

# An Assessment of the Impact of Farmers-Herdsmen Conflict on National Security: Study in Yobe State, Nigeria

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1016SCO004>

Received: 17 February 2026; Accepted: 23 February 2026; Published: 11 March 2026

## ABSTRACT

This study assessed the impact of farmers-herdsmen conflict on insecurity in Yobe State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are: to examine the nature of farmers-herdsmen conflict in Yobe State; to assess the impact of farmers-herdsmen conflict on insecurity; and to provide measures for addressing the problem of farmers-herdsmen conflict in the study area. Anchored on eco-violence theory, the study adopts a descriptive research design to explain how competition over land, water, and grazing resources generates violent inter-group relations. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining questionnaire survey and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). The study population comprised males and females aged 14 years and above, while the target population included farmers, herders, traditional and political leaders, and security personnel. A total sample of 300 respondents was selected using multi-stage sampling techniques, with 295 quantitative and 5 qualitative respondents. Findings reveal that crop destruction, competition over grazing routes and water points, and the increasing use of weapons are major triggers of conflict. The conflict has resulted in loss of lives, displacement, reduced agricultural productivity, proliferation of small arms, and weakened social cohesion, thereby exacerbating insecurity in the state. The study concludes that farmers-herdsmen conflict in Yobe State is structurally driven and requires integrated interventions. Farmers-herdsmen conflict has emerged as a persistent security and development challenge in Yobe State, one of the North-Eastern states of Nigeria with porous international boundaries, particularly with the Niger Republic. It recommends the establishment of functional grazing reserves, community-based mediation mechanisms, and inclusive land-use policies.

**Keywords:** Farmers-Herdsmen Conflict, Insecurity, National Security, Yobe State.

## INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inherent feature of all human societies, driven by the interplay of various socio-economic factors. Despite its universal characteristics, conflict is more widespread in the developing countries of Africa, with no exception to Nigeria. Before the turn of the 20th century, the phenomenon of farmers and herders conflict was mainly restricted to the savanna belts of West Africa, such as Guinea, Sudan and Sahel Savanna which were areas where crop production used to be done on small scale measure because it was within the short period of rainy season. Farming on small piece of land enables the cattle herders to have available vast area of grass land (Mukhtar, 2025). Subsequently, irrigation practice was introduced in the Savanna belt of Nigeria. During dry season, the herdsman move to coastal zone where raining is longer and soil retains moisture for long, in search of pasture and water. This movement is what scientist called transhumance (Ofuoku & Isife, 2010).

This southwards migration used to be conducted peacefully, and, until the concluding phase of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Nigerian government was making constructive efforts to facilitate the migration process because they demarcated cattle routes (called *burtali* in both Hausa and Fulbe languages). Another giant effort by both the British colonial and post-colonial administrations establishing was grazing reserves. Since Nigeria has a very large urban sector which requires both meat and dairy products, this was largely seen as beneficial to the overall socio-economic structure of the country. As time goes, this migration took a rather fierce dimension because it culminated in multiple violent encounters between farmers and the herdsman. Unlike the contemporary grazing

migration, the early form of migration used to occur when the human population was still relatively small and land was freely available (Mukhtar, 2025).

The inherent idea of free access to grazing land and rivers among pastoralists led them into conflict with the farmers, whose idea of land ownership is stable, nomadic life style. Consequently, the country began to experience dramatic upsurge in violent resource use conflicts, with the North-eastern, North-central and North-western Nigeria as the most affected regions. As one of the North-eastern Nigerian states, Yobe State has been facing this form of conflict. Yobe State shares boundaries with international communities like the Niger Republic (Bakabe, 2025). The State experiences low rainfall with a short duration and is characterized by acute dryness of the soil, conditions which hardly support luxuriant growth of grass and other flora bio-diversities. However, there is luxuriant growth of trees around riverbeds, which supports arable and animal husbandry. The State's population is made up of both sedentary arable farmers and migratory herdsmen. In recent times, growth in human population and demands for residential area and food lead to constant struggle for cultivated areas and grazing lands, and consequently creating violent conflict between arable farmers and herdsmen (Adeoye, 2017).

In line with the above, Babagana, Madaki, Ibrahim, Adamu & Gujja (2019) explained the extent of herdsmen and farmers conflict in Yobe State in the following quotation, thus:

In Yobe state, frequent occurrence of Fulani herdsmen and farmers clashes have become a common phenomenon especially in areas with considerable populations of the Fulani cattle rearers. Although farming activities is more prominent in Gujba LGA than in Tarmuwa because of its geography that favours agricultural activities more, clashes between herdsmen and farmers are common to both areas (P. 20319).

