these clashes remains economic in nature, specifically the struggle over access to diminishing land resources. Some respondents in Mbawa stated;

> Those who make such allegations may say that because of what they are experiencing in their places coupled with the reaction and proclamation of the herdsmen. Here, when we talk of Guma Local Government Area, our problem with the herdsmen is that the herdsmen we see today are strange and alien to us. The herdsmen we had dealings with in the past always informed us about their intentions i.e. where there intend to visit for grazing etc. Their movements were made known to us. Today, they would move to "Fiena", from there, they would travel to Angwer and later return to us. In this way, the same herdsmen whom we saw yesterday and, familiar with, followed this circle of movement which we were comfortable with. During the rainy season, he would take his cows and leave in order to enable you farm without worry and, after the harvesting season, the same herdsman would return with his family and cattle seeking permission from you to allow him to settle on your land with his family and feed his cattle. Again, he would only settle and graze where you have shown him. But now, we don't even know the current herdsmen who choose to settle wherever they deem fit without our consent. So, for some us, even if it is Jihad, we don't know because since we haven't experienced Jihad in these parts, we cannot say that it is a religions war. (Focused Group Discussion, 2024).

Closely related to the above assertion, one of the respondents, (Bernard Ishor, Male, 59 years, 30th October 2024, Daudu) added that;

> It is not Jihad! Typically, once you have a squabble with Fulani herdsmen, even if you are a Muslim, he does not care in so far as it concerns his cows. Why I say this is that, even the Hausa, their Muslim brothers- four of them- who live and sell cows here were lured into the bush by these herdsmen and cut with machetes simply because they were unable to pay the meat collected from them on credit. So, if it was Jihad, I don't think they would cut their own brothers. (Interview, 2024).

While it was agreed that the conflict between farmers and herdsmen is largely economic and centered on land, it was observed that some individuals exploit the resulting insecurity for personal gain, such as looting and theft, which further inflames tensions. A significant factor contributing to the conflict is the increase in cattle ownership by the ruling and bureaucratic classes. These elites often employ youths, referred to as "hirelings" or "small boys," to manage their growing herds. These hirelings, driven by monetary incentives, lack the responsibility and reliability of the original herdsmen, who had a personal stake in maintaining peaceful relations with farming communities. Expatiating and substantiating this claim, one of the respondents (Moses Atem, Male, 48 years, 30 October 2024, Daudu) stated;

> These cattle do not exclusively belong to them. Most of these cattle belong to prominent Hausa-Fulani sons. It is this wealthy individual that entrust into their herds these cattle for up keeping. We say this because average herdsmen cannot rear up to 300 or 400 cattle alone. The cattle also belong to their friends, also. If you want to verify the truth of what we are saying, if you look critically at the hirelings rearing the cattle now, you will notice that they are not Fulanis nor do they even understand the common Hausa language spoken by the herdsmen who came to these parts. These boys sniff drugs and carry sophisticated weapons around. Not only this, they are very ill tempered. (Interview, 2024).

It must be stated that the organization of resources to maximize one's gains in a conflict is not restricted to the herdsmen alone but also applies to the farmers. Most respondents interviewed preferred to describe this as a defense against the herdsmen's incursions. However, there are two divergent views regarding the sponsors and motivations behind the farmers' organization of defense, which I shall present below. A respondent from Saghev (Sam Kwende, Male, 69 years, 21 June 2024)

> They are not really paid by the farmers..... The efforts of the government (past executive governors) are enjoyed by our people by providing bullets and guns to those who choose to fight. (Interview, 2024).

However, contrary to this view, one of the respondents (Peter Ishor, Male, 45 years, Daudu, 18 August 2024) argued that:

> The farmers do not fight or go to war. In general terms, a Tiv farmer man is a very humble person. There has never been a period when farmers or the youths organized themselves to fight without being provoked in the first instance. The herdsmen have pushed us to the edge. If someone comes to your house and tries to kill you and your entire family, will you still sit and sleep comfortability? No! Definitely, you must rise to defend yourself. For instance, on the day they (herdsmen) attached Daudu, to be precise, on the 7th March 2014, most of the youths here stood up in defense of their people and land because they felt something had to be done least they would be driven out of their lands. (Interview, 2024).

