

## Herders-Farmers Conflict and the Search for Peace in Benue State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Herders-farmers conflict has become a constant and increasing occurrence over the past decades, making it a major threat to orderliness and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. In Northern Nigeria where the conflict has been dominant, Benue State remains one of the most hard-hit where bloody clashes between Fulani armed herdsman and farmers over grazing lands have led to the killing of people and razing down of houses as well as food storage facilities. Therefore, this study investigates the causes, effects, and government's role in addressing the farmers-herdsmen conflict and identified gaps in government's responses to the crisis in Benue State, Nigeria. Relying on primary and secondary data, the study found that, land dispute over grazing right and farming, climate change which obstructed grazing routes as well as changes in livestock and cropping systems, were among the causes of herders-farmers conflict in Benue State. The study also revealed the effects of herders-farmers conflict, which include increasing loss of lives and property, displacement of persons, food insecurity and high cost of food. Thus, the study advocates the need for the government to address issues of land disputes in the state by initiating peace building efforts, ensures pro-active response by improving security intelligence gathering techniques, just like the need for bottom-up approach, which will include involvement of local and traditional leaders in the area.*

**Keywords:** Fulani Herdsmen, Herders-farmers conflict, Insecurity, Peacebuilding, Benue State

### 1.0 Introduction

Herder-farmer conflict which is based on shortage of grazing and farming resources have increased, spreading throughout sub-Saharan Africa<sup>1</sup>. Nigeria is however the most affected nation of the menace, particularly in northern and some southern parts of the country<sup>2</sup>. These conflicts have now become so intimidating on the country's national unity, such that the previous peaceful relationship between farmers and herders across various parts of Nigeria is degenerating to a carnage level, leading to loss of lives and properties<sup>3</sup>. Most worrisome in the present development is the pillaging, raping, killing, and kidnapping by the herdsman. Currently, on a daily basis, reports are published by national dailies of how armed herdsman strategically attack several communities and houses, with sophisticated assault guns-AK-47<sup>4</sup>.

Moreover, evidence suggests that most of the very violent conflicts triggered by Fulani Herdsmen occurred in the middle-belt of Nigeria in general and Plateau, Benue, and Taraba

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<sup>1</sup> Okolie, A. C., & Atelhe, G. A. (2014). Nomads against natives: A political ecology of herder/farmer conflicts in Nasarawa state, Nigeria. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 4(2), 76-88

<sup>2</sup> Iwu, H. (2015). *Traditional Mechanism in Conflict Resolution in Igboland, Nigeria*, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing.

<sup>3</sup> Aliyu, M. K., Ikedinma, H. A., & Akinwande, A. E. Assessment of the Effect of Farmers-Herdsman Conflicts on National Integration in Nigeria. 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Buari, J. (2017). Fulani Herdsmen kill scores in attack on Taraba Villages, accessed in <https://www.naija.ng/795995-fulani-herdsmen-kill-44-taraba-buharis-government-finally-reacts-html>. 16/3/2018.

States in particular<sup>5</sup>. In the case of Benue State there have been highly devastating conflicts that have claimed so many lives and properties engendered by Fulani Herdsmen in communities of local government areas such as Agatu, Guma, Gwer West, Makurdi, Kwande, Katsina-Ala and Loggo<sup>6</sup>. As a matter of fact, the communal conflicts orchestrated by Fulani herdsmen in Benue State had claimed the lives of more than 5000 victims in the first half of 2018 (Nte, 2016). Consequently, considering the unending threats to peaceful living and continual resultant deaths owing to the conflicts it is germane that this study should be carried out in order to investigate the causes, their tailgating effects, and the roles of Nigerian government in addressing the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Benue State, Nigeria. The research is equally important because it will activate subsequent research on herder-farmer conflict in other parts of the country to ensure the needful resolution, and a consequent peaceful living in the nation.

