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FARMERS AND HERDERS CONFLICTS: IMPLICATIONS ON FOOD SECURITY IN TARABA STATE

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Abstract

In recent years, Taraba State has witnessed escalating conflicts between farmers and herders, posing significant challenges to food security and societal stability. These conflicts, rooted in competition over dwindling natural resources exacerbated by climate change and demographic pressures, have profound implications for agricultural productivity and food availability. This abstract examines the multifaceted dimensions of these conflicts and their direct impacts on food security in Taraba State. The conflicts primarily arise from disputes over land use and access to water resources. Farmers, cultivating crops essential for local and regional food supply, often clash with herders whose livestock depend on grazing lands that are increasingly encroached upon by expanding agricultural activities. Historical grievances, exacerbated by economic disparities and political marginalization, further fuel tensions, leading to violent confrontations that disrupt farming activities and displacement of communities. These disruptions have ripple effects on food security across Taraba State. The destruction of crops and livestock, coupled with the displacement of farmers and herders, undermines agricultural production and reduces food availability. As a result, local communities face heightened food insecurity, exacerbated by loss of livelihoods and economic instability. Furthermore, the cycle of violence and retaliatory attacks perpetuates a climate of fear and mistrust, hindering social cohesion and development efforts. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that integrates conflict resolution strategies with sustainable agricultural practices and equitable resource management. Policy interventions must prioritize conflict prevention through dialogue and mediation, supported by legal frameworks that protect land rights and promote inclusive economic development. Additionally, investments in infrastructure for water management and agricultural productivity can enhance resilience to climate variability and mitigate conflict triggers. Farmers and herders conflicts in Taraba State represent a critical threat to food security, necessitating urgent action to foster peace, restore livelihoods, and build resilient communities. By addressing the root causes of these conflicts and promoting inclusive development, Taraba State can mitigate the impacts on food security and pave the way for sustainable agricultural growth and social harmony.

Key Words: Conflicts, Farmers, Herders, Agriculture, Food, Security, Insecurity

Introduction

In recent years, Taraba State, located in Nigeria's North-East geopolitical zone, has experienced escalating conflicts between farmers and herders. These conflicts have emerged as one of the most pressing socio-economic and security challenges facing the region, with profound implications for food security. At their core, these disputes stem from competition

over access to dwindling natural resources, exacerbated by demographic pressures, climate change impacts, and historical grievances. Taraba State, known for its diverse agricultural production ranging from staple crops like maize and rice to cash crops such as coffee and cocoa, faces significant threats to its food security due to these conflicts. Farmers in the state cultivate crops essential for local consumption and regional trade, while herders rely on grazing lands to sustain their livestock, crucial for livelihoods and economic stability in pastoral communities. However, overlapping land use and resource scarcity have intensified tensions, leading to violent clashes and widespread disruption of agricultural activities. The implications of these conflicts for food security in Taraba State are far-reaching. Direct consequences include the destruction of crops and livestock, displacement of farming and herding communities, and loss of lives and livelihoods. Such disruptions not only undermine agricultural productivity but also reduce food availability, exacerbating food insecurity among vulnerable populations. The cycle of violence and retaliatory attacks further perpetuates fear and distrust, hindering social cohesion and economic development efforts.

Understanding the root causes of these conflicts is essential for devising effective interventions. Factors contributing to tensions include competing land tenure systems, inadequate enforcement of land use regulations, and political marginalization of pastoral communities. Climate change-induced environmental stressors, such as desertification and erratic rainfall patterns, exacerbate resource scarcity, intensifying competition between farmers and herders. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that integrates conflict resolution strategies with sustainable agricultural development initiatives. Policy interventions should prioritize mechanisms for peaceful coexistence, including community dialogue, conflict mediation, and enforcement of equitable land use policies. Investments in infrastructure for water management, irrigation, and agricultural extension services are crucial for enhancing resilience to climate variability and mitigating conflict triggers. Furthermore, enhancing the resilience of agricultural systems through diversification, improved access to markets, and climate-smart technologies can bolster food security in Taraba State. Sustainable land management practices, such as agroforestry and rotational grazing systems, can promote harmonious resource use and reduce conflict over scarce resources.