The traditional institution in Nigeria, like other colonial systems, works in collaboration with the propertied class, often at the expense of the peasant farmers. Traditional rulers, by granting herdsmen permission to settle on farmland, accumulate wealth, leading to conflicts over land ownership. These practices, endorsed by both traditional rulers and the ruling class,

allow herdsmen to claim large areas of farmland, which results in clashes with farmers. In some cases, such as the actions of the late Tor Tiv, HRH Dr. Alfred Akawe Torkula, this system has led to significant loss of life and property.

> The Late Tor Tiv, HRH. Dr. Alfred Alkawe Torkula, directed the people to allow the Fulani herdsmen to settle among them provided that they would settle the farmers or land owners. (Focused Group Discussion, 2024).

The result of this submission is that most of the communities which the traditional rulers received money or gift-if one must be economical with words- without the knowledge or consent of the entire people, constitute the most conflict-ridden areas in Benue State. For instance, it was argued by one of the respondents (Orkulan, Male, 57 years, Yogbo, 1 November 2024) that;

> It is true that the traditional rulers collected money from the herdsmen. In my council ward (Mbayeyandev), Zaki Gbogyo collected money from them and Zaki Nege in Makurdi L.G.A. There are the two heads that collected money from the herdsmen. However, other rulers like Mbakaan and Njuka refused to collect their money. This explains why the herdsmen did not attack their communities. (Interview, 2024).

The herdsmen mostly attacked villages which they felt the traditional rulers had betrayed their arrangement and, since the main targets of their attacks were the traditional rulers, on occasion of their absence, they visited their wrath on the peasant farmers. This explains why one of the respondents (John Lawrence, Male, 33 years, Nyiev, 15 July 2024) asserted that

> Even up till now, most of the traditional rulers are residing in Makurdi, they are yet to return back to their domains for fear of their lives. (Interview, 2024).

Even though some form of peace has been reached between farmers and herdsmen, it is important to note that the conflicts between farmers and herders in Benue State, particularly in Guma Local Government Area (LGA), had disastrous effects on livelihoods, agriculture, and security. Recent data reveals that more than 600,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are currently living in camps across the state, including in Daudu, Umenger, and Gbajimba, under deplorable conditions with inadequate access to food, water, and healthcare (National Emergency Management Agency, 2023; Benue State Government, 2023). Agriculture, a primary source of livelihood for the region, was severely disrupted. Farmers abandoned their fields due to incessant attacks, leading to reduced crop yields and food shortages.

From 2020 to 2023, it is reported that more than 1,500 people were killed in attacks attributed to armed herders, with Guma being one of the worst-affected areas. Prior to 2023, the conflict worsened following the implementation of the anti-open grazing law in Benue State, which herders opposed as detrimental to their livelihoods (Benue State Government, 2023). Though some peace has been reached, the conflict in Guma Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State profoundly affected agricultural development in the region, disrupting its role as Nigeria's "food basket." This is premised on the fact that the main stay of their economy, farms-*referred to as 'indomie' by the herdsmen- was eaten by the cows* (Focused Group Discussion 2024). Guma, like much of Benue, is heavily reliant on agriculture for subsistence and economic activity, with crops like yam, cassava, maize, rice, and sorghum being significant outputs (Ezeibe et al., 2017; Hembe et al., 2019). However, persistent violence between herders and farmers drastically curtailed farming activities. This violence stems largely from disputes over land use and grazing rights, exacerbated by environmental

challenges such as desertification in northern Nigeria, which has pushed herders southward (Odo, 2020). The displacement of farmers is one of the most visible impacts. Thousands of residents have been forced into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, leaving their farms abandoned. This displacement has caused significant declines in agricultural productivity, with substantial losses in crop yields. For instance, Hembe et al. (2019) found that staple food production in conflict-affected areas like Guma has dropped by over 50% in some years, contributing to food shortages not just locally but across Nigeria. This disruption extends to livestock farming, as cattle theft, destruction of grazing land, and loss of herds during attacks have reduced meat and milk production, further straining local economies (Adeleke et al., 2021).The conflict also disrupts access to essential agricultural inputs and markets.

