

## THE NIGERIAN STATE AND THE MANAGEMENT OF FARMER-HERDER CONFLICT: AN EVALUATION

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### Abstract

The paper evaluates the role of the Nigerian state in handling the phenomenon of farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria. This is against the backdrop of the prevalence of the conflict amid the apparent government lethargy in dealing with the situation over the recent years. By way of a qualitative analysis of secondary data, the paper posits that the response of State and Federal governments towards resolving the herdsman-farmers conflicts have been anything but weak, feeble and complacent. Hence, the conflict has intensified and had also become more widespread, frequent and utterly destructive. The paper observes that the deployment of security agencies to at-risk communities is usually belated in total neglect of early warning signals, while the policy initiatives so far being considered have not been operational in spite of the urgent need for implementation. The paper submits that while the efforts of the states that have anti-open grazing laws in place are commendable, there is need to have a holistic policy that will check the conflicts in all the states of the federation through the concerted efforts of the federal government and other non-governmental stakeholders

**Key words:** State, management, farmer-herder conflict

### Introduction

Over the years, the Nigeria's national security has been tragically embattled. From the incidences of the Boko Haram torrential attacks to the present herdsman-farmers conflicts, all but depicts a country in a steady and seemingly inexorable drift into an abyss of anomie. While Boko Haram insurgency appears to be attenuating, herdsman militancy is exacerbating with immense collateral consequences evidenced by high casualties, fatalities and population displacements. The phenomenon is fast degenerating from lowly isolated cases of clashes with rudimentary weapons to a more widespread, frequent and utterly destructive one enabled by use of sophisticated weaponry. To say the least, contemporary trajectories and dynamics of herdsman militancy in Nigeria reveal that incidents have become a lot more organized, sophisticated and complicated (Okoli and Ogayi, 2018).

Herder-farmer conflicts in the recent past have also progressively compounded the security situation in Nigeria with dire humanitarian consequences leading to the report by The Global Terrorism Index (GTI, 2015) which identifies such militancy as the fourth deadliest instance of organized terror in the world. The Report indicates that Nigeria is a critical flashpoint of the occurrence. According to the Report, casualties associated with herdsman militancy in the various States of Nigeria rose from 80 in 2012 to 2013 period to 1,229 in 2014 alone (GTI, 2015: 49). Between 2015 to date (mid 2018), the casualty figure is put at about 2000 deaths (still counting). In 2017 alone, over 1, 000 were killed. While there were a total of 67 clashes between herdsman and farmers between 2007 and 2011, there were 716 clashes between 2012 and 2018 thus far. The highest single case was recorded

in February 2016 in Agatu community in Benue State, which witnessed a monumental conflict between herders and farmers leading to deaths of over 300 people (Voice of America, 2016).

Regrettably, the deadly expansion, sophistication of attacks and degeneration of violent conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria appear to have not being matched with requisite policy measures to mitigate the conflict. The state's response and management of this conflict from government at all levels seems un-inspiring, weak and feeble and at best fraught with mere assurances and promises that have not materialized. While the federal government is still mulling on the possibility of establishing grazing reserves or cattle colonies several years after, some state governments has implemented anti-open grazing law albeit, with some concerns. The response of security agencies to the conflict has as well raised suspicion which suggests their complicity. Resultantly, the violence has prevailed in apparent defiance to all remedies. An evaluation of the states' management policies, actions and in-actions towards resolving this conflict is germane in order to advance possible policy solutions towards ending this malaise. It is this objective that has informed this paper.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

**State:** This refers to political organization endowed with legitimate use of sovereign powers to make laws and enforce same on the people under a confined territory. State institutions include administrative bureaucracies, legal systems, and military or religious organizations (Earle, 1997).

**Management:** This can be defined as the systematic planning, organization and coordination of the activities of government in order to achieve defined objectives. Management as it relates to the state and government consists of the interlocking functions of making public policy and organizing, planning, controlling, and directing the affairs of the state to achieve major objectives for public good. Such objectives include national defense, administration of justice and provisioning (Caparaso and Levine, 1992).