Food is no doubt, the most basic of all human survival needs. Food remains the most critical need for human survival. FAO's motto "Fiat panis" literally meaning "Food comes first" supports this assertion. As a basic physiology need, threat to sufficient food production is threat to human survival. Food security has been an issue that has gained global concern. Nations, therefore, strive to meet the food needs of their citizens in a food security sense by promoting food production within borders and complementing as necessary with importation across borders (Vaughan, Afolami, Oyekale&Ayegbokik, 2014). This is why every activity man gets involved in always tend towards providing food for himself and his people. Indeed, in the hierarchy of human needs, food occupies the prime place. Most discernable indicators of underdevelopment have also been linked to absence of food.

Nigeria is grossly an agrarian nation which is reflected in the fact that over 70% of her economically active population is employed in the agriculture sector (Muhammad &Olawusi 2015). Every region in Nigeria is known for producing one type of agro produce or the other. For example, according to Ojo & Adebayo (2012), groundnut production was a common practice in Northern Nigeria, epitomized by the presence of the groundnut pyramids, Western Nigeria is known for cocoa cultivation and it has the cocoa mountains, cultivation of palm and its plantation is common in Eastern Nigeria. The rubber plantation was the common practice in the Mid-West etc. But since the discovery of oil in Nigeria in 1956 and subsequent oil boom in the 1970s, the agriculture sector became less important to the government of Nigeria as it could not withstand the economic prudence of the oil industry. Thus, Nigeria became heavily dependent on importation of food (Adeagbo, 2012). This has increased the

challenge of food security in the country. For example, According to Vaughan, Afolami, Oyekale&Ayegbokik, (2014), in 2010 alone, Nigeria spent ₦635 billion on importation of wheat, ₦356 billion on rice, which is tantamount to spending about ₦1.0billion per day, ₦217 billion on sugar and ₦97billion on fish in spite of all the endowed marine resources, rivers, lakes and creeks of the nation.

Problem Statement

The escalating conflicts between farmers and herders in Taraba State pose significant threats to food security, societal stability, and sustainable development. These conflicts, driven by competition over scarce natural resources such as land and water, exacerbated by climate change impacts and historical grievances, have profound implications for agricultural productivity and the nutritional well-being of local populations. Despite numerous efforts to mitigate these conflicts, their persistence underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of their root causes, dynamics, and socio-economic impacts to inform effective policy and intervention strategies. Therefore, the frequent clashes between farmers and herders in the predominantly farming areas of Taraba State have resulted in the destruction of lives and farmlands, posing a major threat to food production. Clashes between farmers and herders have left in its trail heavy losses of lives and property. These losses of lives have adversely affects farming activities and other related businesses. This has resulted in a drastic reduction in farm outputs, a development that has heightened the fear of hunger. Already most farmers in Taraba State have abandoned their farms for fear of being attacked by the herdsmen. For the predominantly farming communities of Benue and border communities of Taraba State, farming is no longer business as usual. Several farmers have been displaced and dispossessed of their farms by armed men believed to be herdsmen. 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 a result of the negative effects of terrorist activities on farmers in Benue and neighbouring states (Omorogiuwa, Zivkovic &Ademoh, 2014).

Okolo and Obidigbo (2015) corroborated the views above by opining that “food is the fuel that energizes the body for effective routine performance and the lack of food makes an individual lethargic, indolent, cheeky and haughty. Unfortunately, the important and pivotal advantages of food to life and to a country’s economy have been terribly downplayed, especially in developing nations. In January 2023 UNICEF reported that an estimated 17million Nigerians were at the risk of food insecurity and this was to rise to 20million during the second half of the year and of the 17 million people who were food insecure at that time, 3 million were in the northeast BAY states and continued conflict, climate change, inflation and rising food prices are key drivers of this alarming trend. Developing economies, including Nigeria, will be extremely affected if painstaking and pragmatic efforts are not immediately embarked upon.

Literature Review

Conceptual Definitions of Food Security

Food security has been conceptualized by Maxwell and Smith (1992) as a flexible concept as reflected in the many attempts especially in research and policy usage. Okolo and Obidigbo (2015) posits that food insecurity is “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in a socially acceptable way”. Food security as a concept originated in the mid-1970s, in the discussions of international food problems at a time of global food crisis. The initial focus of attention was primarily on food supply problems - of assuring the availability and to some degree the price stability of basic foodstuffs at the international and national level. That supply-side, international and institutional set of concerns reflected the changing organization

of the global food economy that had precipitated the crisis. A process of international negotiation followed, leading to the World Food Conference of 1974, and a new set of institutional arrangements covering information, resources for promoting food security and forums for dialogue on policy issues (United Nations, 1975).