In most instances, losses incurred from such conflicts tend to be enormous. In spite the killings recorded on both sides and other social problems associated with the conflicts, economic impacts such as reduced crop production, destruction of farms, killing of animals, destruction of stored crops etc. are also associated with these sorts of conflicts. In view of the above, the present study will assess the impact of farmers-herdsmen conflict on national security in Yobe State. The study is guided by the following research objectives:

1. To examine the nature of farmers-herdsmen conflict in Yobe State, Nigeria.
2. To assess the impact of farmers-herdsmen conflict on insecurity in Yobe State, Nigeria
3. To provide measures for addressing the problem of farmers-herdsmen conflict in Yobe State, Nigeria.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual Clarifications

Conflict is defined severally, depending on the disciplinary bias of a scholar or an author. Folarin (2015) sees conflict as interchangeably used with other terms. This is where it becomes pertinent to mention words or terms that represent synonyms of conflict.

These include contrast, disharmony, discord, struggle, contest, strife, antagonism, controversy, clash, rivalry, contest, contention, brawl, fisticuff, fight, battle, feud, combat and war. In politics, it is not too dissimilar; however, conflict technically means an existing state of disconnect between two or more parties on a prevailing issue. In his view, Tjosvold (2006) stated that conflict is not necessarily a state of opposing interests as argued by many writers, because conflict can take the form of cooperation or competition.

In addition to obscuring the reality that people with completely compatible goals often do have conflict, conflict as opposing interests is confounded with competition defined as incompatible goals (Tjosvold, 2006). This confounding makes it unclear whether the theorized effects or found are due to conflict or to competition. Conflict in this context is the state of disagreement, confrontation and strife between two or more different groups, such as farmers and herdsmen, on the basis of some scarce resources (e.g. land, farms, food or cattle).

Security is not confined to protecting territorial integrity or strengthening military capabilities, nor is it limited to policing internal affairs. It is a multidimensional concept encompassing the protection of human needs and preventing any condition that threatens societal well-being (Sani et al., 2015). Thus, security takes various forms, including political, national, regional, community, and domestic security.

As defined by Dambazau (2011), national security represents the collective security interests of individuals, communities, ethnic groups, political institutions, and entities within Nigeria. As mentioned by Mukhtar & Abdullahi (2022), security involves safeguarding citizens' welfare by creating an environment free from threats or impediments to their well-being, as well as maintaining law and order. Conversely, insecurity denotes a state of vulnerability to risks or dangers, resulting in fear, anxiety, and instability. Like security, insecurity is multidimensional. It encompasses personal, community, economic, political, food, and environmental dimensions. Importantly, security is indispensable for good governance and sustainable development.

### **The Impact of Farmer-Herder Conflict on National Security**

Farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria have a long history, rooted in competition for land and water resources. Today, Nigeria is undergoing rapid demographic changes and stiff competition for land. Imam & Ali (2021) observed that most of the cases of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria are taking place in the vast areas of northern Nigeria, Yobe State inclusive.

Their study was conducted in Fika, Yobe State. Mukhtar et al. (2016) describe these conflicts as a significant challenge to national development, highlighting their socio-economic impacts on rural communities. These conflicts have escalated in recent years, exacerbated by climate change, population growth, and the expansion of agricultural activities into traditional grazing lands (Blench, 2018).

Food security has become a major policy issue in many countries with the increase in food prices worldwide. Food insecurity varies across regions in Nigeria and rural-urban settings. Babagana, Madaki, Ibrahim, Adamu & Gujja (2019) explained that frequent occurrence of Fulani herdsmen and farmers clashes have become a common phenomenon especially in areas with considerable populations of the Fulani cattle rearers in Yobe state.

According to the 2018/19 household survey, the North-East and North-West regions have the most acute levels of food insecurity, and this is confirmed by data from the recent Cadre Harmonise surveys. The household survey also found large differences in food insecurity estimates between urban (18 percent) and rural areas (52 percent), a view also supported by Mekonnen (2021).

Using the September 2018 to October 2019 household survey of expenditures, the cost of achieving 2251 calories per day (age-weighted caloric need for food security), is about 82,000 naira per person per year. Based on this survey, about 40percent of the Nigerian population is identified as food insecure.

Mekonnen (2021) show similar results using the same data survey, arguing that about 28 percent of the population was food insecure based on the cost of a diet with localized food preferences that achieves food-based dietary guidelines (Thomas & Turk, 2023).

Insecurity resulting from farmer-herder conflicts has had a devastating impact on food production in Nigeria. According to Mukhtar & Abdullahi (2022), the destruction of farmlands, displacement of farming communities, and loss of livestock have led to significant declines in agricultural output. This, in turn, has contributed to food shortages and increased poverty in affected regions.