Before 2023, despite efforts by both state and federal governments to address the persistent conflict between farmers and herders in Guma Local Government Area and other affected regions of Benue State, the crisis continued to escalate. President Muhammadu Buhari, a Fulani man, faced significant criticism, with accusations of being indifferent to the killings perpetrated by herders, many of whom share his ethnic background. Critics argue that his administration failed to adopt stringent measures against the herders, leading to heightened political tensions before the February 2019 elections. Protests in Makurdi, the Benue State capital, saw thousands of mourners clad in black, waving wreaths and banners with inscriptions like “President act now: your people are killing us”, as coffins carrying victims from rural communities were paraded during mass burials.

The Federal Government introduced several measures to curb the violence. At the height of the conflict, former President Buhari directed the Inspector General of Police to relocate to Benue State and launched a special military operation, Ayem a Kpatuma (Cat Race), aimed at restoring peace and order while apprehending perpetrators of the attacks. However, the operation was widely criticized for yielding minimal results, with reports of continued sporadic attacks and destruction in the affected communities. On the legislative front, the Federal Government proposed the National Grazing Commission Bill to establish and regulate national grazing reserves and livestock routes. This bill was meant to provide a lasting solution by formalizing grazing routes, but it faced vehement opposition from groups such as the Pan-Yoruba socio-political organization, Afenifere. The group argued that the bill was pro-Fulani herders and anti-peasant farmers, as it contravened the Land Use Act and traditional land ownership practices. Similarly, the Federal Government’s proposal to introduce cattle colonies was met with stiff resistance from states, particularly those directly affected by the violence. Many saw the measure as favoring herders while undermining the rights of local landowners.

Efforts by the Buhari administration include the establishment of the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP), which aims to modernize livestock farming through ranching while addressing the root causes of the conflict, such as competition over land and water resources. The plan emphasized collaboration with state governments to provide alternatives to open grazing. While the initiative was implemented in some pilot states, progress has been slow, with limited adoption in affected areas like Benue due to political resistance and logistical challenges. Overall, government's responses—though significant on paper—were largely inadequate in practice. Most respondents agreed that confined grazing systems, where grass is supplied to herders within designated spaces, might be the best solution to the conflict. One of the reasons stated;

> Provision should be made for the herdsmen to graze within a confined environment. This is because, considering the expansion of farming activities and increase in the

> number of cattles, the two occupation can never be in harmony if allowed to operate in a free range. (Focused Group Discussion, 2024).

After Governor Hyacinth of the All Progressives Congress (APC) assumed office in 2023, the farmer-herder conflict in Guma Local Government Area (LGA) significantly decreased. Since his swearing-in, no new attacks have been reported. Respondents attributed this to a peace meeting between the herders and farmers, during which both sides, worn down by prolonged conflict, agreed to put an end to the violence. This agreement fostered a calmer environment, encouraging internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly younger individuals, to return to their farmlands and resume farming activities. One of the respondents, (Bernard Ishor, Male, 59 years, 27th November 2024, Daudu) noted;

