



Research Article

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDERS, CAUSES OF CONFLICT AMONG FARMERS AND CATTLE RUSTLERS IN BODINGA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF SOKOTO STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the relationship between farmers and herders, causes of conflict among farmers and cattle rustlers in Bodinga Local Government Area of Sokoto State Nigeria. Also the study determined the prevalence of conflict among cattle rustlers and farmers in Bodinga local government area, and divulged the consequences of conflict between cattle rustlers and farmers in Bodinga local government area using a sample size of 300 respondents drawn using Raosoft sample size calculator. This is done with the margin of error of 5% and 95% degree of confidence. Similarly, a stratified sampling methods applied. Hence questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents and the data were analyzed using tables, frequencies and percentages in an SPSS. Also chi-square was used to test the hypothesis. The study found that persistent economic hardship (53.0%) is the main cause conflict among cattle rustlers and farmers in Bodinga Local government; cattle rustlers conflict prevails in Bodinga Local Government Area (also 73.3% responded yes, that cattle rustlers are always violent). Likewise, the study found that hardship in supply/delivery of basic amenities (45.0%) is a consequence of conflict between the cattle rustlers and farmers in Bodinga local government area. Thus, resultantly, the study recommends among others that government should extensively bring empowerment programs that will create employment for the people in Bodinga Local government area as the causes of the conflict is as a result of persistence economic hardship. Also the community should set up a vigilante groups that will monitor people moving in and out of the local government.

KEYWORDS

Farmers , Conflict , Relationship , Cattle rustler , Between , Courses , Herder.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, cattle rustling have evolved in to a pattern of organized crime with immense criminal sophistication and efficiency. Hence, contemporary cattle rustlers operate with modern weaponry and their operations are marked by trans-locational and trans-national syndication (Alemika, 2013). This clearly underscores cattle rustling as a typical and prominent instance of ‘underworld franchise’ in contemporary societies (Okoli at el., 2014). The phenomenon of cattle rustling refers to a violent activity by pastoral communities stealing livestock from each other. The main resource being livestock and ownership depends on one’s strength to protect what one has and to increase the number by constantly invading other communities using all available means to own the animals. The process involves serious fighting resulting to loss of human life and property. Social order is also affected because of lack of insecurity (Clinard and Meier, 1995). Cattle rustling have been defined to mean, the stealing or planning, organizing, attempting, aiding or supporting the stealing of livestock by any person from any country or community where the theft is accompanied by dangerous weapons and or violence. It is a practice of stealing livestock for either economic or social gain.

According to (Benke, 2008) livestock is a fundamental form of pastoral capital, besides functioning as a means of production, storage, transport and transfer of food and wealth. Natural resources such as pastures, water, natural vegetation and livestock are the key drivers of pastoralist economy. This is where these communities derive their livelihood It has been observed that cattle rustling in Bodinga local government of Sokoto state create the conditions for economic criminality; the unpredictability of the criminal groups involved in rustling of cattle increased

in criminality and deaths; distortion in the source of income and livelihood of communities; and the existence of market for rustled cattle's. It is in this view that the researcher intends to study the socio cultural causes of conflict among farmers and cattle rustling in Bodinga Local Government area

CONFLICT: It is an existing state of disagreement or hostility between farmers and cattle rustlers of either, Bodinga people or those coming on their way rearing animals. Refers to the cultivation of land among people of Butunku or out off.

CATTLE RUSTLING: Refers to a violent activity by pastoral communities stealing livestock from each other.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC: Refers to a combination of sociological and economic factors of the subjects of the study.

Herder–farmer conflicts in Nigeria are a series of disputes over arable land resources across Nigeria between mostly Muslim Fulani herders and mostly Christian non-Fulani farmers. They have been especially prominent in the Middle Belt (North Central) since the return of democracy in 1999. More recently, it has deteriorated into attacks on farmers by Fulani herdsmen.