**Farmer-Herder Conflict:** This refers to aggressive and often violent behavioural manifestations expressed by both herders and farmers in relation to land resources' access and use. It is a conflict that arises from the pursuit of divergent goals and aspirations by the pastoralists and the farmers in defined social and physical environments in relation to vegetations i.e. grazing land and farming land. It is usually characterized by killings and wanton destruction of property as a result of incompatible goals between herder and farmer. In essence, herder-farmer conflict is the systematic aggression exhibited by the nomadic pastoralists in the context of socio-ecological struggles with sedentary farmers (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014).

### **History and Incidence of Herder-farmer Conflicts in Nigeria**

Conflict between pastoralists and farmers is not a recent phenomenon. In the words of Blench (2003:1) 'the conflicts between nomad and the settled goes back to the earliest written records and is mythically symbolized in many cultures'. The farmers are the settled or sedentarized arable crop growers. They grow crops either for subsistent or commercial purposes. The herders are the nomadic pastoralists who rely on transhumance in other to exploit grazing resources opportunities for their livestock. In this order, some forms of inter-change of relationship existed where the Fulbe herders also exchanged some of the animal products they produced with farmers for grain, thus

supplementing the diets of each respective group (Wilson 1984). The occupational differences also mean differences in lifestyle and the expectant rivalry. Outside the healthy rivalry, the herder-farmer relationship was symbiotic and relatively interdependent at least before the advent of colonialism. Davidheiser and Luna (2008) illustrated this relationship thus:

*A farmer entrusts or lends cattle that he or she owns to a herder, who will then take care of them in return for being able to keep some or all of the milk and offspring that the cattle produce. The dung and stubble exchanges take place as the Fulbe move from their wet season pastures to the wetter grasslands in which subsistence and small-surplus producing peasant farmers have long worked. In dung and stubble exchanges, known as the *contrat de fumure* in the Francophone Sahel, Fulbe graze their cattle on fields that have already been harvested, and the manure of the cattle provides fertilization for the farmer (Van den Brink, Bromley & Chavas 1995 in Davidheiser and Luna, 2008:7).*

This pattern of relationship was simply symbiotic and geared towards maximizing comparative advantage opportunities. Deep exchange relations persisted between these two groups but were altered by the advent of colonial rule particularly in Nigeria.

Under the yoke of colonialism, agricultural production for use value gave way for producing towards exchange value. Demands for raw materials by the Europeans led to intensification of agricultural food production for exchange other than domestic use. This led to several policies with consequences. According to Davidheiser and Luna (2008:7), 'the changes in land tenure laws during the colonial period intensified commodity production and the attendant environmental degradation as consequence. The adoption of new irrigation techniques, and the sedentarisation schemes for transhumant pastoralists that accompanied the introduction of capitalism to West Africa, disrupted the production symbiosis of herders and farmers in addition to increasing the likelihood of conflict between them'. Widespread changes in production systems and socio-political landscapes created conditions that enabled the likelihood of goal incompatibility, and heightened the potential severity of strife between herders and farmer in Nigeria. This continued and even degenerated after independence.

The degeneration of this phenomenon has led to what Okoli and Ogayi (2018) simply referred to herdsman militancy. It is violent conflict characterized by immense military sophistication, with the deployment of modern weaponry and mercenary fighters. It is essentially a post-2000s development that crystallized and culminated around 2015-16. Hitherto, there had been cases of 'low-intensity' skirmishes or clashes between native farming communities and pastoral herdsman over competitive land-use, especially claims of farmland/rangeland trespasses (Blench and Dendo, 2005). Such clashes were largely restricted to peak planting and harvesting periods in northern Nigeria. At worst, they involved the use of rudimentary arms and ammunition, such as dane-guns, machetes, spears and arrows, and amulets (Gyuse and Ajene, 2008).