World Food Conference in 1974 conceptualized food security in terms of supply of food-"assuring the availability and price stability of basic foodstuffs at the international and national levels" (FAO, 2006). Since that World Food Conference of 1974, the concept of food security has evolved into what is now a generally agreed standard definition which was adopted during the World Food Summit in 1996, that food security exists 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 (FAO, 2008). Food security also means availability, accessibility, utilization and stability. Based on the practical guide of Food Security Information for Action, all four components must be satisfied simultaneously to meet the objectives of food security.

Availability is when there is physical, social and economic access to sufficient and nutritious food by all people and at all times. Such food must satisfy the dietary needs and preference of the people. To a great extent, food availability depends on the level of local production, imports, stock levels and net trade in food items. Access refers to economic, social and physical access to food by all people at all times. That an adequate amount of food is available at the regional, national or international level does not imply it is accessible at household level. It must be locally accessible and affordable.

Utilization on the other hand refers to the pattern in which the body makes use and benefits from the various food nutrients. Utilization is determined by food quality, nutritional values, and preparation method and storage as well as feeding pattern. Finally, stability refers to the stability of food availability, accessibility and utilization over time. All three components must be present simultaneously at all times. A person who has adequate access to quality food today is still considered food insecure if he/she has periodic inadequate access to food which may cause his/her nutritional level to deteriorate. Variation in weather conditions, political and economic instability, and price fluctuations are some of the factors that may impact negatively on food security status.

Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO 2002). According to Eme, Onyishi, Uche & Uche (2014) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Africa (1986) food security is a situation that all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life.

Furthermore, the World Bank (1986) posits that food security is the condition in which all have access to sufficient food to live healthy and productive lives. Food security is dependent on agricultural production, food imports and donations, employment opportunities and income earnings, intra-household decision-making and resource allocation, health care utilization and caring practices (Maxwell & Frankenberger, 1992). According to Hoddinot (2001), household food security issues cannot be seen in isolation from broader factors such as physical, policy and social environment. In addition, the World Bank (2001), states that food availability for farming households means ensuring sufficient food for the households through production.

However, it should be noted that simply making food available is not enough; one must also be able to purchase it, especially the low income households (Sen, 1981). Hence, food security connotes physical and economic access to adequate food for all household members, without undue risk of losing the access. The concept of food security has expanded beyond the strict biological requirements of sustenance for survival. Food security does

include consuming at a level adequate for physical and mental health and also includes the right to cultural preferences. Furthermore, it also includes obtaining the food in appropriate proportion, (Robertson, 1990). Following this therefore, food security involves interconnected domains, with questions of agriculture, society, environment, employment and income, marketing, health, nutrition, and public policy (Eme, Onyishi, Uche & Uche, 2014).

Food security requires an available and reliable food supply at all times which at the global, regional and national levels, can be affected by climate, disasters, war, civil unrest, population growth, lack of effective agricultural practices, and restrictions to trade. Government initiatives that encourage a policy environment based on macroeconomic stability and competitive markets can, on the other hand improve food availability (NEPAD, 2005). Drawing from the forgone definitions, we could summarize that food security means different things to different scholars. However, food security in addition to the above definitions can be said to be the act of ensuring availability of quality food that is accessible at prices that are affordable to even the downtrodden in the society.

Efforts made to Enhance Food Sufficiency

Matemilola and Elegbede (2017) avers that many efforts have been made to improve the quality as well as production of world food supplies, food supply but it has still remained a major problem in the country. Indeed, food insecurity remains prevalent, particularly in Nigeria and indeed other global southern nations of Asia and Africa. Food security itself is a phenomenon which is multidimensional with economic, environmental and social aspects. In recent times, the issue of violent clashes and instability between farmers and nomadic herdsmen across the regions in Nigeria has become a major focus to the Nigerian Government, International and National or indigenous development organizations. This to a large extent, if not nipped in the bud, may affect the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2 which aims at ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture by 2030 (Imo & Adekunle, 2017).