Nomadic conflict also called farmer–herder conflict, is a type of environmental conflict where farming and herding communities overlap and has been used to refer to fighting among herding communities or fighting between herding and farming communities. This is sometimes referred to as conflict involving pastoralists or nomadic people and agriculturalists or settled people. The conflicts usually arise from destruction of crops by livestock and is exacerbated

during times when water and lands to graze are scarce. Cain and Abel: Cain, the farmer, sacrifices crops to Yahweh; Abel, the herdsman, sacrifices an animal. Yahweh is pleased by Abel's sacrifice; Cain murders Abel out of jealousy. The story is seen as an allegory for ancient farmer-herder conflicts.

The Nigerian government has been unwilling to address the causes of the crisis. Fighting Boko Haram in the North-East and facing rising levels of violence in different regions of the country, the government has nonetheless tried to implement a few measures.

Due to the widely perceived inefficacy of the Nigerian government, armed vigilante groups have sprung up in many farmer communities. This situation would often lead to vicious cycles of bloody feuds among farmers and herders. Local politicians and religious leaders have also exacerbated conflicts by recruiting members and frequently exaggerating claims.

Since 2012, there have been projects to create transhumance corridors through the Middle Belt. Mostly supported by Northern lawmakers and opposed by their Southern counterparts, these endeavours have been rarely successful.

In 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari tried to create Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlements. His proposal was met with fierce criticism. On 17 May 2021, the 17 Southern governors in Nigeria issued the Asaba Declaration, aimed at solving the crisis.

Although ranching, where cattle are kept in enclosed parcels of land, has frequently been proposed as a solution to the crisis, this has proven to be highly unfeasible in Nigeria due to poor infrastructure (with unstable supplies of electricity, water, and fuel) and difficulties with acquisition and legal ownership of land. Land grabbing and cattle rustling are also

potential difficulties that ranchers would have to deal with. Ranchers would also be unable to compete with nomadic herders with zero land-related costs

17 Mar 2021 By Luqman Adeiza Jinadu

In Societal Futures, Governance 13 Minutes Luqman Adeiza Jinadu SHARE

The spiralling conflict between Herdsmen and Farmers in Nigeria is still ongoing without any end in sight. In January 2021, tensions have escalated to an extent not seen in recent years: the governor of Ondo state set an ultimatum for Fulani herdsmen to vacate certain areas, and in Oyo and Ogun state, people with Fulani and/or Hausa origins were asked to leave by politically mobilized youth from local communities.

The herder-farmers conflict has led to nation-wide insecurity, which is a great setback in the fight against food insecurity. This article will highlight the recent trends of the conflict and propose possible solutions.

Dynamics of the conflicts

Both herdsman and farmers have suffered casualties from armed attacks and ensuing reprisals, and properties worth billions of Naira have been destroyed. The conflicts usually start as a competing interest over access to natural resources (such as land and water) and most often, take an ethno-religious dimension. Most herdsman are Muslims from the Fulani ethnicity while the farmers are mostly Christians from other ethnic groups. Complicating the conflict is the fact that a proportion of the herdsman keep cattle for powerful local actors, such as public servants and politicians, thereby generating a conflict of interest and leading to political inaction. The conflict hotspots are concentrated in the North-Central, affecting states like Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau. Other states affected include Adamawa and Taraba in the North-East, Ogun

and Oyo in the South-West, Ondo in the South-South, and Enugu and Imo in the South-East. The tension is still spreading to other regions.

Between January 2016 and October 2018, the conflict claimed the lives of at least 3,641 people. Thousands of farmers were forced to abandon their farmlands to stay alive. Besides the herders-farmers conflicts, the country is also facing other security challenges: the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, and the scourge of banditry in the North-West. In November 2020, at least 43 rice farmers were reportedly slaughtered by the Boko Haram insurgents. These incidences do not reflect a positive outlook in the quest to end poverty, hunger and malnutrition, and food security in the country.

The Herdsmen

In Nigeria, the word 'herdsmen' is synonymous to 'Fulani herdsmen' – Fulani represents an ethnic group predominantly in the Northern Nigeria. They have their indigenous language known as 'Fulfulde', but because of their close-knit relationship with the Hausa tribe, the Fulanis have also adopted the Hausa language. The herdsmen are predominantly Muslims and are widely recognized for livestock keeping, particularly ruminants such as cattle, sheep and goats. Their women are very enterprising and work downstream in the dairy value chain. The Fulani herdsmen account for 90% of the livestock population in Nigeria which contribute about one-third of the agricultural GDP and approximately 3.2% of the entire country's GDP.