Unfortunately, the trajectory of herdsman militancy in Nigeria has steadily grown for a number of years, but has since escalated from 2014 to date with 847 deaths recorded in 2014 alone (Okoli and Ogayi, 2018). The North central region has been the worst hit as it relates to this conflict. However, more recent indicators in 2016 point to the fact that herdsman militancy is fast degenerating into a scale of national emergency. Curiously, the phenomenon is no longer restricted to Central Nigeria;

rather, it has been variously recorded in many States of Southern Nigeria. Table 1 chronicles incidents of herdsmen militancy (attacks) recorded in various parts of Nigeria in 2016 alone.

**Table 1: Attacks by Herdsmen in 2016**

Date of attack	Victims killed	LGA	State
1/1/2016	1	Nkanu East	Enugu
1/4/2016	12	Nasarawa	Nasarawa
1/10/2016	45	Agatu	Benue
1/17/2016	0	Wukari	Taraba
1/25/2016	20	Adamawa	Adamawa
2/6/2016	12	Buruku	Benue
2/7/2016	1	Yewa North	Ogun
2/7/2016	10	Buruku	Benue
2/11/2016	2	Ozo Uwani	Enugu
2/24/2016	300	Agatu	Benue
2/27/2016	9	Wukari	Taraba
2/28/2016	9	Agatu	Benue
3/3/2016	1	Logo	Benue
3/5/2016	0	Agatu	Benue
3/8/2016	40	Logo	Benue
3/8/2016	12	Buruku	Benue
3/9/2016	8	Logo	Benue
3/10/2016	2	Agatu	Benue
3/11/2016	0	Senator David Mark Convoy attacked	
3/13/2016	90	Agatu	Benue
3/13/2016	2	Buruku	Benue
3/13/2016	6	Tarkaa	Benue
3/17/2016	25	Logo	Benue
3/17/2016	15	Buruku	Benue
3/19/2016	1	Udi	Enugu
3/21/2016	2	Guma	Benue
3/29/2016	7	Ogba-Egebema North	Rivers
4/4/2016	1	Tarkaa	Benue
4/9/2016	1	Oktipupa	Ondo
4/10/2016	15	Cashaka	Taraba
4/13/2016	44	Bali	Taraba
4/13/2016	0	Ifedore	Ondo
4/16/2016	1	Ayamelum	Anambra
4/18/2016	18	Kwande	Benue
4/25/2016	20	Uwani	Enugu
4/26/2016	0	Ndokwa	Delta
4/27/2016	20	Ozo-Uwani	Enugu
<b>2016 subtotal</b>	<b>725</b>		

Source: CWI. Nigerian: Fractured and forgotten: Discrimination and violence along religious faultiness. (21<sup>st</sup> Century Wilberforce Initiative, 2016), pp.75-76).

Table 1 above indicates that the conflict is becoming more widespread, frequent and in a steady increase. A total of 725 people lost their lives in 2016 alone. The killings continued unabated till date. For instance, from January to April 2018, United Kingdom-based Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) disclosed that Fulani militias killed 1,061 people in about 106 attacks on communities in central Nigeria in the first quarter of 2018 (Thisday,2018). CSW also said it had documented over 400 deaths in 46 attacks during the second quarter of 2018. In one of the most

recent, at least 200 people were reported to have died in coordinated attacks on around 50 communities in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area in Plateau State, which began on June 22 and lasted until June 24, the report said. Contemporary trajectory of herder-farmer conflict reveals that there appear to be no end in sight without requisite action towards ending the menace. Below is a table that reveals some recorded casualties from January to June 2018.