The challenges posed by insecurity, particularly in the context of farmer-herder conflicts, are not limited to food production but extend to broader issues of national development. Sani et al. (2015) argue that insecurity disrupts economic activities, undermines social cohesion, and hinders development initiatives. The cyclical nature of these conflicts, where insecurity leads to reduced food production, which then exacerbates poverty and fuels further conflict, presents a major obstacle to achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.

Competition-driven conflicts between arable crop farmers and cattle herdsmen have become common occurrences in many parts of Nigeria (Ingawa *et al.* 1999). The competition between these two agricultural land

user-groups has often times turned into serious overt and covert hostilities and social friction in many parts of Nigeria. This is what exactly happens between farmers and herdsmen in Yobe State.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The subject matter will be explained using *Eco-violence Theory*. Eco-violence Theory is an emerging theoretical construct that seeks to elucidate the relationship between environmental factors and violent conflicts. Developed by Homer-Dixon (1999), the theory holds thus: a decrease in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, population growth, and resource access act singly or in various combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests, and fish.

This can reduce economic productivity both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies. The affected people may migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflicts (Homer-Dixon, 1999). Implicit in the eco-violence theory is the assumption that competition over scarce ecological resources engenders violent conflict.

This trend has been aggravated in contemporary times owing to the impacts of climate change, which has exacerbated ecological scarcity across the world (Blench, 2004). In effect, ecological scarcity raises the competitive stakes and the premium that the various societal groups may place on available ecological resources. This condition tends to precipitate violent conflicts.

Applied to the present discourse, the theory of eco-violence offers insights into the nature and dynamics of the herdsmen/farmers conflicts in Nigeria.

In this regard, it is to be observed that the conflicts have been driven by the desperation of the affected groups to protect and advance their livelihood interests in the context of an ever shrinking ecological space, characterized by resource-scarcity, a livelihood crisis, population explosion, and resource competition.

The security-development nexus thesis, as discussed by Mukhtar & Abdullahi (2022), highlights how insecurity and underdevelopment are mutually reinforcing, creating a vicious cycle that is difficult to break.

In addition to amplifying existing environmental risks, FAO, (2020) reported, climate change will lead to the creation of new risks for the entire eco-system. In urban areas, the risk would increase for people, assets, economies and ecosystems.

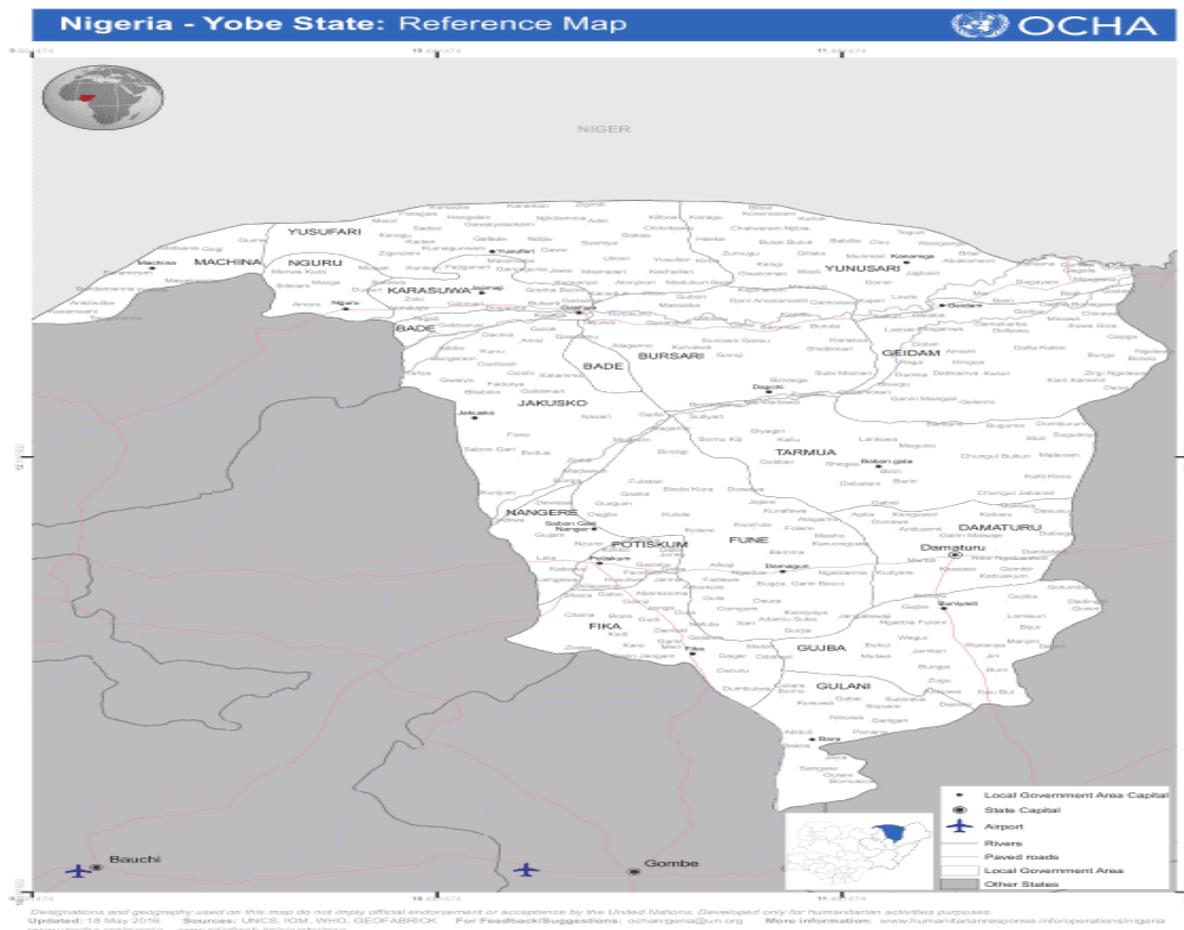
The crux of the theory of eco-violence is that the desperate quest for survival by groups in a competitive and resource-scarce ecological sphere (eco-survivalism) is likely to precipitate violent conflict (Adeoye, 2017). In a nutshell, the changing environmental situation in Yobe and the general climatic changes nationwide have led to natural resource crises and have contributed in the struggle for survival between farmers and herdsmen in Yobe State.

