

Assessment of Measures in Resolving Incessant Herdsmen Arable Crop Farmers' Conflicts among Farmers in Plateau and Taraba States, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the measures in resolving incessant herdsmen-arable crop farmers' conflicts on rural and agricultural development among farmers in Plateau and Taraba States, Nigeria. The population of this study consisted of arable crop farmers in Taraba and Plateau States. Stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 252 respondents as the sample size. Data for the study were collected from primary sources with the use of structured questionnaires and were analyzed with the use of inferential statistics such as Kruskal-Wallis. The Kruskal-Wallis (H) test revealed that there was a significant difference ($P > 0.05$) between Plateau and Taraba States in terms of H. Cal. (27.5) $>$ X^2 Tab (11.1) at 0.05 level of probability, hence the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. It was concluded that each State put in place different measures in resolving incessant herdsmen-arable crop farmers' conflicts on rural and agricultural development. In Plateau State, the adoption of ranching (69), anti-open grazing law (68), government intervention (66), payment of compensation to farmers (62), and educating parties involved (60). In Taraba State, it was found that anti-open grazing law (77), respect for culture and tradition (75.5), adoption of ranching (75.5), personal intervention with village heads and heads of herdsmen (73), dialogue with the parties involved (73) were the most serious measures needed to put in place to resolving herdsmen-arable crop farmers' conflicts. The study, therefore, recommended that there should be good government policy on open grazing, there should be control of the immigration of foreign Fulanis into Nigeria, ranching should be encouraged, and the Land Use Act policy should be fully implemented.

Keywords: Measures, herdsmen, farmers, Conflicts, rural and agricultural development

INTRODUCTION

The Fulani people are the primary breeders of cattle and sheep in Nigeria, owning over 90% of the nation's livestock. This livestock sector is significant, contributing about one-third of the agricultural GDP and 3.2% to Nigeria's overall GDP (Bello, 2013). Historically, the relationship between crop farmers and pastoralists was peaceful, allowing both groups to coexist harmoniously for many years.

However, as Adetula (2016) notes, the nomadic nature of pastoralist activities often leads herders to migrate in search of grazing lands, and this movement sometimes results in unintended trespassing on farmlands. Such incursions can damage crops and other property, leading to conflicts when farmers attempt to protect their land. Often, these confrontations escalate into violence, with crop farmers sometimes facing injuries, displacement, and even fatalities. Additionally, herders have occasionally been accused of using these encounters to engage in criminal acts, such as theft, arson, and assaults on local communities (Adetula, 2016).

To mitigate these conflicts and their economic toll, various levels of government local, state, and federal have implemented measures to promote peace. These efforts include deploying security forces to conflict-prone areas and organizing peace-building dialogues among stakeholders. Likewise, non-governmental organizations, including religious groups, traditional authorities, and civil society organizations, have also taken active roles in fostering peace through advocacy and dialogue initiatives at local and international levels (Gukas, 2019).

Brottem (2021) highlights the importance of building trust between communities and security forces, asserting that without more reliable and efficient security measures, violence mitigation efforts will fall short. In safer areas, gathering more data on the role and effectiveness of security forces in curbing violence could provide insights into successful interventions. To enhance their impact, it's essential to establish mechanisms that boost the accountability and responsiveness of security forces, particularly in handling sudden outbreaks of violence. When communities trust that security personnel will respond swiftly and impartially, they are less inclined to resort to extralegal actions during disputes. Through timely, unbiased interventions, security forces can help stabilize communities and prevent conflicts from escalating (Brottem, 2021).

The methods for resolving conflicts vary according to the conflict's nature and severity. For instances where crop damage is the primary issue and the responsible herder acknowledges responsibility, parties may settle matters directly, often involving compensation for minor crop losses. However, in situations where relationships between herders and crop farmers are strained, interpersonal resolutions are less common. In such cases, local leaders, including the village head and the leader of the herders, typically mediate the dispute to seek a resolution (Oyedokun & Lawal, 2017).

Adelakun et al. (2015) emphasized that dialogue and compensation to victims are vital strategies for resolving conflicts. Measures such as establishing communication channels, educating involved parties, and building confidence are crucial. Additional methods include countering misperceptions, analyzing the conflict, helping parties see each other as individuals, identifying underlying interests, providing emotional outlets, balancing power, framing the conflict accurately, and promoting consensus and solution building.

The media also plays a critical role in societal development by managing conflict narratives. Howard (2010) suggests that policymakers should focus on the media's role in cultivating a public sphere that supports non-violent conflict resolution. During times of conflict, the media should deliver independent, reliable information to aid in reconstruction and reconciliation.

Mowali and Adamu (2020) noted that dialogue is one of the most effective approaches for managing herder-farmer conflicts at the community level. Early detection and proactive management can prevent escalation from personal disputes to larger communal conflicts, as observed in Nigeria's herder-farmer clashes.