**Table 2: Timeline of herdsmen-farmers conflicts and casualties in 2018 (January –June)**

Date	Place of Incident	No. of Deaths
Jan, 1	Logo and Guma, LGAs, Benue State	73
Jan, 1	Awe and Keane LGAs, Nasarawa State	27
Jan, 5	Tse Akombo, Tse Vii and Tse Agule villages, Benue State	15
Jan 6-8	Lau and Sardauna LGA, Taraba State	58
Feb, 37	Demsa in Adamawa State	20
Mar, 1-4	Saradauna LGA, Taraba State	35
Mar, 5	Okpokwu in Benue State	25
Mar, 14	Daima/Omala, Kogi State	32
April, 5	Gwer west, Benu State	30
May, 22	Ayati-Ikpayongo in Gwer East district of Benue State, north-central	17 catholic worshippers and 2 priests
May 18	Mbatonbo community in Gwer LGA, Benue State	6
May, 20	Tseke Village, Benue State	2
May 21	Mchia village, in Logo LGA, Benue State	5
May, 22	Markudi_Naka road, Benue State	2
June, 3	Tseadough village in Mbachom, Yaav Ward, Benue State	8
June, 6	Communities in Logo and Guma LGA. Benue State	15 including 2 NECO exam candidates
Jun, 23-24	11 communities in Gashish and Ropp Districts in Plateau State	300

**Source:** Compiled by the authors with aid of information from media sources

Table 2 reveals the spate of killings in 2018 thus far. The highest single attack in the year so far was the attack in eleven communities in Plateau state with over 300 deaths recorded. Some recorded attacks were omitted in this table for want of space. Data released by The International Society for Civil Liberties and the Rule of Law, Intersociety, revealed by the killings by herdsmen, Benue State

recorded the highest number of rural Christian and other non Muslim deaths in first six months of 2018 with no fewer than 600, followed by Plateau State with 400; Taraba 250; Nasarawa 200; Southern Kaduna 100; Adamawa 100 and Kogi State 100; totaling no fewer than 1,750 Christian and other members of non Muslim population (Daily Post, 2018).

### **Perspectives on Herder-Farmer Conflicts: Drivers and Triggers**

Extant literature have revealed various factors that trigger and drive these conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. Some of the factors that influence the conflict include the under mentioned:

**Climate Change:** this has resulted in desertification and depletion of land and water resources preciously needed for farming and herding purposes. Increase in aridity in northern region contrasts with seeming humidity in the south therefore engenders transhumance of nomads to the south in order to exploit grazing opportunities for their livestock. Intensified migration of pastoralist as a result of land resources scarcity leads to violent confrontations with sedentary farmers. Climate change and desert encroachment have made southward movements even more inevitable and confrontations with southern farming communities more frequent and unavoidable (Nwosu, 2017).

**Population Increase:** Increase in human population without commensurate increase of land resources sanctions struggle and competition for access and use (Okoli, 2015). Again, there is yet increase in population of cattle amidst decline in forage and water to feed them. This results in increased transhumance and frustration with attendant aggression. This competition usually results into violent conflict between the two occupational groups. Related to population are other demographic factors like increasing rate of urbanisation and industrialisation which make land available for other purposes other than farming. This puts pressure on available land resources hence, conflict.

**Proliferation of Arms:** The conflict in Libya and Mali was believed to have increased the proliferation of small and large arms into the country because Nigeria's porous borders are uncontrollable. Some people are exchanging stolen crude oil for arms and these are being easily shipped through our sea ports" (BBC, 2016). Another theory being adduced is that herdsmen get their weapons from black market across West and Central Africa, because their nomadic business that traverses through the corridors of these countries.

**Failure of Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism:** According to Bukar (2016), the increase in crisis between herdsmen and farmers can be blamed on the collapse of traditional dispute resolution mechanism. The author opines that "the traditional institutions are 'de facto' conflict resolution mechanism. Traditional conflict resolution mechanism is built around mediation rather than retribution; participatory as against coercion; reprimand as against punitive; oath-taking as against the full wrath of law. The involvement of traditional institutions in conflict resolutions has proven to command considerable confidence among parties in dispute in various communities. Waning influence of this institution has proven to be unhelpful in resolving herder-farmer conflicts.