### 2.1 Origin of the Fulani Ethnic Group

The Fulani in Nigeria are a part of the Peul, or Fula, ethnic group, which has been in existence for thousands of years (Iro, 1994). Accordingly, the Fulani are more than 20 million in Africa today, while the largest community in the tribe is located in Nigeria, thus constituting one of the nation's largest ethnic groups (Abass, 2012). The Fula people are almost solely Muslim, having converted to Islam from their traditional belief system in the 1500s. According to Anter<sup>7</sup>, the Fulani are traditionally a nomadic, pastoralist, tracking people, herding cattle, goats and sheep across the vast dry hinterlands of their domain, separating them from the local agricultural population. Nevertheless, their origin is a matter of contention; while some scholars claim that they originated from Judaeo-Syrian ancestry, some are of the opinion that they are of North African descent. However, most scholars agree that the group may have migrated from the Middle East through North Africa and settled in the Central and West Africa from Tukulor Empire in today's Senegal region. Additionally, they are believed to be the largest semi-nomadic group in the world. Thus, in Nigeria, most of them still operate semi-nomadic lifestyle, while others have embraced modernity and moved to the cities. Unlike the more integrated city dwellers, the nomadic groups spend most of their lives in the bush and are the ones largely involved in the herders-farmers conflict. These herders usually herd the animals across vast areas, leading to frequent clashes with farming communities.

### 2.2 Herders-Farmers Conflict

Herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria has been coined to mean ethnic and religious clashes in relation to land grazing resources among Fulani herders who are predominantly Muslim and non-Fulani farmers who are mostly Christians. However, before the present farmers-herders conflict assumed a dangerous dimension, the relationship between them had been a cordial and symbiotic one<sup>8</sup>. Farmers-herders conflicts arose from increase competition over land use because of the increase in population of both the farmers and the herders. Other causes of the conflict include invasion of farmlands by cattle; assault on female farmers by herders; blockage of stock routes and water points; burning of rangelands; expansion of farming on pastures; cattle theft; change in climatic condition leading to drought and dessert encroachment;

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<sup>5</sup> Obiajuru, N. (2016). Fulani herdsmen kidnap female NYSC member in Abuja, demand N15m ransom. Retrieved from: <https://www.naij.com/1079202-fulani-herdsmen-kidnap-female-nysc-member-abuja-demand-n15m-ransom.html>

<sup>6</sup> Durojaiye R. (2014). Challenge of Fulani Herdsmen, Editorial, Daily Independence, July 8, pp 15-16.

<sup>7</sup> Anter, T. Who are the people and their Origin? 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.modernghane.com/news/349849/who-are-the-fulani-people-their-origins.html>. (Accessed June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Nzeh, E. The effects of migration by nomadic farmers in the livelihoods of rural crop farmers in Enugu state, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Science Frontier Research: D Agriculture and Veterinary*. 2015, 21-28.

improvement in technology that brought about irrigation; the need to cultivate and produce more of the cash crops newly introduced. It should be noted that conflicts between farmers and herdsmen are being reinforced by the herdsmen's habit of allowing cattle to veer into the farmers' farm to eat their plants and drop their dungs either on the farm or on the pedestal route, and farmers' habit of extending the boundary of their farms to livestock route<sup>9</sup>.

### **2.3 Area of Study**

Benue State is one of the North Central states in Nigeria with a population of about 4,253,641, as recorded in 2006 census. The state was created on the 3rd of February, 1976 out of the defunct Benue-Plateau as an administrative unit. Presently, the state has twenty-three Local Government Areas. The state borders Nasarawa State to the North; Taraba State to the East; Kogi State to the West; Enugu State to the South-West; Ebonyi and Cross-Rivers States to the South. Benue State equally has an international border with Cameroon to the South-East. It is inhabited predominantly by the Tiv, Idoma, Igede and Etulo peoples, while its capital is Makurdi. Benue is a rich agricultural region; hence it is referred to as the food basket of the nation. Despite agricultural endowment in terms of arable land and favorable weather condition for farming and animal husbandry, the state has suffered much crisis which has consequently impacted much on food insecurity, prominent among which is the herders-farmers conflict.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a mixed method to source for data, using primary and secondary sources which includes encyclopaedia, non-published works, and journals. Primary data is generated in Gboko and Makurdi area of Benue State, this was achieved via qualitative interviews that gave an in-depth narrative from those directly affected. The secondary source of data used for this research consisted of academic publications, research papers, newspaper articles and policy documents. In consideration of the objectives of the study, the qualitative method is adopted in order to present and intensive description of the causes, their effects, and the roles of Nigerian government in addressing the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Benue State, Nigeria.

### **4.0. Discussion of Findings**

#### **4.1. Causes of Herders-Farmers Conflicts in Benue State**

The farmers-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria has spread and escalated over the past decade and today it is causing a lot of threat to national survival. Thousands of people have been killed, communities have been destroyed and so many farmers and pastoralists have lost their lives and property as a result of the incessant killings and destructions engendered by the conflicts.