In response to growing violence, some Nigerian states introduced anti-open grazing laws, mandating that livestock be transported by rail or vehicle rather than on foot. Benue and Taraba States implemented such laws in 2016 to reduce conflicts between herders and farmers. Following the laws' enactment, these states reported a decrease in conflict incidents and fatalities, though the impact of enforcement remains uncertain. In May 2021, governors of 17 southern states also passed a resolution banning open grazing in their regions due to rising tensions.

Benue State's Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law of 2017 aimed to prevent crop damage, resolve farmer-herder conflicts, protect the environment, and facilitate large-scale farming (Aligba et al., 2020). This law banned open grazing and advocated for ranches as a sustainable alternative. Taraba State followed with its own Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law in 2018, recognizing the law's economic, cultural, and security implications (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018), though it lacked federal government support.

The federal government's primary approach to managing herder-farmer conflicts is deploying security forces to affected areas. Security personnel, including specialized forces like the Nigerian Air Force's Quick Response Wing, are frequently dispatched to hotspots as a response to resource conflicts (Vanguard, 2018). Despite these efforts, the conflict between herders and crop farmers remains persistent, particularly in Plateau and Taraba States. This study examines various conflict resolution measures applied in the affected regions.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Plateau and Taraba States, located in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. These states share a common boundary and have experienced frequent herder-farmer conflicts, making them suitable for this research.

Study Area Description

Plateau State is the twelfth-largest state in Nigeria, located at the center of the country. Known for its unique geography, Plateau State completely surrounds the Jos Plateau in its central and northern regions, with Jos as its capital. It spans a latitude of 9.8965° N and longitude of 8.8583° E and is bordered by Taraba to the southeast, Nasarawa to the southwest, Bauchi to the northeast, and Kaduna to the northwest (Plateau State ICT Development Agency, 2021). The population, projected from the 2006 census, is approximately 5,400,974, with a land area of 26,899 km² (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Plateau State is divided into 17 Local Government Areas (LGAs).

Taraba State was created from the former Gongola State in 1991 and is named after the Taraba River. Its capital, Jalingo, is centrally located within Nigeria's Middle Belt. The state spans an area of 58,795 km², lying between latitudes 6°30' N and 9°36' N, and longitudes 9°30' E and 11°45' E. It is bordered by Plateau, Nasarawa, and Benue States to the west, Adamawa State and Cameroon to the east, and Gombe State to the north (National Galleria, 2021). According to the 2006 census, Taraba State had a population of 2,294,800, which was projected to increase to 4,331,885 by 2023 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Taraba State comprises 16 LGAs.

Sampling Procedure

A multi-stage sampling approach was employed, incorporating purposive, stratified, and simple random sampling techniques to select a sample of 252 respondents. Plateau and Taraba States were purposively chosen from Nigeria's 36 states due to the prevalence of herder-farmer conflicts. Each state was stratified based on existing agricultural zones: Southern, Central, and Northern, resulting in six zones across both states. From each agricultural zone, two LGAs were selected purposively based on areas frequently affected by farmer-herder attacks. Two rural communities were randomly chosen from each selected LGA, totaling 24 rural communities. In Plateau State, the selected communities included: Wase (Zangu, Mavu), Shendam (Yelwa, Shendam), Barkin-Ladi (Dorowa, Kassa), Bassa (Maiango, Kishesho), Bokkos (Ganda, Marish) and Mangu (Mangu, Kombu). In Taraba State, the selected communities included: Wukari (Gidan-Idi, Rafin-Kada), Ibi (Sarkin-Kudu, Gindin-Waya), Ardo-Kola (Sunkani, Iware), Jalingo (Janibanibu, Kona), Gasol (Kwarrarafa, Tella) and Bali (Garba-Cede, Suntai). A sampling frame was established for each selected rural community. Using a proportional allocation of 5%, a total sample size of 252 respondents was determined.

Table 1: Sample Size Selection Plan

State	Zone	Local Government Area	Rural Communities	Sampling Frame	Sample Size (0.05)
PLATEAU	Southern	Wase	Zangu	202	10
			Mavo	223	11
		Shendam	Yelwa	257	13
			Shendam	240	12
	Northern	Barkin-Ladi	Dorowa	183	9
			Kassa	164	8
		Bassa	Maiango	212	11
			Kishesho	195	10
	Central	Bokkos	Ganda	266	13

			Marish	153	8
		Mangu	Mangu	239	12
			Kombun	135	7
Sub-total (b)				2469	124
TARABA	Southern	Wukari	Gidan-Idi	267	13
			Rafin-Kada	275	14
		Ibi	Sarki-Kudu	193	10
			Gindin-Waya	204	10
	Northern	Ardo-Kola	Sunkani	188	9
			Iware	153	8
		Jalingo	Janibanibu	165	8
			Kona	178	9
	Central	Gassol	Kwarrarafa	257	13
			Tella	228	11
		Bali	Garba Cede	213	11
			Suntai	235	12
Sub-total (a)				2556	128
Grand Total (a + b)				5025	252

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measures put in place to Resolve Incessant Herdsmen-Arable Crop Farmers' Conflicts.