**Complicity of Government and Politics:** The inability of the government to regulate agrarian relations through pragmatic land/resource-use policies as well as the structural neglect of the

livestock sector in the country has particularly not been helpful. Thus in absence of an entrenched mechanism for resource security and governance, what prevails in the agrarian sector is simply anarchy and criminal impunity as exemplified by the incidence of herdsman militancy. To a large extent, this perspective agrees with the governance-crisis theoretical paradigm that implicates state failure as a veritable factor in resource-based violence (Okoli and Ogayi, 2018).

### **The State and Management of Herder-Famer Conflict: An Evaluation**

The unfolding trajectory and dynamics of herder-farmer conflict suggests serious degeneration into a worst security challenge to the corporate existence of Nigeria. From lowly and isolated cases of attacks attendant with the use of rudimentary weapons in the past, the conflict has now become more sophisticated, complex and complicated with attendant consequences on lives and means of livelihood. At the same time, the role of the state and its agencies towards resolving this conflict has remained at best lethargic. Crisis Group Africa Report 2017 equivocally decried the response of government towards resolving this mayhem. The group notes:

*The reaction from Nigeria's federal and state authorities, so far, has been wanting.... Federal security and law enforcement agencies have established neither early-warning nor rapid response mechanisms; they have not arrested and prosecuted perpetrators of violence or offered redress to victims. Until recently, officials have paid little (if any) attention to improving livestock management practices to minimize friction with agrarian communities. State governments' responses overall have been short-sighted; most have failed to encourage community-level dialogue. As a result, both herders and farmers are taking matters into their own hands, further aggravating conflicts (Crisis Group Report, 2017: ii).*

Obviously, governments at all levels have been responding to the expanding herder-farmer conflict through some policies, albeit with some reservations. The federal government has responded through deployment of security to affected communities. They have been mulling on the possibility of establishing cattle ranches, grazing reserves or cattle colonies among other initiatives. State governments have initiated some policies and measures in the same regard. States like Ekiti, Benue and Taraba have introduced anti-open grazing laws. General overview of these policies is in order and suffices here.

### **Federal Government Responses to Farmer-Herder Conflict**

**Creation of Grazing Reserves and routes:** The earliest response by the federal government towards mitigating herder-farmer conflict was by creating grazing reserves in 1965. The Northern Region Grazing Reserves Law of 1965 created corridors for the passage of migrating livestock and 415 grazing reserves throughout the country. The reserves were envisioned to section off large swathes of land to be exclusively used by herders to graze their livestock. . While initially considered a legislative solution, population growth, urbanization, and migration encroached on these designated areas, reducing herders' access and usage of the reserves. Unhelpful either is the effect of climate change which had led to desertification and deforestation thereby threatening the availability of land resources to support grazing in these enclosures. Consequently, herders were often unable to find sufficient pasture and water within the confines of the reserves. Keeping livestock in one place increases the animals' vulnerability to disease and banditry, which incentivized herders to keep their

herds moving outside the boundaries of the reserves. The federal and state governments have been derelict in the upkeep of these reserves to meet these concerns of farmers and herders. Amidst the absence of a concrete response plan to label and enforce the law on transhumance passage by governments at all levels, existing reserves and routes are being distorted (Kwaja and Adelehin, 2018).

Recently, the National Assembly attempted to pass legislation to address conflicts between farmers and herders through the controversial National Grazing Reserve (Establishment) Bill 2016, which ultimately was not passed. This is largely because the Land Use Act of 1978 vests all powers related to the regulation of ownership, alienation, acquisition, administration, and management of Nigerian land with the state governors. This attempt and others by the National Assembly to legislate on grazing reserves were in violation of the Land Use Act of 1978 and perceived as a move to usurp the powers of the governors.

**Establishment of the National Commission for Nomadic Education:** The federal government established the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE) in 1989 through Decree 41. It is presently known as Nomadic Education Act, Cap No. 20 Laws of the Federation. The main goal of the program was to economically and socially integrate nomadic pastoralists into the national life, through the provision of relevant, functional, and mobile basic education and livelihoods skills provision. It was also designed to help the pastoralists modernize their techniques of rearing cattle to maximize their economic potential, including dairy processing and marketing, animal vaccinations, and modern herding techniques. The program on nomadic education currently suffers from dilapidated infrastructure and human resource deficits, primarily due to a lack of adequate funding from the federal government (Alabi, 2015).