## METHODOLOGY

**Description of the Study Area:** Yobe State is located in the North-eastern Nigeria, as one of the six states that constitute the geo-political zone. Historically, it was within Kanem Borno Empire and it was later carved out from Borno State on August 27, 1991 by the then regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. Yobe State has 17 Local Government Areas: Bade, Bursari, Damaturu, Fika, Fune, Geidam, Gujba, Gulani, Jakusko, Karasuwa, Karawa, Machina, Nangere, Nguru, Potiskum, Tarmua, Yunusari, and Yusufari LGAs. Damaturu is the State Capital.

Situated in the North Eastern flank of Nigeria, Yobe State occupies 45,502 square kilometers. Yobe State shares borders with Borno State to the east, Gombe State to the south, Bauchi and Jigawa States to the East and Niger Republic to the north (Nigeria Galleria, 2017).

**Figure 1: The Map of Yobe State**



**Source:** OCHA (2020). Map of Yobe 612861-ocha\_yobe\_state\_reference\_map\_18052016.

The state is dominated by the Kanuri ethnic group, and is an example of the endurance of traditional political institutions in some areas of Africa. There, the emirs of the former Kanem-Bornu Empire have played a part in the politics of this area for nearly 1000 years. Currently, the political system has been transformed as a legacy of colonialism, characterized by constitutional democracy. Like the other 35 State Governments within the Federation, it is headed by a Governor. The incumbent Governor is Mai Mala Buni. There is Ministry for Health which has many departments dealing with many issues related to health, including health insurance agency. However, there are some INGOs and NGOs that partner with the Government to intervene in this latter area within the State.

The study area experiences low rainfall with a short duration and is characterized by acute dryness of the soil, conditions which hardly support luxuriant growth of grass and other flora biodiversities. However, there is luxuriant growth of trees around riverbeds, mountains and highlands, which supports arable and animal husbandry. The population of Yobe State is made up of both sedentary arable farmers and migratory herdsmen, mainly of the Fulani ethnic group (Adeoye, 2017). Yobe State is endowed with diverse economic potentials. Potash which is a basic raw material for soap production is found in commercial quantity in the northern parts of the state. Gum Arabic of high grade is also available especially in Bursari, Tarmuwa and Damaturu Local Government Areas of the state. Equally, produced in commercial quantities are cotton, Groundnuts, and Beans. In the chemical and mineral sector, Gypsum is found in commercial quantity in Fika, Gujba and Fune Local Government areas, Diatomite and Limestone also in Gujba while the presence of substantial deposit of Kaolin, and Quartz have been confirmed in the other parts of the state (Yobe State Government, 2018).

Yobe state is also one of the largest suppliers of livestock in Nigeria. Although IRIN (2009) reported over a third of land that was cultivable 50 years earlier is now desert across 11 of Nigeria's northern states, Borno, and Yobe inclusive. This situation consequently posed constraints to farmers, while nomadic Fulanis are also becoming

another security challenge that destroy farmlands in Nguru, Fune, Gashua and Gujba LGAs, and attack victims if responded to. This is why farmers-herdsmen conflict is becoming common in the State.

**Research Design:** The study is descriptive research design. It will describe the impact of farmers- herdsmen conflict on national security in Yobe State, Nigeria.