Besides, farmers-herdsmen conflict is now affecting national cohesion.

Conflicts between cattle herders and farmers have existed since the beginning of agriculture and keep increasing in intensity and frequency because of economic, environmental and other factors. For example, increases in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of the cattle, compelled the cattle herders to seek for more pastures beyond their limited range. Since the 1980s therefore, there has been a marked expansion of cultivation of the *fadama* (riverine and valley-bottom) areas. This means that both the farmers and cattle herders have engaged in fierce struggles for access to such valuable lands which, more often than not, has resulted in increased conflicts and violence<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Moritz, M., Scholte P., & Kari S. The demise of the nomadic contract: arrangements and rangelands under pressure in the far north of Cameroon. *Nomadic Peoples*. 2002, 6(1); 124-143(20). Doi: <https://doi.org/10.3167/082279402782311013>.

<sup>10</sup> Blench, R. & Dendo M. The Transformation of Conflict between Pastoralists and Cultivators in Nigeria. 2003. *Paper in press for a special issue of the Journal Africa*, Moritz, M. (ed.), Cambridge, September 13, 2004.

Likewise, according to De Haan<sup>11</sup>, clashes between cattle herders and crop farmers have been a major cause of increasing violence and general insecurity in Nigeria. In most of these encounters, citizens are regularly killed; the destruction or loss of property leaves an already endangered populace even poorer. Per se, the regular occurrence and scale of these communal conflicts have become alarming and need urgent attention. In Nigeria, the most frequent causes of conflicts between the nomadic cattle herders and sedentary farmers are illegal invasion of farms and destruction of crops by cattle, particularly during the planting season and immediately after the harvesting period. Even though it is patent that the causes of farmers-herdsmen conflicts are often not far-fetched, yet there appears to be no consensus between both groups as to the causes of their mutual conflict. However, according to De Haan<sup>12</sup> the destruction of crops by cattle and other property by the cattle herders themselves are the main direct causes of conflicts cited by the farmers, whereas the cattle herders submit that the burning of rangelands and fadama and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are the primary reasons. The researcher equally points out that the increasing rate of cattle theft constitutes another major reason for the conflicts between the duo, which is often accompanied by violence.

Similarly, Ingawa *et al*<sup>13</sup> reports that three key underlying causes of farmers-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria. The researchers contend that the changing of resource access rights, whereby traditional access rights to communal grazing and water resources are being obstructed by the individual tenure of arable farmers is a crucial factor responsible for the conflict. The authors argue further that the changing is particularly severe on the traditional trek routes, which became favorite cropping sites because of their better soil fertility resulting from the concentration of animal manure from the trekking herds in these areas. Secondly, the researchers opine that the inadequacy of grazing resources resulting from increasing crop cultivation and increasing commercialization of the crop-residues, and the poor management of the existing grazing reserves have resulted in a significant reduction in available livestock feed resources, in particular in the northern states.

The authors further avow that the third reason for the conflicts can be attributed to the decline in internal discipline and social cohesion, as the adherence to the traditional rules regarding grazing periods, and the authority of the traditional rulers is broken down. Hoffmann *et al*<sup>14</sup> also opine that the relationship between farmers and nomadic Fulani started degenerating when the Hausa farmers began to raise animals, including cattle. The farmers would take crop residues to their animals, and as a consequence, forage became scarce for herders in the dry season. Probably, out of frustration, the settled herders invited the nomadic ones to carry-out group herding on farmers field even while crop were yet to be harvested. When the farmers attempted to challenge them, violence erupted. This shows that ethnicity is also a cardinal instigator of nomads-farmers conflicts. Government policies can also be seen as a cause of nomads/farmers conflicts. For example, Hoffman *et al*<sup>15</sup> further explain that the conflicts do occur as the size of the existing reserve shrinks due to encroachment and government approved

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<sup>11</sup> De Haan, C. Nigeria Second Fadama Development Project (SFDP). Project Preparation Mission Report, Livestock Component, World Bank. 2002, pp1-13.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid (n 11)

<sup>13</sup> Ingawa, S. A., Maina J A & Ega, L. A. 'Farmer-Pastoralist Conflict: the way forward' Paper presented at the meeting of National Agricultural Land Use and Management Policy Evaluation Committee 28-30 September Premier Hotel, Ibadan. 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Hoffman, I., Umar, B. F. and Tukur, H.M. (Eds.) Crisis and Cooperation over Control and Management of Zamfara Reserve, Nigeria. In: Gefu, J.O. Clement, B.I.A. and Maisamari, B. *the Future of Transhumance Pastoralism in West and Central Africa: strategies, dynamics, conflicts and interventions*. Shika-Zaria: National Animal Production Research Institute. 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid (n 14).

expansion of farmlands. This leads to the conversion of water points and stock routes into farmlands.