Interestingly, Okolo &Obidigbo (2015) posits that food security has been a major issue globally as international organizations and governments have continuously developed and modified methods for reducing food insecurity. General consensus amongst authors, scholars, NGOs etc. is that developing nations (such as Nigeria), lack the ability to adequately feed its populace. Furthermore, Bakare (2015) posits that the recurring issue of clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in some parts of Nigeria remains one of the major threats to food security in the country.

The four major components of food security, i.e availability, accessibility, utilization and stability must be available for us to assume that there is food sufficiency. Efforts to combat food insecurity will therefore, not only make food available but also ensure that people can consistently afford to make it ready for consumption at all times. Most importantly however, food security will not be achieved by just increasing the production of food but when such food is sufficiently available. It is important to however note here that a poor hungry man will remain food insecure as long as he cannot afford to buy it even when it is available, (FAO, 2008).

Understanding the importance of food security, intervention initiatives to ensure food security in Nigeria were made which according to Otaha (2013), included; Operation Feed the Nation, Lower River Basin Development Authorities, Green Revolution and regulatory bodies such as the Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) and National Agricultural and Land Development Authority (NALDA). It appears these programmes have not engendered good agriculture and food productivity in Nigeria.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development in 2012 rated Nigeria as the number one producer of yam, cassava and cowpea in the world; yet Nigeria remains a food insecure nation and relies heavily on importation of grains, livestock products and fish.

Nigeria has about 75 percent of its land suitable for agriculture, but only 40 percent is actually cultivated and majority of the rural populace engage on subsistent farming on small plots of land to feed their households and relying on seasonal rainfall (Omorogiuwa, Zivkovic &Ademoh, 2014).

These pieces of land for farming activities actually constitute a high percentage of the source of the farming and food production endeavours in the country and is fundamental in securing food availability in Nigeria. Incidentally, the bulk of the food production activities and indeed the main supply of food to the country have been coming from the middle belt region of the north central Nigeria. The north Central region in addition to its reputation as the food basket of the nation has been bedeviled by series of violent conflicts between the farmers and the herders. The spate of recurrence of the conflict has been described as very regular with very wide consequences. Unfortunately however, the story appears to be changing with the farmers/herders conflicts raging in the north central region where most of these crops are cultivated. This has greatly affected crop farming and grazing activities, resulting in low productivity, food instability, low food utilization, food inaccessibility and inadequate availability of food in the state. It is in the light of the above submission that this study examined the implications of farmers and herders conflicts on food security in Nigeria with particular emphasis on Taraba State.

Empirical Facts on the Effect of Farmers and Herders Conflict on Food Security

According to Imo (2017), Mercy Corps 2013 and 2016, a global humanitarian organisation 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, reducing in crop yield, displacement of farmers, loss of lives and properties, loss of products in storage and destruction of public and private buildings. It become glaring that if nothing is done to arrest this ugly situation, the achievement of food security and sustainable development becomes a mirage. The herdsmen and farmers clashes disrupt and threaten the sustainability of pastoral farming and crop production in West Africa (Moritz, 2010).

In the host communities, nomadic herdsmen relocate as a result of conflict and host farmers, especially women and children, who remain behind, stop going to the distant farms for fear of attack by the nomads in the bush. Such displaced farmers have become a source of liability to other farmers whom they have to beg for food for themselves and their families. A lot of killing by the nomads and reprisal killing of nomads by the host communities take place during the conflicts. Herds of cattle belonging to the nomads are also killed. Also some of the victims (young and old) are badly injured or maimed. All these have drastically reduced agricultural labour force in such areas which pose huge challenges for the constant growing Nigerian population (Imo, 2017).

It has been noted that war and conflict occupies a prime place in the factors that hinder food security. This probably explains the reason why Abbass (2011) vehemently laments that the types of conflicts for survival between the Fulani pastoralists and farmers in Northern Nigeria vary in form and intensity from one community to another. These conflicts, through provocative claims over access rights to farmland and cattle routes, have become ubiquitous and seem to have defied solutions. The intensity and variations of the conflicts largely depend on the nature and type of the user groups where the pastoralists graze. These conflicts have constituted serious threats to the means of survival and livelihoods of both the farmers and pastoralists and what both groups are tenaciously protecting and projecting.