The Farmers at the other side of the conflict, we have smallholder farmers who depend on their farming activities for their livelihoods. They constitute 80% of the total farmers in Nigeria, and in addition to the incessant conflicts with herdsmen, they are facing other challenges including climate change, irregular

rainfall, drought, pests and disease outbreaks. These hampers their yield and consequently, low profits. Many farmers in the North-West are now abandoning food crops for cash crops due to low returns on investments. Their situation was further worsened by the activities of armed bandits and incessant attacks by Fulani herdsmen. Farming communities in the North-Central panic at the glance of Fulani herdsmen. They have accused the herders of grazing their animals on their crops. And since they cannot depend on the government to provide adequate security, they mobilise the youths to form local vigilante groups with the aim of expelling the Fulani herdsmen out of their communities. Some states government like Ekiti, Benue, and Ondo, have implemented laws that banned herdsmen from open grazing. This policy further deepened the hostility between the herdsmen and their host communities.

Major government interventions

The conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria are not new and some government interventions are no longer sustainable due to high population growth, land use change, and ethno-religious sentiments, amongst other factors. One of the major government interventions was the establishment of grazing reserves. The government enacted the grazing law in between 1964 and 1965 to allocate lands for pastoralists where they can graze their animals. The idea was to indirectly force the pastoralists to adopt the sedentary system whereby they settle on the grazing reserve. They would be incentivized by access to feeds, water, veterinary services and through enactment of the law, were granted some level of land ownership rights. In 1980, 2.3 million hectares of land had already been allocated for grazing reserves across the North. However, with rapid population growth and urbanization, parts of

these lands were encroached and used for other purposes such as housing, construction of roads and expansion of arable farming. The Nigerian population was about 55 million in 1965 and over 200 million in 2019. As such, it has been nearly impossible to sustain these policies. In January 2019, the Federal government introduced the RUGA project aimed at revitalizing the national grazing reserves under the National Livestock Transformation Plan, but the idea was widely criticized as a land grabbing attempt. Some states welcomed the idea while many others kicked against it. Land that would previously have been available to local farming communities would now be subject to land use restrictions, while access to arable land is already decreasing due to the effects of pollution and climate change. It was also not clear as to who would be responsible for maintaining the grazing reserves. Many critics proposed that since cattle rearing is a private business, the pastoralists should acquire their own lands and set up a ranching system. These projects have yielded low results as many communities have rejected their implementation.

Against this backdrop, it is imperative to develop novel approaches that would help to move the conflict from zero-sum to win-win. My experience working with farmers and herders, and my observation of the conflicts over the past decades, led me to propose the following interventions as possible elements of what will have to be a multi-pronged solution:

1. Promoting climate-smart agriculture

Promoting sustainable nutrient cycle whereby herders supply animal manure to farmers in exchange for crop residues can help in soil nutrient restoration. One of the key drivers of these conflicts is climate change and soil degradation. There are nineteen (19) northern states and seven (7) are severely affected by desertification while eight (8) are moderately affected.

This forces herders to migrate from the north to the south in search for greener pastures. The impact is less herbage are available for grazing. Hence, with the exchange of manure for crop residues, the herders and farmers can cooperate thereby moving the conflict from zero-sum to win-win.

2. Feed preservation and storage

Training herders on local feed preservation techniques such as silage and hay would make a significant contribution towards seasonal dependency on feeds supply. It would further reduce the need for seasonal migration. Feed supply is generally not a problem during the rainy season. The excess herbage can be harvested, processed and stored against the dry season. Private investors can also tap into the business of feed manufacturing for ruminants. The poultry and aquaculture sub-sectors have well-established feed manufacturing companies and a lot of brands, but the ruminant sub-sector does not.