Additionally, Yahaya<sup>16</sup> notes that the two groups accuse each other of the cause of the conflict. For instance, farmers accuse nomads of deliberately destroying farm products, and as such this is the immediate cause of the violent conflicts between the two groups. On the other hand, the nomads claim that the cultivators excessively expand their farms beyond areas demarcated for animal grazing, and that the dry season cropping has claimed most of the uplands and lowlands (Fadama) allocated to cattle herders for grazing. Cattle routes and water points have also been tampered with by the farmers. For their survival, therefore, the cattle herders resort to violence.

Another cause of the conflicts is lack of sensitization of people to apply the land use Act of 1978. Nationalization policy states that the land in Nigeria shall be available to all Nigerians in any state, local government, or district of their choices for residential, agricultural, grazing, commercial or industrial purposes, irrespective of their states of origin, ethnic background, religious and political affiliation<sup>17</sup>. Relatedly, Adamu<sup>18</sup> also observes that colonial policies in Katsina State has led to the seizure of vast tracts and farming lands, which has consequently turned the lands into native authority forest reserve. The immediate impact of this was that it made the herders and farmers to compete over land that had shrunk as a result of colonial forest policy. Subsequently, the rate of the competition resulted in conflict between the groups.

Negligence on the part of both groups is also a notable contribution to the conflicts. For instance, Yahaya<sup>19</sup> avers that the cattle herders often left a large number of cattle in the care of children who are either ignorant of the consequences, or do not care in the event of destruction of farm produce. Equally important is the fact that some farmers leave their harvested crops on their farm unprotected, while others who have poor yield intentionally leave their crops on the farm unharvested for cattle to graze, so that they could claim heavy compensation.

Subsequently, the most prevailing causes of the crisis between the crop farmers and pastoralist are damaging of crops and blockage of water points, and both believe that informal authority should be used in resolving conflicts. Furthermore, variables such as age, gender, marital status, religion, education and year of residence are notably related to causes of conflict between the crop and pastoral farmers.

### **Effects of Herdsmen-Famers Conflict on Food Production in Nigeria**

Nigeria is under a severe internal and security threat, which has political, economic and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions has critically affected the stability of the nation and can be traced to many factors in which the Fulani-herdsmen appears to be a major factor. Most worrisome in the present development is the pillaging, raping, killing and kidnapping by the Fulani herdsmen. Farmers can no longer farm peacefully because of Fulani herdsmen. These Fulani herdsmen and farmers' clash has pitched Christians and Muslims against each other. Recent studies conducted by Okereke<sup>20</sup> have shown that, serious conflicts

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<sup>16</sup> Yahaya, Y. S. Perspectives on Nomadic/Farmers Conflicts. A paper presented at Zamfara State College of Education, Zamfara state, Nigeria. 2008, September 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Abubakar, M. B. Sociological Assessment of Nomadic Pastoralist and Sedentary Farmers Conflicts in Katina State. An unpublished M.Sc. Thesis submitted to Sociology Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Adamu, M. M Colonial Origins of Post-colonial Conflicts between Cattle Rearers and farmers in Katsina State. In Historical perspective in Nigeria's post-colonial conflicts. 2007/

<sup>19</sup> Ibid (n 17)

<sup>20</sup> Okereke, D. The remote immediate causes of crimes, terrorism and instability in Nigeria and solution. 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.nairand.com/1027585/remote-immediatecauses-crimes> on July 19th, 2020.

erupt between Fulani herdsmen and farmers leading to loss of lives, valuable properties and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands thereby posing serious threat to food security since farmers for fear of attack could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce.