The greatest danger posed to food security is when stakeholders in agricultural sector make statements such as; “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 fields and routes by farmers is a call to war". These disagreements over the use of essential resources such as farmland, grazing areas and water between herders and local farmers are said to be the major source of the fighting. Fulani frequently clash with farmers who consistently accuse them of damaging their crops and failing to control their animals. The Fulanis respond that they are being attacked by gangs from farming communities who try to steal their cattle and they are just defending themselves (Abbass, 2011).

Abbass (2011) further posits that the continuing Fulani Pastoralists' militancy for the survival of their cattle makes fierce struggle and violent conflicts with farmers inevitable. The traditional practices that focus on the close integration between raising of livestock and enhanced farming have posed serious dialectics in the dynamic relationships between pastoralists and farmers in Northern Nigeria. More so, available grazing lands are diminishing at an alarming rate and livestock pathways are blocked through land use, urbanisation and frontiers. The old grazing routes that existed for centuries are almost gone. The increase in population, drying of waterholes, shifting in rainfall pattern leading to drought as a result of the changing climate affects both pastoralists and farmers. Hence, they compete over land leading to conflict, and embedded within these are growing form of capitalists land tenure and delay in the justice system that exacerbates the situation (Muhammad, Salau &Olawusi, 2015).

Bello (2013) observed also that 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. Furthermore, the contribution of the Fulani to the local food chain and national food security cannot be overstressed. Experts believe that the overall effect of rising farmer-herder violence has been nothing short of disastrous for Nigeria. Apart from loss of lives and property such crises have also resulted to low development of agriculture in northern region. Farm produce are often destroyed during the crisis because farmlands are destroyed and thousands of cattle killed as well. Such destruction had really affected farming activities in the region (Ibrahim, 2017).

In the opinion of Tenuche and Infatimesun (2009), the state has continued to play prominent roles in the escalation of conflicts over land on a number of factors, especially in issues such as the 'indigene' and 'settler' phenomena have not been addressed and settled, the issues of unresolved grazing land and water spots for the survival of farmers and pastoralists as well as other corresponding matters on socio-economic relationships between the two warring groups.

To corroborate the views raised above Abbass (2011) further observed that security is a framework for intervention in conflicts. Since insecurity gives ways to conspiracy, conflicts are inevitable. The object of security is to primarily advance the well-being and possessions of the persons involved; while the survival of the state is secondary. In other words, when the character and nature of the state do not seem to protect the security of the citizens, their freedom and choices completely shift away from the state to individuals or groups to ensure their security. 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, at the detriment of others irrespective of the risks involved. As the state cannot regulate the mutual coexistence of its citizens in the harmonious sharing of the competed resources, the parties may have to resolve to struggle

among themselves with no retreat, nor surrender and for the survival of the fittest. There is no doubt that this can have serious consequences on food security in the country.

It is worth noting at this point therefore that the continued effect of climate change on grazing lands has pushed the Fulani herdsmen further southward in search of grass and water. This has widened the scope of the conflict with deadly incidents being increasingly reported in southern parts of the country, raising fears that the violence could threaten the fragile unity that exists among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups (Mikailu, 2016).

Konczacki (1978) and Jacobs (1980) in Audu (2014) observed that freshwater scarcity and insufficient rainfall are causes of social and economic ruins, conditions that leave the pastoralists at the mercy of the sedentary society of predominantly farmers. The same scarcity makes rain-fed farmers to expand their farms into cultivable pastoral land, which brings about displacement of pastoralists.

When the population grows, more land is cultivated and less is available for grazing cattle thereby forcing herders to move free areas and in some instances either deliberately or mistakenly step on farmers' farms already cultivated and this often cause serious conflict between them. It is in the light of this that Nyong (2010) made a submission that with the expansion of population, the rate of food production naturally increases to meet increasing demand. It is natural for the farmers to encroach into marginal lands that had been the traditional pasture routes for the cattle. This has therefore heightened struggle between livestock and agricultural production which, more often than not, result in the escalation of conflicts. There is no doubt that this consequently affects food availability, accessibility, utilization and sustainability in the country.