**Deployment of Security:** The deployment of security agencies has been a dominant feature of the federal government's response to farmer-herder conflict. The Nigerian Army has recently flagged-off two Battalion Forward Operation Base, FOB, in Birnin- Gwari, with an operation tagged "Idon Raini". The Nigerian Air Force has deployed its Special Forces to the newly-established 23 Quick Response Wing, QRW, in Nguroje, Taraba (Vanguard, 2018). The NAF also has a 1000-man Special Intervention Force deployed to Makurdi to degrade bandits and criminals in Benue and Nasarawa states. NAF has unveiled a new base in Kerang, Plateau State, with the aim of reducing its response time to emergencies. NAF has also deployed drones to flash points. The Federal Government has deployed 3,000 personnel of Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps Special Forces, known as 'Agro-rangers', to protect farms and agricultural investment in the country. "The Police have deployed additional Five Units of Police Mobile Force, Police Special Forces, Police Aerial Surveillance Helicopters and Special Police Joint Intelligence and Investigation Team to Benue State. "The Police have also deployed a surveillance helicopter to Taraba (Vanguard, 2018).

Incidentally, there are concerns that these security measures have not been proactive. Again, here are reports that security agencies who are part of these operations and were sent to protect at-risk farmer and herder communities have committed crimes and human rights violations, such as physical torture, extortion, and other forms of gender-based violence against the communities they were deployed to protect. In fact, the deployment of security agencies has often had the unintended consequence of breeding local resentment and further increasing divides, as many communities

perceive them to be biased with one side. This perceived or actual bias risks alienating the communities and people they are meant to protect (Kwaja and Adelehin, 2018).

**The Federal Government’s Comprehensive Livestock Development Plan:** In 2015, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) formulated what was referred to as a “comprehensive livestock development plan.” The plan was to address lingering conflict between farmers and herders across the country and develop grazing reserves as well as cattle routes, through a review of the existing program. Despite the fact that the Central Bank of Nigeria release the sum of N100 billion (nearly USD \$300 million) to the 36 states for this purpose, no state has been able to construct a ranch, reserve, or address the issue of stock route due to poor commitment to the issue (International Crisis Group, 2018).

**The Great Green Wall Initiative:** The impact of climate change had altered the environment resulting in desertification, deforestation and land aridity particularly in Northern Nigeria. In response to these challenges, the African Union introduced the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) in 2007. The GGWI set out to create an 8,000km (nearly 5,000 miles) of trees along the southern Sahel, accompanied by rural development and ecosystem management initiatives, to combat the encroaching desertification of the Sahara Desert. In 2013, the Nigerian government answered the call by establishing the Great Green Wall Agency (GGWA) to fight desertification, which has been responsible for the migration of herders from the northern part of the country to the Middle Belt region in search of water and pasture. (Kwaja, 2013). The purpose of the GGWA is to create a green shelter-belt (wind-breaking trees), in the front line states of Borno, Katsina, Kebbi, and Zamfara, to protect the northern part of the country against desert encroachment. The GGWA has established orchards and nurseries in northern Nigeria, as well as solar and wind-powered boreholes, but their activities have slowed down due to funding challenges from the federal government (Fulani, 2017).

**The 6-point Plan:** The federal government through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, FMARD, and National Economic Council in 2017 came up with a six point plan to end this conflict. The government’s new plan is tagged, ‘The National Livestock Transformation Plan.’ It is built on six key pillars: economic investment, conflict resolution, law and order, humanitarian relief, information education and strategic communication; and cross-cutting issues. According to the plan, the economic investment pillar would support and strengthen the development of market-driven ranches in seven pilot states for improved livestock productivity through breed (genetic) improvement and pasture production, in addition to efficient land and water productivity. The government also said it would rebuild social capital at the community level to promote mutual trust, confidence building and consolidate the peace process, with regards to the conflict resolution pillar (Vanguard, 2018).