In recent times, the killings recorded as a result of Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash have rampaged most communities, and a resultant displacement of their farmlands, resulting into loss of their major source of livelihood. Notably, the Fulani herdsmen have always had their ways, thereby leaving the farmers at their mercy. This recent wave of violence in Nigeria as observed by Kasarachi<sup>21</sup> has disrupted socioeconomic, religious and educational activities, as well as eventuates in political instability, in addition to threatening the national unity in Nigeria. These extra judiciary killings have forced thousands of people to abandon their homes and farmlands for safety. Okereke<sup>22</sup> asserts that this unfolding violence have become so alarming that there is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria is at a crossroad and gradually drifting to a conflict society. Equally begging for answers are the social issues of the rape of women, robbery and kidnapping with ultimate intent for ransom.

In Nigeria, most of its population resides in rural areas. The production of crops and rearing of livestock are the main economic activities of the people<sup>23</sup>. Communal conflict is correlated to food security and, under most circumstances, reduce production from cash crops and livestock. Thus, this reduction in production has serious implication on food security, for it has the capacity to reduce the coping capacity of those depending on food resources for their livelihood. Correspondingly, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization,<sup>24</sup> communal violence costs Nigeria over \$12 billion worth of agricultural production during the last third of the 20th century, given the importance of agricultural livelihood to overall economic wellbeing, especially in conflict prone areas of Nigeria. Not only has communal conflicts drastically limited the production of food, it has the propensity to also deny people access to food and availability of food supply.

The Fulani indisputably represent a significant component of the Nigerian economy. They constitute the major breeders of cattle, the main source of meat consumed by Nigerians. The Fulani own over 90% of the nation's livestock population which accounts for one third of agricultural GDP and 3.2% of the nation's GDP<sup>25</sup>. Furthermore, the contribution of the Fulani to the local food chain and national food security cannot be overstressed.

#### **4.2. Effects of the Fulani Herdsmen-Farmers Clashes in Benue State**

It is an unquestionable fact that the activities of the Fulani herdsmen against the farmers have resulted in a huge economic setback in Nigeria today. The Fulani's frequent attacks on the farmers have led to the creation of an artificial scarcity of goods and services and, consequently, to inflation and devaluation of the naira. For instance, the Zaki-biam Yam Market attack in Benue State that happened on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017, resulted in the deaths of over 50 people, and out of fear the traders refused to come back to the market for a long time. This created a man-made scarcity, which ordinarily would have been avoided if the Fulani herdsmen's attack on the farmers and villagers had not happened.

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<sup>21</sup> Kesarachi, N. P. Institutionalizing peace education for sustainable development in public secondary schools in Delta State. *Niger Delta Journal of Education*. 2016, 8(1), 194-196.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid (n 21)

<sup>23</sup> World Food Programme Nutrition in Emergencies; WFP Experience and Challenges: Policy Issues Agenda Item 5, Rome: World Food Programme. 2004.

<sup>24</sup> International Food and Agricultural Organization Rome Declaration and World Food Security plan of Action, Rome: Food and Agricultural Organization. 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Messer E, Cohen M.J. Breaking the links between Conflict and Hunger in Africa, Washington DC: International Food Policy Research Institute. 2004

Inflation, simply put, is a persistent increase in the prices of goods and services over a period of time. Anyanwuocha<sup>26</sup> defines it as a persistent rise in the general price level. The artificial scarcity created by the frequent attacks of the herdsmen on citizens as stated earlier has led to inflation, which in turn has resulted into devaluation of the naira. Hence, demand is greater than supply. The available money cannot buy as much quantity as it could before.

There is a decrease in output per capita because of restrictions on people's movements as a result of curfews. The daily output in goods and services reduced immensely people can no longer go to their farms, shops and business centers freely as they used to, which makes the overall output of the people decrease because of the restrictions placed on the community. Moreover, the continual attacks by the Fulani herdsmen frighten away foreigners who have come to Nigeria to do business. In the course of the attacks, lives and property, public companies, film-producing houses, and industries are destroyed. When potential investors see these things, they are not encouraged to do businesses in these areas, it is not surprising then that most prefer to invest in areas like Lagos or opt for other African countries.

The clashes between the herdsmen and farmers also resulted in the creation of refugees, as well as an increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). This is because whenever there is a serious attack on the citizens, houses and often a whole village is set ablaze, rendering more than half of its people homeless. Consequently, some of them who are not well-to-do cannot easily find themselves a home, therefore, they are quartered in public buildings as IDPs. According to an interviewee

“The crisis creates refugees and large numbers of people are displaced. There are then taken to a temporary location where shelter, food, health care and education is made available, popularly known as IDP camps. Most of these camps are public buildings like schools and others are tents constructed by Philanthropist. Government is trying but they should try harder because most people would not get the food and essential needs provided for them by the government or some wealthy individuals because of their large population” – Mr. Aondonkaa Solomon.