**Population of Study:** The population of Yobe State stood at 3 million in 2016 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Population of the study will include all male and female population between the age of 18 and above 57 years residing in Yobe State. The target population of the study will include all farmers, herders, law enforcement agents, community leaders (traditional rulers and religious leaders) and political leaders in the study area.

**Sample Size and Sampling Procedure:** The total sample for the study is going to be 300 respondents, based on the proportion of the total population of the study area (3,000,000) divided by 100 (300,000/100=300). Out of the total sample, 295 respondents are respondents for quantitative data, while the rest (5) will be respondents for qualitative data. Multi-stage sampling technique will be used to select the sample. The sampling technique is going to be both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. In the first stage, cluster sampling will be used to divide the Yobe State into select 17 areas, based on the 17 LGAs that make up the State. In the second stage, purposive sampling technique will be used to select Tarmuwa Local Government Area as one of the most affected local government areas in Yobe State.

**Method of Data Collection:** The instruments of data collection will be questionnaire and interview guide; that is, quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The questionnaire will be structured and it will be designed to address the research objectives. It will therefore be formulated into sections, from the socio-economic and demographic information of the respondents to the substantive issues as raised in the research questions. The interview will be used to gather information key informants to complement the findings of the quantitative data.

**Method of Data Analysis:** A mixed-methods approach to analysis was employed. Quantitative data from questionnaires was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) summarized demographic and socio-economic profiles. Likert scale was also used to address substantial issues. Qualitative data from interviews was analyzed thematically to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data, providing nuanced context to the quantitative findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section analysed, presented, and interpreted the data collected from the field survey. Out of the 295 questionnaires distributed, 276 were successfully completed and retrieved. Therefore, the analysis is based on the retrieved questionnaires (N = 276). Additionally, 3 in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with farmers and herders; traditional/religious leaders; IDPs and 3 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with and law enforcement agents and academics.

### Section A: Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents (n = 276)

This section provides an integrated analysis of the demographic and socio-economic profile of the 276 survey respondents from the study area. This profile is critical for understanding the context of farmers-herdsmen conflict in the study area.

**Table 1.1: Gender Distribution of the Respondents**

S/N	Income	Frequency (%)
1.	Male	232 (84.1%)
2.	Female	44 (15.9%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>276 (100.0%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The data in Table 1.1 show that male respondents constituted the majority of the study population, accounting for 69.6%, while female respondents made up 30.4%.

This gender distribution reflects the socio-cultural realities of Yobe State, where men are more directly involved in farming, herding, and community security matters. Consequently, males are more likely to be available and willing to respond to issues relating to farmers–herdsmen conflict and national security.

**Table 1.2: Age Groups of the Respondents**

S/N	Income	Frequency (%)
1.	18–25 years	48 (17.4%)
2.	26–35 years	82 (29.7%)
3.	36–45 years	71 (25.7%)
4.	46–55 years	45 (16.3%)
5.	56 years and above	30 (10.9%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>276 (100.0%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1.2 shows the age groups of the respondents. It indicates that the economically active age groups dominated the study. Respondents aged 26–35 years (29.7%) and 36–45 years (25.7%) formed the largest proportions.

This suggests that the conflict predominantly affects individuals in their productive years, who are actively engaged in farming, herding, and other livelihood activities. The implication is that farmers–herdsmen conflict poses a significant threat to economic productivity and household welfare in Yobe State.

**Table 1.3: Marital Status of the Respondents**

S/N	Income	Frequency (%)
1.	Single	64 (23.2%)
2.	Married	178 (64.5%)
3.	Divorced/Separated	19 (6.9%)
4.	Widowed	15 (5.4%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>276 (100.0%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1.3 shows the respondents’ marital status. The table reveals that a substantial proportion of respondents were married (64.5%), while single respondents accounted for 23.2%.

This indicates that the conflict affects individuals with family responsibilities, thereby increasing its social consequences such as household displacement, loss of livelihood, and increased vulnerability of women and children.

**Table 1.4: Ethnicity of the Respondents**

S/N	Income	Frequency (%)
1.	Kanuri	108 (39.1%)
2.	Fulani	63 (22.8%)
3.	Hausa	54 (19.6%)
4.	Bade	32 (11.6%)
5.	Other (Specify)	19 (6.9%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>276 (100.0%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1.4 shows the ethnic composition of the respondents. It shows that Kanuri respondents (39.1%) formed the largest ethnic group, followed by Fulani (22.8%), Hausa (19.6%), and Bade (11.6%).

This distribution mirrors the ethnic configuration of Yobe State and is particularly relevant to the study, as the farmers–herdsmen conflict often involves sedentary farming communities and mobile pastoral groups, especially among Fulani herders.