The findings presented in Table 2 highlight significant differences ($P < 0.05$) between Plateau and Taraba States in terms of government measures aimed at resolving ongoing conflicts between herdsmen and arable crop farmers. The Kruskal-Wallis (H) test indicates a significant result, with a calculated H value of 27.6 exceeding the chi-square critical value ($X^2 = 11.1$) at a 0.05 significance level.

In Plateau State, key measures perceived as essential for conflict resolution included:

1. Adoption of ranching (69 respondents),
2. Enforcement of an anti-open grazing law (68 respondents),
3. Government intervention (66 respondents),
4. Payment of compensation to affected farmers (62 respondents),
5. Educational programs for the involved parties (60 respondents).

For Taraba State, the prominent measures identified were:

1. Anti-open grazing law (77 respondents),
2. Respect for local culture and traditions (75.5 respondents),
3. Adoption of ranching (75.5 respondents),
4. Engagement through personal interventions with local village heads and leaders of herdsmen (73 respondents),
5. Facilitating dialogue among the involved parties (73 respondents).

These results suggest that each state has tailored its approach based on the unique context of the conflicts. These findings align with Oyedokun and Lawal (2017), who observed that conflict resolution measures often vary according to the nature and severity of conflicts across different states in Nigeria.

Table 2: Analysis of Measures put in place to Resolve Incessant Herdsmen-Arable Crop Farmers' Conflicts.

States	Plateau State						Taraba State					
	Responses						Responses					
	SA		AG		SD		SA		AG		SD	
Variables	Freq	R ₁	Fre q	R ₂	Fre q	R ₃	Freq	R ₄	Fre q	R ₅	Fr eq	R ₆
Personal intervention with the village head and heads of herdsmen	85	58	34	45	5	30	124	73	3	23.5	1	4.5
Dialogue with the parties involved	59	52	61	53	4	27.5	124	73	3	23.5	1	4.5
Payment of certain compensation	99	62	23	41.5	2	14.5	124	73	3	33.5	1	4.5
Communication between parties involve	69	56	53	47.5	2	14.5	107	64	19	40	2	14.5
Educating the parties involved in the conflict	96	60	23	41.5	5	30	123	71	3	23.5	2	14.5
Anti-open grazing law	113	68	9	34.5	2	14.5	127	77	-	-	1	4.5
Respect for culture and tradition	56	50.5	55	49	3	23.5	125	75.5	2	14.5	1	4.5
Government intervention	113	66	11	36	2	14.5	111	66	14	37	3	23.5
Building trust between community and security agents	53	47.5	65	55	6	-	98	61	28	43	2	14.5
Training of local leaders in dispute resolution	56	50.5	64	54	4	27.5	106	63	15	38	7	33
Adoption of ranching	117	69	5	30	2	-	125	75.5	2	-	1	4.5
Arrest and Prosecution of Defaulters	81	57	41	46	2	14.5	118	70	9	-	1	4.5
Renovation and construction of affected communities	91	57	31	44	2	14.5	111	66	16	39	1	4.5
H. Cal= 27.6 X²Tab= 11.1 K-1= 5		$\sum R_1$ = 753.5		$\sum R_2$ = 577		$\sum R_3$ = 257.5		$\sum R_4$ = 908		$\sum R_5$ = 315.5		$\sum R_6$ = 136

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there are different measures adopted by farmers in each of the States (Plateau and Taraba States) in resolving incessant herdsmen-arable crop farmers' conflicts. This is done depending on the nature and magnitude of the conflicts in each of the States. Some of the most

serious measures needed to be put in place to resolve herdsman-arable crop farmers' conflicts in Plateau State were the adoption of ranching, anti-open grazing law, government intervention, payment of compensation to farmers, and educating parties involved in the conflict. In Taraba State, it was found that the Anti-Open Grazing Law, respect for culture and tradition, adoption of ranching, personal intervention with village heads and heads of herdsman, and dialogue with the parties involved were the most serious measures needed to put in place to resolving herdsman-arable crop farmers' conflicts.

Hence, the following recommendations were made:

1. Ranching should be encouraged to be practiced than the old pastoralism in the study area.
2. The Land Use Act of 1978 should be reformed to avoid unauthorized encroachment on land by herdsman.
3. Perpetrators should be arrested and prosecuted by the relevant authorities.

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