Table Showing Sequence of Farmers and Herders Conflicts in Taraba State

S/No.	Date of Attack	Group Responsible	Place of Occurrence	Consequences	Source
1.	April 13, 2016	Fulani Herdsmen	Gashaka	15 Farmers Killed and many displaced. Farmlands and villages destroyed	Punch online
2.	MAY 17, 2017	Fulani Herdsmen	Gazabu, Kungana, Tukun Ruwa, Utsua Daa and Kpenkpen villages in Bali LGA.	12 killed and 1,765 Displaced. Farmlands and villages destroyed	Mkom, J. Vanguard news online
3.	MAY 24, 2018	Fulani/Farmers	Yorro	6 farmers killed. Farmlands and villages destroyed	Mkom, J. Vanguard news online
4.	APRIL 13, 2018	Fulani Herdsmen	Jandeikyula village in Wukari LGA	25 slaughtered, farmlands and villages destroyed	Soni Daniel, Northern Region Editor, Peter Duru & John Mkom, Vanguard news online
5.	January 6, 2018	Fulani Herdsmen/Farmers	Lau Local Government Area	Sectarian violence led to the death of 13 people. Villages destroyed.	Clifford Ndujihe&Chukwumezie Udochukwu, Vanguard news online

6.	January 6, 2018	Fulani Herdsmen	Lau Local Government Area (Reprisal attack)	55 villagers killed and farmlands destroyed	Clifford Ndujihe&Chukwumezie Udochukwu, Vanguard news online
7.	January 8, 2018	Fulani Herdsmen	Maisamari in Sardauna LGA	6 were injured during overnight attack and houses destroyed.	Clifford Ndujihe&Chukwumezie Udochukwu, Vanguard news online
8.	February 1, 2018	Fulani Herdsmen	Gassol, Taraba.	4 farmers killed, Farmlands and villages destroyed	Clifford Ndujihe&Chukwumezie Udochukwu, Vanguard news online
9.	December 19, 2016	Fulani Herdsmen (Reprisal Attack)	Bornu Kurukuru and Sabon Gida villages of Dan Anacha, Gassol LGA	20 killed, villages and farlands destroyed.	John Nkom, Vanguard news online
10.	April 24, 2016	Fulani Herdsmen (Reprisal Attack)	Dan-Anacha market, Kyaaior, Gindin Kerenya and Tse Gyo villages in Gasol LGA	13 killed with villages destroyed and farmlands	John Nkom, Vanguard news online
11.	September 16, 2015	Fulani Herdsmen/Tiv	SerkingGudu village in Ibbi Local LGA	10 killed, food stuffs and villages destroyed.	
12.	February 2, 2018	Herdsmen	Ngutsen of Wurojam Ward, Gassol LGA	4 killed and property destroyed.	Adeoye, B.C Vanguard news online
13.	2013	Herdsmen	Andayeku, Chinka ward, Wukari LGA	25 killed, food stuffs and villages destroyed.	Ikeke, N.
14.	April 13, 2018	Herdsmen	Jandeikyula village, Wukari LGA	30 killed, houses and food stuffs destroyed.	Punch online
15.	December 30, 2017	Herdsmen	Minda village, Lau LGA	4 killed and property destroyed.	Silas, D. Daily Post online
16.	April 17, 2018	Herdsmen	Gishiri, Dooshima and Danwaza villages	28 killed, villages and farmlands destroyed.	Egbe, R.

Source: Authors' Compilation, 2023

An Estimated number of Farmers killed and injured in seven LGAs in Taraba State

S/No.	Local Government	No. of People Killed
1.	Bali	364
2.	Donga	61
3.	Gashaga	60
4.	Gassol	240
5.	Takum	94
6.	Ibi	140
7.	Wukari	200
	Total	**1,159**

Source: World Watch Research (2015)

Going by the high level of killings and destruction of villages and farmlands in Taraba as highlighted in the tables above, it becomes quite obvious that Taraba is one of the states that are being affected by the farmers/herders crises. The situation has not only led to wanton destruction of lives and properties, but also brought about massive abandonment of farming activities due to the prevailing security challenges. To corroborate this view, Moritz (2010) observed that the herdsmen and farmers clashes disrupt and threaten the sustainability of pastoral farming and crop production in West Africa. Adeoye (2017) confirmed this by stating that there are incessant conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria have claimed many lives and properties and a number of conflict resolution meetings and solution-based researches have taken place. But it appears not much has been achieved with regard to identifying the originator of the conflict and the most effective methods of resolving the conflict.