**Table 1.5: Occupation of the Respondents**

S/N	Income	Frequency (%)
1.	Farmer	104 (37.7%)
2.	Herder	52 (18.8%)
3.	Civil Servant	41 (14.9%)
4.	Trader/Businessperson	57 (20.7%)
5.	Unemployed	18 (6.5%)
6.	Other: Artisan, Driver, Daily Labourer	4 (1.4%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>276 (100.0%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1.5 shows the occupation of the respondents. The occupational distribution reveals that farmers constituted the largest group (37.7%), followed by traders/businesspersons (20.7%) and herders (18.8%).

This confirms that the respondents are directly drawn from the populations most affected by the conflict.

The presence of civil servants and traders further highlights the broader economic and administrative implications of the conflict beyond primary actors.

**Table 1.6: Educational Level of the Respondents**

S/N	Income	Frequency (%)
1.	No Formal Education	66 (23.9%)
2.	Primary School	59 (21.4%)
3.	Secondary School	73 (26.4%)
4.	Tertiary/University	42 (15.2%)
5.	Qur’anic Education Only	36 (13.1%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>276 (100.0%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1.6 shows the educational level of respondents. The table indicates that respondents with no formal education (23.9%) and those with primary education (21.4%) constituted a significant proportion of the sample. This suggests that low literacy levels may contribute to poor conflict resolution mechanisms and limited awareness of formal legal frameworks, thereby exacerbating the persistence of farmers–herdsmen conflicts in Yobe State.

**Table 1.7: Approximate Annual Income of the Respondents**

S/N	Income	Frequency (%)
1.	Less than ₦200,000	112 (40.6%)
2.	₦200,000 – ₦500,000	89 (32.2%)
3.	₦500,001 – ₦1,000,000	49 (17.8%)
4.	Above ₦1000,000	26 (9.4%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>276 (100.0%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1.7 shows annual income of respondents. The income distribution shows that 40.6% of respondents earned less than ₦200,000 annually, while 32.2% earned between ₦200,000 and ₦500,000.

This indicates widespread economic vulnerability among respondents. Such economic hardship increases competition over scarce resources, thereby intensifying farmers–herdsmen conflict and its security implications. This profile aligns with commonly cited risk factors associated with conflict in the affected regions (Isyaku, Ishaq & Mukhtar, 2018).

In conclusion, the demographic profile grounds the study in the harsh realities of Northeast Nigeria. It moves the discussion of radicalization from an abstract ideological phenomenon to one deeply embedded in specific socio-economic and demographic conditions. Any meaningful analysis of de-radicalization and its security implications must contend with this foundational context.

**Table 1.8: Length of Residence in the Community**

S/N	Income	Frequency (%)
1.	Less than 5 years	34 (12.3%)
2.	6–10 years	58 (21.0%)
3.	11–20 years	79 (28.6%)
4.	More than 20 years	105 (38.1%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>276 (100.0%)</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1.8 shows respondents’ length of residence in the community. The data reveal that 38.1% of respondents had lived in their communities for more than 20 years, while 28.6% had resided for 11–20 years. This suggests that most respondents possess deep historical knowledge of community relations and conflict patterns, making their responses credible and well-informed.

**Section B: Nature of Farmers-Herdsmen Conflict in Yobe State**

Section B deals with the nature of farmers-herdsmen conflict in Yobe State, such as crop destruction by cattle is a major trigger of conflict in this area; competition over water and grazing land is a frequent cause of clashes, etc.

**Table 1.9: Nature of Farmers-Herdsmen Conflict in Yobe State**

S/N	Statement	5– Strongly Agree	4 – Agree	3– Neutral	2– Disagree	1– Strongly Disagree
1.	Crop destruction by cattle is a major trigger of conflict in this area.	118 (42.8%)	94 (34.1%)	31 (11.2%)	21 (7.6%)	12 (4.3%)
2.	Competition over water and grazing land is a frequent cause of clashes.	109 (39.5%)	96 (34.8%)	36 (13.0%)	23 (8.3%)	12 (4.4%)
3.	The use of weapons in farmer-herder disputes has increased in recent years.	92 (33.3%)	88 (31.9%)	47 (17.0%)	31 (11.2%)	18 (6.6%)
4.	Ethnic and cultural differences significantly fuel the conflict.	81 (29.3%)	93 (33.7%)	49 (17.8%)	32 (11.6%)	21 (7.6%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1.9 shows the nature of farmers-herdsmen conflict in Yobe State. The results show a cluster mean score of 3.61, which exceeds the decision threshold of 3.00, indicating general agreement among respondents. Respondents strongly agreed that crop destruction by cattle is a major trigger of conflict (Mean = 3.82). Competition over water sources and grazing land was also identified as a frequent cause of clashes (Mean = 3.76). The use of weapons in disputes has increased in recent years (Mean = 3.47), suggesting an escalation of violence. Ethnic and cultural differences were acknowledged as significant contributing factors (Mean = 3.39).