3. Establishment of satellite milk collection centres

The Fulani women walk thousands of kilometres hawking their 'Fura da Nono'—Milk product. Many of them have been victims of rape and sexual assault. During the rainy season when the milk yield of their cows increases due to availability of green pastures, the poor road network hampers their access to urban markets and part of their milk goes to waste. Therefore, the establishment of satellite milk collection centres close to their homesteads, would create an assembling point where they can sell their fresh milk. In addition, the government can leverage the existence of such locations to establish vocational training centres for them on local milk processing techniques.

The establishment of a community-based educational system using their local language

The herders and their families do not have access to quality education for proper integration into the society. Presently, they reside in remote areas and only come to town to graze their animals or sell their milk. Consequently, they have less interaction with people of other ethnicities. However, if their children were enrolled into formal education they would learn intercultural communication strategies. Likewise, they can be introduced to innovative livestock production systems that are environmentally sound, economically viable and socially acceptable. The government could provide incentives for those that will enrol their children in schools; for example, subsidized veterinary services, and premium prices for their milk.

4 The use of animal trackers.

There are different types of animal trackers that herdsmen can use for effective monitoring of their animals during grazing. Since farmers are complaining about animals grazing on their crops, with these trackers, herders can prevent their animals from eating farmers' crops. In addition, it would protect the animals from cattle rustlers and proper record keeping.

5 Development of a database for cattle owners in Nigeria.

The government should develop a database containing the biometrics of farmers and cattle owners in Nigeria. Farmers and herders should have a unique identification number for proper referencing and data-driven policies. The data can be generated using mobile phones or through the use of a register at the local government authority. Whenever a herder enters a community, he should document his presence at the local government authority and also sign out when leaving. This manner, offenders can be tracked and prosecuted.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Future Africa Forum. Future Africa Forum is a pan-African policy think-tank and policy advisory consultancy headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya.

Bodinga Local Government Area as a whole, in spite of its proxy to Sokoto town is still to a very large extent rural, thus, the majority of the adult population - have farming and cattle rearing as their major source of livelihood. In fact, in all the markets in the area, the bulk of merchandise traded in are agro - allied product.

Bodinga Local Government Area as mentioned earlier has an area of 2,504 sq. kilometer, and based on 1963 population census figures and projections on 2.H growth rate, it has about 334,629 inhabitants (1986). The Local Government Area is sub-divided into six (6) Administrative Districts.

There are 11 wards in Bodinga local government area of Sokoto state. The wards in Bodinga local government area are: Badau/Darhela, Bagarawa, Bangi / Dabaga, Bodinga / Tauma, Danchadi and Dingyadi / Badawa. The widely disputed result of the 2006 national population census put the population of Bodinga local government area at 174,302 with 87,844 males and 86,458 females. Agriculture is the main economic activity, grain is the staple diet, including guinea corn, millet, maize, and rice. The Bodinga Local Government also grow and eat root crops and a variety of vegetables. Cotton and peanuts are processed and use locally, but part of the harvest is exported. The Bodinga Local Government practice intercropping and double-cropping; their main implement is the hoe. The cattle Fulani provide the Bodinga with meat, yogurt and butter. Most men also practice a second occupation, such as aristocratic office holder, scholar, Islamic cleric (Imam), trader, musician and butcher. As good Muslims, the urban women are in seclusion upon their

husbands for their maintenance; they are economically active from behind the compound walls, however, primarily in order to finance their daughters' dowries they do other works. Their work, which includes sewing and selling prepared food and jewelry, is an offshoot of their domestic personal.

Based on the findings of this research and in relation to the objectives of the research it can be concluded that, there are; conflict between cattle rustlers and farmers, migration and abandonment of farm lands, loss of lives and properties accelerated by the persistence economic hardship in the Bodinga local government area, Sokoto state, Nigeria. The attack is always violence and goods are taken away. The cattle rustlers attack at random and their time of attack.

Base on the findings this research recommends that Since economic hardship is a major thing that is behind the conflict between cattle rustlers and farmers, it is pertinent to restate that the, governments at all levels should come up with programs that aimed at squarely addressing the poverty in the area; for instance, they should extensively introduce empowerment programs that will give employment (such as government works, commerce and trade initiatives) for the people in Bodinga Local government area at rural and urban areas, as the main cause of the conflict is as a result of persistence economic hardship.

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