The fourth pillar, humanitarian relief will focus on rebuilding and reconstructing of common facilities, worship places, markets and individual homes that have been destroyed. The fifth pillar will aid information, education and strategic communication on the development of grazing reserves in the frontline states, and mitigate the consequences of these conflicts such as wanton loss of lives, destruction of properties, including schools and facilities.

The ‘cross-cutting’ issues pillar identifies various cross-cutting issues necessary to realise the objectives of the programme, which include monitoring and evaluation and research to contribute

evidence base in programme implementation; as well as gender mainstreaming, the plan showed (Vanguard, 2018). Ten states were identified as frontline states to receive these pilot interventions. The states include: Adamawa, Benue, Ebonyi, Edo, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Oyo, Plateau, Taraba and Zamfara. The plan includes creation of large ranches in each of these states.

**State-level Anti-Open Grazing Legislations and Administrative Initiatives:** The response of state governments across the nation is somewhat different from that of federal government. In a courageous manner, states like Taraba and Benue have enacted anti-open grazing laws. In Benue, the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017, was enacted on May 22, 2017, in response to the lingering conflict between farmers and herders in the state. Implementation of the law began on November 1, 2017. In the wake of the Benue State legislation, other states have considered similar legislation to respond to lingering conflicts between farmers and herders within their borders. For instance, the Taraba State Governor also signed the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Bill 2017 into law on July 24, 2017, while implementation began on January 24, 2018. Others, like Ekiti state in the south west and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Abuja in the centre, have passed laws regulating grazing activities. Ekiti state, on 29 August 2016, passed a law banning grazing or movement of cows at night and stipulating that any herder found with weapons would be charged with terrorism. It followed up by establishing the Ekiti Grazing Enforcement Marshals (EGEM), in October 2016. These initiatives have however, failed to address the challenge in its entirety. In some instances, it had resulted in backlash as a result of opposition of herders to these laws.

Some states have also come up with administrative policy initiatives geared towards ending these conflicts. While states like Anambra, Enugu and Abia chose to set up a Farmers and Herdsmen Conflict Resolution Committee, others like Imo chose to issue identity cards to resident Hausa/Fulani people to avoid infiltration of criminal elements. Ebonyi state had earlier volunteered to provide land to the federal government to support ranching and had also set up security vigilante team across agrarian communities. A more detailed response of states across the federation can be seen in table 3 below:

**Table 3: States Policy and Administrative Initiatives to End Herder-Farmer Conflicts (2014-2017)**

States	Policy/Administrative Initiatives	Intended Outcome	Results/
Anambra	Establishment of security committee comprising security agencies, traditional rulers, town unions and representative of herdsmen led by Saraki Fulani. Payment of Compensations upon assessment of willful damage by both parties	Prevent conflicts by heeding to early warning signs and resolutions of conflicts using traditional rulers	Relative peace and lessened Frequency of attacks
Abia	Revival and deployment of local vigilante outfit popularly known as the Bakassi Boys to rural communities in May, 2016	To provide security to Rural farmers	Relative peace. violent conflicts still occur
Imo	Registration of Hausa/Fulani residents to actually identify genuine herdsmen	To Prevent infiltration of murderous herdsmen	Very little was achieved. Cases of destruction of farmlands still occur