#### **4.3. Government's Role in Addressing the Farmers-Herdsmen Conflict in Benue State**

The government at the various levels has taken steps in order to put an end to the farmers-herdsmen crisis in Nigeria. The federal and the state governments have worked unilaterally and in collaboration by coming up with different statements, policies and actions to tackle the menace. For instance, the federal government instituted committees to deliberate on issues regarding the conflict and to come up with solutions, in addition to deploying military troops to locations where conflict has occurred and also holding meetings with representatives of the conflicting parties in order to come up with a solution to the crisis. An example of a committee formed to deliberate on issues regarding the conflict is The Nigerian Working Group on Peace Building and Governance. The group which is a coalition of public policy experts suggested ways of addressing the lingering violence in Nigeria's livestock farming business in a recent report released on February 7, 2019. The group gave a number of recommendations which include environmental and climate smart pastoralism, expansion of grazing reserves, the harmonization of relevant laws and policies that governs grazing reserves, digital tracking of cattle and the construction of positive narratives. Another policy rolled out by federal government is the National Livestock Transformation Plan that it claims would permanently solve the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria. The government's plan is built on six key pillars: economic investment, conflict resolution, law and order, humanitarian relief, informative education and strategic communication, and cross-cutting issues.

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<sup>26</sup> Anyanwuocha, R.A.I., Fundamentals of economics for senior secondary schools, Africana-Feb Publishers Limited, Onitsha. 1996.

States where the clashes between herders and farmers have been most prominent include Benue, Ekiti, Taraba, Plateau, Maiduguri, Katsina and Kwara States, others are Abia, Imo, Kaduna, Bayelsa, Oyo and Anambra. These states have taken various measures to curb the spread and effect of the farmers and herders' conflict in their communities. Some states have enacted laws or are processing bills to prevent open grazing on their territory. Foremost amongst these states is Ekiti; the state government introduced the "Prohibition of Cattle and Other Ruminants Grazing in Ekiti" law in 2016. Taraba State equally introduced the "Anti-Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment bill 2017" in 2017. Edo State also introduced "A Bill for a Law to Establish the Edo State Control of Nomadic Cattle Rearing/Grazing Law and for Other Purposes". Lastly, Benue State, the study area introduced a law captioned: "A Law to Prohibit Open Rearing and Grazing of Livestock and Provide for the Establishment of Ranches and Livestock Administration, Regulation and Control and for Other Matters Connected Therewith" in 2017. These laws and bills were introduced and passed to serve as a form of deterrent to herders who allow their herds to graze indiscriminately into farmlands.

However, a state like Kogi decided not to enact any form of law that would restrict grazing of herders in the state. According to the governor, Kogi is home to herdsman and called on the people to integrate herdsman in traditional councils in the State and local Government levels of government for effective decision making. Also, where cases of clashes have been reported, state governments have been reported to send police officers to such locations in order to restore law and order.

#### **4.4. Identified Gaps in Government's Responses to the Crisis**

The various conflict management strategies employed by the government as regards the farmers-herdsman crisis in Nigeria can be said to be reactionary strategies. In cases of clashes reported by the media, it is glaring that the government at various levels only send security agents to affected communities after the clash had happened. The government in addressing the farmers-herdsman conflict in Nigeria has failed to come up with effective preventive measures. Effective proactive measures are required in order to effectively curb the crisis and prevent further cases of clashes between farmers and herdsman across the country.

Although several policies and plans have been drawn out to tackle the farmers-herdsman crisis in Nigeria, all of these are still on paper. There has been no evidence as regards the implementation of these plans and programmes. The lack of implementation or effective implementation of these plans is one of the major reasons why the farmers-herdsman crisis in Nigeria still persists with regular reports of killings and destruction of properties. The farmers-herdsman crisis in Nigeria is one that should be taken seriously by the government as it has negative impact on the socio-economic and political sphere of the nation. Hence, the government should not just set up committees and draw up policies and plans; they should rather make further efforts to make sure that these plans are actually carried out.