Taraba State IDP Camps and the Number of IDPs by Local Government Area

S/No.	LGA	Town	Name of Camp	No. of IDPs
1.	Bali	Bali	- NKST Church Camp - St. Paul Catholic Church Camp - Legislative Quarters Camp - Tiv Traditional Hall Camp	2,400
2.	Jalingo	Jalingo	NKST Church Camp	1,373
3.	Ibi	Ibi	Ibi Camp	690
4.	Takum	Peva Jato	- Peva Camp - NKST Jato Camp	2,889 1,850
5.	Mutum/Biyu	Mutum/Biyu (Wukar-Jalingo Way) Mutum/Biyu NKST Church	Mutum/Biyu Camp NKST Church Camp	2,132 564
	Total			**11,898**

Source: World Watch Research (2015)

To corroborate with the table above, Akpeji (2018) states that several parts of the state including, Gashaka, Lau, Ibi, Takum, Wukar, Sardauna, Gassol local government areas have been rendered inaccessible by the herdsmen attacks. Hundreds of thousands have been rendered homeless of which a majority of them are farmers who are now entirely dependent on aids to survive as against their large farm produce. Some of the affected persons, especially farmers take refuge in various Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in the state.

According to Ezea (2018) the leadership of the Tiv community, who claim that their people are the worst affected by the crisis, said the country is bound to experience food scarcity, because all our people are affected by various attacks. He further stated that Taraba state Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dr. David Kassa, expressed dissatisfaction on the continuous attacks on farmers by herdsmen across the state and the country stating that it would hamper federal government's plan to diversify the economy through agriculture. The herdsmen killings going on in the country if not checked, he said would throw the country into serious food crisis, adding that the Federal Government's directive that people should go back to farm in order to divert attention from oil revenue had become counter-productive, because of the herdsmen killings going on across the country.

Theoretical Framework

This work has adopted two theories in order to explain major phenomena. These theories are; conflict theory and entitlement theory. The reason why these two theories are chosen is because of their aptness in addressing the issues at hand. The basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals and groups in society struggle to maximize their share of the limited resources that exist and are desired by humans. Given that there are limited resources, the struggle inevitably leads to conflict and competition. The farmers and herders conflict is quite not unconnected to these issues of limited resources. For instance, conflict theory is to take care of all the conflicting situations that occur between the farmers and herders while the entitlement theory looks basically at the aspect of food security.

Many sociologists have contributed to the development of conflict theory, including Max Gluckman, John Rex, Lewis A. Coser, Randall Collins, Ralf Dahrendorf, Ludwig Gumplovicz, Vilfredo Pareto, and Georg Simmel. However, Karl Marx is often credited as being the father of conflict theory. The conflict theory, suggested by Karl Marx, claims that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. It holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than consensus and conformity. According to conflict theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless (Schlee, 2004).

The basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals and groups in society struggle to maximize their share of the limited resources that exist and are desired by humans. Given that there are limited resources, the struggle inevitably leads to conflict and competition. These struggles can lead to changes in institutions and societies as different groups come into power. The ideas that make up the foundations of conflict theory can be traced back to early philosophy. Han Fei Tzu (280 - 233 BC) and other ancient Chinese philosophers taught that men are innately weak and lazy. This assumption leads to the obvious conclusion that the only way men can be controlled, then, is through punishment. Those who have the power to punish can control society, as the fear of the power of punishment keeps men in check (Martindale, 2010).

In explaining the conflict theory Ogbeide, (n.d) posits that to create a fair understanding of the cause of the conflicts, it is important that an elementary expression of the theory of conflict be made. In the same vein, conflict theory states that tensions and conflicts arise when resources, status, and power are unevenly distributed between groups in a society and that these conflicts become the engine for social change (Cole, 2016). The unevenness in the distribution of resources, status, and power between groups in a society, whether by nature, human interference or cohesion is the core reason for conflict. Relating the theory to the cause of the Fulani herdsmen conflict with their neighbouring communities Ogbeide, (n.d) further states that the Fulanis are always conscious of the fact that they are a minority and their host community could be antagonistic towards them at any point in time. These are experiences they had carried all along in their life as a survival strategy. The main concern of the Fulani particularly the herdsmen is to keep their cattle in good pleasure no

matter how vulnerable they may be. The cattle Fulani is by no means a colonizer, but a servant of his cattle.