Enugu	Establishment of security committee and proactive engagement of MACBAN	To prevent and Protect Farmers and herders	Calm after the Nimbo-Ukpabi attack in 2016
Ekiti	Full operation of anti-open grazing law since 2016	To secure farmers against herdsmen attack	Calm. No reported case of conflict since then
Edo	Strengthening security in agrarian communities	To tighten security and prevent willful damages of crops and killings	Marauding attacks still persist
Delta	Establishment of forum of stakeholders	To ensure that peace prevails in all rural communities	Very little was achieved. Cases of destruction of farmlands still occur
Bayelsa	Establishment of farmland protection policy. designated farms were protected and NO GRAZING sign post put at the fence	To secure farms as Priority	Relative peace Achieved
Cross-River	Deployment of security to attack prone localities. setting up a 3,000-member "Homeland Security Service". Local officials said the members would not carry firearms, but carry out activities such as providing intelligence on herders' movements and activities	To forestall further conflicts after herdsmen Attacks in Eniong, Abatim in Odukpani LGA	Clashes still occur Particularly in the Same Odukpani LGA
Benue	Full operation of anti-open grazing law since May 22, 2017. Established ranches as alternative	To prevent further Bloodshed after Several attacks in Agatu and virtually all the rural localities	Increased conflicts attributed to the resistance of herdsmen to the law. Several communities are under siege
Plateau	No anti-open grazing law. Continued Engagement of relevant stakeholders in place	Maintain peace	Peace seems elusive as herdsmen attacks have not abated
Adamawa	Setting up of judicial panel of enquiries to look into the causes of the conflicts. Interface of the government with traditional rulers is strong	Crime detection, prevention and control	Conflicts have not Abated
Taraba	Passage of anti-open grazing law by the state Assembly in 2017. Signed into law but have not become operational	To achieve peace after several violent clashes in various parts of the state.	Clashes and conflicts have continued unabated

**Source:** *Compiled by the authors with the aid of information from Vanguard Newspaper publication titled: "herdsmen on rampage as government continue to delay". June 20, 2017*

Table 3 reveals some administrative initiatives aimed at curtailing herder-farmer conflicts across the nation. Apart from Ekiti State that first took the initiative to ban open grazing, other states have witnessed continued skirmishes. Among the states that have taken decisive legal instrument to curtail these conflicts are Ekiti, Benue and Taraba. Others have no clear-cut policy against open grazing but pockets of initiatives that revolve around formation of stakeholders committee. While these initiatives represent indication of willingness to engage security agencies, traditional institutions with the government, they have not been able to resolve effectively this problem. The most intriguing is the case of Benue state. The enforcement of anti-open grazing law has rather increased incidences of these conflicts. This is being attributed to firm resistance of herders to the new law. Herders, who consider these regulations restrictive, often fail to comply and rather resort to violence to register their disapproval.

What is rather worrisome is the fact that the leadership of Miyatti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) who use to issue inflammatory remarks each time this conflict occurs have not been arrested and prosecuted to serve as deterrent. This body have been defending the herdsmen frontally and have shown cause to be at the forefront in ensuring that anti-open grazing laws in Benue and Taraba fail. This questions the neutrality of the state and its security agents. The deployment of security agencies are done retroactively as against proactively. Even in some instances, at-risk farming communities are left with little protection despite early warning signals as was the case in *Nimbo-Ukpabi* 2016 attack, Agatu attack in 2016 and many others. The complacency of the federal government appear to have been confirmed by its inability to manage these conflicts with requisite policy instruments and implement same with the urgency it deserves. The consequence is the continued violent clashes between herder and farmers in various parts of the country with attendant security implications.

### **Conclusion**

Farmer-herder conflicts have been one of the most nagging national security challenges in contemporary Nigeria. The phenomenon has over the years degenerated, defying all remedies aimed at mitigating it. The response of federal government towards resolving the herdsmen-farmers conflicts have been anything but weak, feeble and complacent. Hence, in apparent trend of diffidence and escalation, the conflict has intensified and had also become more widespread, frequent and utterly destructive. The deployment of security agencies to at-risk communities is usually belated in total neglect of early warning signals. Administrative-cum-policy measures so far being considered have not been operational in spite of the urgent need for implementation. While the efforts of the states that have anti-open grazing laws in place are commendable, there is need to have a holistic policy that will check this conflicts in all the states of the federation. This can only be achieved by the federal government with the support of other component units and in collaboration with NGOs and faith-based organizations. Establishment of ranches to be driven by the private sector while government provide enabling environment for the business to thrive is the key towards resolving this conflict permanently. This could be achieved through proper civic engagements and advocacy and not by executive fiat.

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