Another gap in government strategies regarding the farmers-herdsman crisis in Nigeria is that the government failed to factor in the differences in religion propagated by both conflicting parties while drawing up their plans and policies for addressing the conflict. While the Fulani herdsman are predominantly Muslims, the farmers are predominantly Christians, hence there is a need to include the promotion of religious tolerance in drawing up an effective strategy for the management of the farmers-herdsman crisis in Nigeria.

Although there have been formations of various committees and organization of conferences to discuss how the farmers-herdsman conflict can be brought to an end but the committees and organizers and attendees of the conferences have not been able to establish an effective mechanism for settling disputes between farmers and herdsman at the grassroots. Even though the conferences usually consist of top government officials and leaders of the organizations of both farmers and herdsman, yet no effort has been made by the participants to



actually organize meetings among the members of the affected communities to seek a way out of the conflict.

The aforementioned gaps in government management strategies are some of the reasons the crisis is still continuing despite its efforts to exterminate the crisis. Conclusively, Fulani herdsmen and farmer's violent conflicts have created humanitarian toll across many communities in Nigeria. Though Farmers have occasionally launched attacks or reprisal attacks against the Fulani herdsmen, yet they have been the ones bearing the brunt of the conflicts. They count more losses than the herdsmen. However, the research concludes that herdsmen-farmers conflict is prevalent in Nigeria; its occurrence is so regular that it occurs monthly oftentimes, while at least two Nigerians die daily owing to the conflict. The causes of the conflict have been attributed to revenge or reprisal attacks, disputes over destruction of farmlands and crops, grazing rights dispute, decades long history of violence competition for land resource, reactions to Anti-Grazing law in Benue State, Cattle rustling, and the violent habit of the herdsmen. The socio-economic effects of the conflict are loss of human lives, displacement of persons, destruction of houses, destruction of farmlands and crops, distrust, unemployment, threat to national security, and threat to food security in Nigeria. However, despite all these gory impacts government and security institutions are yet to be responsive in solving the dangerous imbroglio, which in turn precipitated break down of law and order, as many Nigerians are now taking law into their hands by defending themselves and protecting their properties against perceived enemies.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The findings from the study revealed that factors that contributed to the farmers-herdsmen crisis can be attributed to the pre-actions and reactions of both herdsmen and farmers. Findings revealed that climate change, encroachment on areas of land reserved for grazing by farmers and consequent encroachment on farms by breeders, the proliferation of fire arms and crime in rural areas and corrupt practices engaged by traditional leaders are the determining factors for the crisis.

The findings further revealed that although government have employed various management strategies in an attempt to curb the conflict, but all have been to no avail as cases of clashes are still reported on a regular basis with no end in sight. The gaps found in the government strategies have been outlined which include the absence of preventive measures as regards the conflict, non-implementation of policies, inadequate promotion of religious tolerance and the absence of grassroots outreach that would precisely assist in ascertaining not only the manifest causes but also the underlying ones of the conflicts, timely and appropriate solutions and their implementations.

The study concludes that the management structures, processes and strategies of government in addressing the farmers-herdsmen crisis are inadequate to the extent that they are more reactionary than preventive, besides have implementation lapses and are made difficult by political exclusion. Despite government's efforts towards addressing the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Nigeria, more needs to be done in order to reduce if not eradicate the continuous conflict between the farmers and the herdsmen. The research puts forward the following recommendations and believe that if adopted, the crisis between the farmers and herdsmen will reduce drastically if not eradicated.

Herdsmen should be properly educated or re-oriented on the sanctity of human lives and taught how to use better channels of communication to convey their grievances than resorting to violence. Government at all levels should handle conflict with their utmost capacity thereby enacting laws that will serve as deterrent to cattle herdsmen in order to reduce insecurity and the spate of conflict and mass slaughter.

Those factors that cause or escalate conflicts must be seriously avoided and if it occurs should be entrusted into the hands of traditional rulers of the community. Therefore, they

should be involved in finding solutions to the conflict. There is a need for the government in the establishment of conflict management mechanism to incorporate the local, state and federal government levels, including occupational unions, traditional and local leaders. The government should organize forums, groups or associations aimed at promoting peace among farmers and herdsman. This should be formed in locations of the crisis. Both state and federal governments should create enabling environment for compensating the victims of the crisis. Any form of aggression as a result of past issue(s) should be discouraged and violators should be prosecuted. All these will nip in the bud farmers-herdsman crisis

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