Thus, the findings indicate that farmers–herdsmen conflict in Yobe State is driven by resource competition, economic survival strategies, and escalating militarization, compounded by ethnic and cultural tensions.

**According to farmer from Potiskum LGA:**

I have been farming sorghum and millet here for over 20 years, but the last five years have been very tough. Herders now bring their cattle into my farm even before harvest, and when I complain, they tell me it is their right to graze anywhere. (IDI with Male Farmer from Potiskum LGA, 45, 2026).

**Herder (Fulani) from Bade LGA also mentioned that:**

We have been moving our cattle through Yobe for generations, following traditional routes that are now blocked by farmlands. The drying up of the Komadugu Yobe River means we must move closer to communities to find water, which causes problems. IDI with Herder (Fulani) from Bade LGA, 38 years, 2026).

**A political leader from Potiskum Local Government mentioned that:**

The conflict here is not just about cattle and crops. It is deeply tied to shrinking resources and weak governance. Climate change has reduced arable land and water points, pushing farmers and herders into the same small spaces. (IDI with Political Leader from Potiskum Local Government, 2026).

**Section C: Impact of Farmers-Herdsmen Conflict on Insecurity in Yobe State**

Section C covers the impact of farmers-herdsmen conflict on insecurity in Yobe State, such as the conflict leading to increased loss of lives and displacement, negative effect on food security in Yobe State, etc.

**Table 1.10: Impact of Farmers-Herdsmen Conflict on Insecurity in Yobe State**

S/N	Statement	5– Strongly Agree	4 – Agree	3– Neutral	2– Disagree	1– Strongly Disagree
1.	The conflict has led to increased loss of lives and displacement in Yobe State.	121 (43.8%)	92 (33.3%)	29 (10.5%)	20 (7.2%)	14 (5.2%)
2.	It has negatively affected food security due to reduced farming activity.	113 (41.0%)	97 (35.1%)	33 (12.0%)	20 (7.2%)	13 (4.7%)
3.	The conflict has encouraged the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.	88 (31.9%)	95 (34.4%)	45 (16.3%)	29 (10.5%)	19 (6.9%)
4.	It has weakened community cooperation and social cohesion.	104 (37.7%)	91 (33.0%)	38 (13.8%)	27 (9.8%)	16 (5.7%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1.10 presents the impact of farmers-herdsmen conflict on insecurity in Yobe State. The cluster mean of 3.73 indicates strong agreement that the conflict has negatively affected security in Yobe State. Respondents agreed that the conflict has led to loss of lives and displacement (Mean = 3.89). The conflict has undermined food security due to reduced farming activities (Mean = 3.85). There is an increased proliferation of small arms and light weapons (Mean = 3.51). Community trust and social cohesion have been weakened (Mean = 3.68). These findings demonstrate that farmers–herdsmen conflict is not merely a local dispute but a major national security concern, contributing to humanitarian crises and long-term instability.

**According to farmer from Potiskum LGA:**

Last season, my entire two-hectare farm was destroyed, and I could not feed my family or sell any produce. We used to settle these issues with the village head, but now some herders carry AK-47s, so we are afraid to confront them. The police are too far away, and when they come, it is often after the damage is done. (IDI with Male Farmer from Potiskum LGA, 45, 2026).

**Herder (Fulani) from Bade LGA also mentioned that:**

Our animals are sometimes poisoned or stolen by farmers who are angry about crops. Many of us do not want violence, but we have to protect our livestock. That is why some now carry weapons. The government talks about grazing reserves, but we have not seen any created here. (IDI with Herder (Fulani) from Bade LGA, 38 years, 2026).

**Section D: Measures for Addressing Farmers-Herdsman Conflict**

This Section deals with measures for addressing farmers-herdsman conflict in the study area, such as establishing designated grazing reserves will reduce clashes significantly; community-based mediation committees involving farmers and herders are effective, etc.

**Table 1.11: Measures for Addressing Farmers-Herdsman Conflict**

S/N	Statement	5– Strongly Agree	4 – Agree	3– Neutral	2– Disagree	1– Strongly Disagree
1.	Establishing designated grazing reserves will reduce clashes significantly.	117 (42.4%)	89 (32.2%)	32 (11.6%)	22 (8.0%)	16 (5.8%)
2.	Community-based mediation committees involving farmers and herders are effective.	109 (39.5%)	94 (34.1%)	37 (13.4%)	22 (8.0%)	14 (5.0%)
3.	Government should provide compensation for crop/livestock losses to reduce revenge attacks	96 (34.8%)	92 (33.3%)	41 (14.9%)	29 (10.5%)	18 (6.5%)
4.	Joint security patrols in flashpoints can help de-escalate tensions.	112 (40.6%)	88 (31.9%)	34 (12.3%)	24 (8.7%)	18 (6.5%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

Table 1.11 shows the measures for addressing farmers-herdsman conflict. The results show a cluster mean of 3.67, indicating broad support for the proposed measures. Establishing designated grazing reserves was widely supported (Mean = 3.73). Community-based mediation committees were perceived as effective (Mean = 3.75). Government compensation for losses was endorsed as a way to reduce revenge attacks (Mean = 3.50). Joint security patrols in conflict-prone areas were seen as useful in preventing escalation (Mean = 3.68).