The domination of Malthusian ended while the new idea of entitlement from Amartya Sen emerged. Entitlement theory discusses about the ethical and human rights dimension into the discussion of food security (Sen, 1981). In contrast with Malthusian, Sen (1980) argues that the problem of food security is not about the food supply failure. The paradigm of food security has changed from the food supply issue contributed by Malthus to the accessibility of food or entitlement argued by Sen. However, the problem of food security and famine is more about food accessibility rather than food supply. According to Kwon (2012), people establish command over food in two broad ways: Direct ownership of food via production and or conversion of wages into food. The significant contribution of Sen with his entitlement theory for the theorizing of famines is that it shifts the paradigm of famines from supply approach (Malthusian tradition) to the ability of people to access food (Devereux, 2001). This theory holds that food security is an entitlement of every citizen of any country. This theory further lays emphasis on the fact that it is the responsibility of government of every nation to ensure that food is available, accessible, utilization (nutritious) and stable for its citizens.

Kwon (2012) avers that the problem of establishing command of food, or the problem of acquiring food in of itself, is central to the question of hunger but remains largely unappreciated by analysts. Instead, since Malthus, an "undue prominence" has been given by economists to the metric of aggregate food output. As a result, many have fallen into a "Malthusian optimism" – solely interested in whether food output is growing faster or as fast as population growth. As a result, policies responding to growing hunger in the world have also reflected this limited view. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that the Malthusian perspective cannot respond to the current phenomenon where global food production outpaces global population growth while certain parts of the world suffer from an intensification of hunger.

Findings

i. The rate of farmers and herdsmen conflict in Taraba State is quite on a very high side thereby disrupting farming and grazing activities in the state.
ii. There is likelihood of food insecurity because of the frequencies and magnitude of the attacks on farming communities in Taraba State.
iii. Majority of the population in IDPs camps, and those killed, injured and displaced are farmers.

Conclusion

The farmers and herders conflicts in Taraba State represent a critical challenge with far-reaching implications for food security and socio-economic stability. These conflicts have arisen primarily from competition over diminishing natural resources exacerbated by climate change, demographic pressures, and historical grievances. Such tensions have led to violent confrontations, displacement of communities, and severe disruptions to agricultural activities, undermining the state's agricultural productivity and food availability. The implications for food security in Taraba State are profound and multifaceted. Direct consequences include the destruction of crops and livestock, loss of livelihoods, and increased vulnerability to food insecurity among affected populations. The cycle of violence and retaliatory attacks has perpetuated a climate of fear and mistrust, hindering social cohesion and economic development efforts essential for sustainable growth. To effectively mitigate these challenges, it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the conflicts and promotes inclusive governance and sustainable resource management. Policy interventions should prioritize conflict resolution mechanisms that foster dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation among farming and herding communities. Strengthening legal frameworks

to protect land rights and enforce equitable resource allocation is essential for reducing disputes over land and water use.

Furthermore, investments in infrastructure for water management, irrigation systems, and agricultural extension services are vital for enhancing agricultural productivity and resilience to climate variability. Promoting climate-smart agricultural practices, such as agroforestry and rotational grazing systems, can optimize resource use efficiency and mitigate conflict triggers associated with environmental stressors. Sustainable development initiatives should also prioritize enhancing the resilience of local food systems through diversification of agricultural production, improving market access for farmers and herders, and promoting entrepreneurship opportunities in rural areas. Empowering local communities with skills training and access to financial resources can enhance their capacity to withstand shocks and contribute to long-term food security goals. Collaborative efforts involving government institutions, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and local communities are essential for implementing and sustaining these interventions. By fostering inclusive governance, promoting social cohesion, and investing in sustainable agricultural practices, Taraba State can mitigate the impacts of farmers and herders conflicts on food security and pave the way for a resilient and prosperous future.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were arrived at in line with the outcomes of this study.

i. Federal and state governments should step up security surveillance in Taraba State in order to abate wanton destruction of farmlands, and killing of farmers, herders and even the herds.
ii. Proper protection of both farmers and herders should be ensured so as to guarantee food security in Taraba State.
iii. Adequate protection and care should be given to the displaced farmers in the various IDPs camps in Taraba State.

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