> This year, 2024, there has been no attack. Since a new state government was elected and sworn in, in May 2023, we have not experienced any attacks from the herdsmen. The Fulani herdsmen are currently with us here, and their wives are also trading *nunu* with us. People are also returning to their ancestral lands. Even in places where people dared not reach, like Mbagwem and Utyondo, people have returned and commenced minimal farming activities. Although many people are still living in camps because they have nowhere to return to, having lost all their properties and even relations. However, as far as Guma LGA is concerned now, there have been no devastating attacks. It is important I tell you that the herdsmen who are in our midst now are not the mercenaries or militia who attacked us. It is the original owners of the cows who have returned because, just like us, they also became tired of fighting, as conflict is expensive. Though they are no longer intentionally destroying our crops as before, there are still cases where their cows destroy and eat crops. In such instances, they are compelled by the police to pay *barana* or compensation. (Response from interview, 2024).

The current peace in Guma LGA is indeed precarious and reflects a temporary lull rather than a sustainable resolution to the conflict between farmers and herdsmen. This situation arises from unresolved underlying issues, particularly the competition for land, which is vital for both farming and cattle grazing. While the absence of attacks might suggest progress, the dynamics of land use and population growth among both groups signal the likelihood of renewed tensions. From a political perspective, such peace accords, while valuable for immediate relief, fail to address the root causes of the conflict. Historically, similar agreements have broken down once the demand for land increased, especially as farmers expanded their agricultural activities or when herdsmen needed more grazing territory. With many displaced farmers still residing in camps, their eventual return will intensify the competition for land, leading to inevitable clashes. This cyclic nature of conflict underscores that the current peace is not a solution but a reprieve.

To establish long-term peace and prevent future conflicts, the government must adopt proactive policies. A key recommendation is the implementation of a ranching system. Ranching would confine cattle grazing to designated areas, reducing encroachments on farmland and minimizing direct competition between the two groups. Such a system would not only mitigate conflict but also enhance agricultural productivity and livestock management. Despite failures in Nigeria, ranching has seen success in several African nations. Ethiopia enhanced livestock productivity with tailored policies, animal health services, and marketing structures. Mali improved cattle productivity through selective breeding and infrastructure investments. South Africa integrated small-scale farmers with

strong private sector support, while Uganda transformed its dairy industry through the Dairy Master Plan. Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Ghana, Niger, and Mali advanced livestock improvement through research-focused ranches, promoting indigenous breeds like N'Dama, Lagunaire, and Azawak zebu. These efforts have bolstered economic opportunities and food security. These examples illustrate how ranching systems and associated reforms, when implemented strategically, can enhance livestock productivity, reduce resource-based conflicts, and support economic development in various African contexts. Nigeria can also copy from these countries to address resource use conflicts in Nigeria.

The implementation of ranching in Nigeria is controversial, raising concerns about land acquisition, fairness, and environmental impact. Past initiatives like grazing colonies and RUGA failed due to perceptions of favoritism toward Fulani herdsmen and inadequate stakeholder involvement. To succeed, ranching must operate as a commercial enterprise, with government support through loans and incentives, rather than being imposed. Ensuring fairness and avoiding the use of national funds to benefit specific groups is essential to address distrust and prevent further conflicts in affected communities.

The idea of government-funded ranches for Fulani herders raises concerns about fairness, as it would single out one ethnic group's occupation over others. Critics argue that such initiatives would deepen divisions and create tensions. Instead, government support should focus on facilitating access to loans and grants for herders through financial institutions to enable them erect ranches or group ranches as currently practiced in Ghana. Past livestock schemes have failed due to a lack of local involvement of traditional knowledge or expertise and the imposition of foreign models. Collaboration and education for both herders, farmers and the public are essential for successful and sustainable ranching solutions, fostering harmony and reducing conflict.

Conclusion

The conflict between farmers and herders, often mischaracterized as religious or ethnic, fundamentally stems from competition over land and resources. The struggle for land as a central factor has caused distrust and strained relations between the two groups, disrupting agricultural development in affected areas. Through the Marxist political economy perspective, the conflict is understood as an inevitable clash of opposing interests within a shared environment, emphasizing land as the material basis of the violence.

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