**Traditional leader (district head from Nguru LGA) stated that:**

In the past, we used our traditional ‘Sulhu’ system to mediate between farmers and herders. Both sides would bring their complaints, and elders would decide on compensation in cows or grain. But now, young people on both sides no longer respect these traditions, and some prefer violence. Also, many herders are no longer known to our communities; they come from neighboring countries or other states, making mediation harder. If the government would work through us and support our authority, we could still help restore peace, but they often sideline us in favor of military solutions (IDI with Traditional Leader, District Head, Nguru LGA, 2026).

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### **A political leader from Potiskum Local Government mentioned that:**

As politicians, we try to mediate, but there is little funding for conflict resolution or compensation for losses. The security agencies are already stretched thin with Boko Haram insurgency, so farmer-herder clashes often get less attention, yet they fuel distrust and make communities vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups. (IDI with Political Leader from Potiskum Local Government, 2026).

In sum, the study reveals that farmers–herdsmen conflict in Yobe State is driven primarily by resource competition and livelihood pressures. The conflict significantly contributes to insecurity, displacement, and food insecurity. Respondents strongly support preventive and inclusive conflict management strategies. The findings suggest that a multi-dimensional approach combining institutional, community, and security interventions is necessary for sustainable conflict management.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined the impact of farmers–herdsmen conflict on national security in Yobe State, Nigeria, with particular emphasis on the nature of the conflict, its security implications, and possible measures for sustainable resolution. Drawing on empirical evidence from the field, the study establishes that farmers–herdsmen conflict in Yobe State is not a spontaneous or isolated phenomenon but a structurally rooted and progressively intensifying crisis driven by competition over land, water resources, and livelihood survival. The findings reveal that crop destruction by cattle, competition over grazing land and water points, and the increasing use of weapons have transformed what were once manageable disputes into violent confrontations. These conflicts are further aggravated by ethnic and cultural differences, which are often manipulated by local elites and opportunistic actors, who deepened mistrust between farmers and herders.

The study also concludes that farmers–herdsmen conflict has become a significant contributor to insecurity in Yobe State. It has resulted in loss of lives, displacement of communities, disruption of agricultural activities, and the weakening of social cohesion. More importantly, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons associated with the conflict poses a direct threat to national security, as it fuels criminality, banditry, and other forms of organized violence beyond the immediate conflict zones. Furthermore, the research demonstrates that the persistence of farmers–herdsmen conflict undermines food security and economic stability, particularly in rural areas where agriculture remains the primary source of livelihood. The erosion of trust between communities and the breakdown of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have made peaceful coexistence increasingly difficult, thereby perpetuating cycles of violence and underdevelopment.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Government at the state and federal levels should establish and legally protect well-defined grazing reserves and stock routes equipped with water points and veterinary services. This will reduce encroachment on farmlands, minimize resource-based competition, and significantly curb recurring clashes between farmers and herders in Yobe State.
2. Traditional rulers, religious leaders, farmers' associations, and herders' groups should be integrated into formal community mediation committees. These structures should be empowered to intervene early in disputes, promote dialogue, and revive indigenous conflict resolution practices that emphasize reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.
3. The government should institutionalize transparent compensation mechanisms for verified cases of crop destruction and livestock losses. In addition, livelihood support programs such as agricultural inputs for farmers and livestock support services for herders should be introduced to reduce the motivation for revenge attacks and retaliatory violence.
4. Security agencies should intensify joint patrols involving the police, civil defence, and local vigilante groups in identified conflict-prone areas. Early-warning and rapid-response systems should be strengthened to prevent minor disputes from escalating into large-scale violence.

5. There is an urgent need for stricter border control, intelligence-led policing, and community sensitization to curb the circulation of illegal arms. Disarmament initiatives and arms mop-up operations should be carried out alongside trust-building measures to prevent further militarization of farmers–herdsmen conflicts.
6. The Yobe State Government should develop inclusive land-use policies that recognize both sedentary farming and pastoral livelihoods. Integrating pastoralism into state agricultural planning, while promoting modern ranching practices where feasible, will reduce structural exclusion and contribute to long-term peace and national security.

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