



Research Paper

# Causes and Effects of Farmers-Herders Conflict in Hong and Gombi Local Government Areas of Adamawa State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT:

In this study the researcher examined the causes and effects of farmers-herders conflict in Hong and Gombi LGAs of Adamawa state, Nigeria. The sample size for the study consisted of 120 farmers and herdsmen respondents recruited from the two LGAs. Chi-square test and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data generated from the respondents. Findings from this study revealed that the major causes of farmers-herders conflict across Hong and Gombi LGAs in Adamawa State include; destruction of farm produce and/or farmlands, harassment of herdsmen by host youths, stray cattle, sexual harassment of women by herdsmen and indiscriminate bush burning. The effects of farmers-herders conflicts as revealed from the study include; destruction of lives and properties beyond the farmlands, distrust between farmers and herdsmen as they perceive each party to be an enemy; hence, finding it difficult to co-habit in the same communities, the displacement of locals thereby rendering them internally displaced, acquisition of arms/weapons, disruption of farming activities, increased sexual harassment and rape and disruption of economic activities. A significant relationship exist between farmers-herders conflicts and resources sustainability in affected communities. From the study, some of the sustainable solutions/recommendations to the age-long conflicts include; ranching method of cattle farming, establishment of local policing and vigilante groups, involvement of both parties in dispute resolution mechanisms for peaceful co-existence, reorientation of the locals on the essence of peaceful co-existence and tolerance irrespective of background and religion differences and fair treatment without fear or favour in decision making processes by the law enforcement agents.

**KEYWORDS:** Farmers, Herdsmen, Conflict, Causes, Effects, Management

Received 04 Sep, 2022; Revised 17 Sep., 2022; Accepted 19 Sep., 2022 © The author(s) 2022.

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## I. Introduction

Over the years, Nigeria has witnessed many conflicts that threatened its territorial integrity and overall survival as a nation. It is a concern in Nigeria due to its prevalent nature and level of cruelty. Despite the professional affinities between nomads and sedentary cultivators, the disagreement between the two groups is at a terrifyingly dramatic level for farmers displaced from their ancestral lands leading to widespread killings, maiming and looting. From an economic perspective, the broken relationship between pastoralists and farmers poses a serious threat to Nigeria's political and socioeconomic development, as well as its human development index. According to Nyong and Fiki (2005), resource-related conflict is responsible for her more than 12% decline in per capita food production in sub-Saharan Africa. Conflicts between arable farmers and ranchers over the use of agricultural land in Nigeria are therefore still prevalent, with serious consequences for rural development (Adisa, 2012). As a result, animosity and social tensions between the two user groups were often severe in many parts of Nigeria, even in Adamawa state.

Despite the fatality rate among Fulani herdsmen, the government response has been weak and unmotivated (International Crisis Group, 2017). In addition to these conflict-related deaths, there is also the humanitarian crisis caused by internally displaced persons. More than 620,000 people are estimated to have been displaced from their homes in the states of Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa and Plateau in Nigeria, where the conflict is most intense (Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin, 2018). The overall impact of these conflicts, in addition to the loss of life in the affected states, is very much proportioned by ongoing displacements and the

accompanying humanitarian and economic crises. Given the spate of reports of attacks, kidnappings for ransom, and related deaths, Fulani herdsmen remain highly deadly. The Nigerian government does not share the same view, even though the Fulani herders are internationally classified as terrorists.

Scholars have examined the causes of conflicts between farmers and nomads in various studies, including cow noise, unfair access to land, depletion of land resources, political conflict, crop damage, inter-ethnic conflict, farm fragmentation, and indiscriminate burning. According to Okereke (2012) and Bello (2013), the conflicts in most part of Nigeria especially the Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash are largely uncalled for. Farmers can no longer farm peacefully because of Fulani herdsmen. These Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash have pitched Christians and Muslims against each other. In recent times, the killings recorded by Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash has rampaged most communities displacing them of their farmlands and loss of their major source of livelihood. This is becoming unbearable with the Fulani herdsmen always having their ways leaving the farmers at their mercy. Herdsmen attribute the roots of the crisis to religious differences resulting in the killing of their cows while the farmers see the herdsmen as a threat to their crops and agricultural produce since the herdsmen allow their cows to feed on the farmer crops. The overall implication for sustainable development is that the farming, economic and social activities seem to be fast deteriorating. This study therefore seeks to validate the causes and effects of farmers-herders conflicts in two Local Government Areas of Adamawa State, and to provide sustainable solutions and/or recommendations to curtail the unending needless conflicts that has gradually turn into religious crises.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was carried in Gombi and Hong L.G.As of Adamawa State. The research design for this study was survey. About 120 respondents that comprised of farmers and herders across Gombi and Hong were recruited for the study. Primary source of information was obtained through structured interviews.

Farmers and Fulani-Herdsman from Garaha, Gaya, Dagsiri, Shagui and Mbulnyi in Hong LGA and Tawa, Bogadinge, Garkida, Gotta and Yang in Gombi LGA of Adamawa State were selected for this study. Sample population of residents from these areas were used in this study.

Multistage sampling procedure was used for the study. The first stage involved the random selection of two Local Government Areas in central Adamawa State. The second stage involved the random selection of 10 wards (five from each) in the selected LGAs. The choice of the respondents was made through the combination of snowball and convenience sampling techniques. This gave a sample size of 120 respondents for the study. This study generated primary data to evaluate the causes and socio-economic implications of the herders-farmers conflicts. The study used a semi-structured question format to elicit responses from the respondents as it provided them the opportunities to elaborate on their answers where necessary. As part of the pre-interview agreement for personal and occupational safety, the identities of the respondents have been made confidential.

Statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 24 was employed in the analysis of data. The Chi-square test was used to determine if there's a relationship between farmers-herders conflicts and the sustainability of resources in affected communities as a result of the recurring conflicts. Level of significance was set at  $P < 0.05$ . The degree of relationship between farmers-herders conflicts and the resources sustainability was examined by calculating the odds ratio framed at 95% confidence intervals.

## III. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the distribution of recruited respondents in the study areas from Hong and Gombi LGAs in Adamawa state. A total of 120 respondents, 12 from each local ward areas were randomly selected.

**Table 1:** Distribution of respondents in the selected areas of study

Hong LGA	Frequency	Percentage
Garaha	12	10
Gaya	12	10
Dagsiri	12	10
Shagui	12	10
Mbulnyi	12	10
Gombi LGA		
Tawa	12	10
Bogadinge	12	10
Garkida	12	10
Gotta	12	10
Yang	12	10
Total	120	100

Table 2 presents the socioeconomic distribution of participants from the selected areas of study. Majority of the respondents (above 60%) were within the age range of 10-49 years of age. Out of the 120 respondents, 86 (71.7%) were males and 34 (28.3%) were females. Of the 120 respondents, 66 (55%) respondents admitted to have no form of formal education. Thirty two (26.7%) had basic universal education. Twenty two (18.3%) admitted to have post primary and tertiary education. Forty five (37.5%) respondents had adult form of education while 46 (38.3%) had Quran/Arabic form of education. One hundred and one (84.2%) respondents were farmers by profession. Nine (7.5%) were traders. Three (2.5%) were civil servants and 7 (5.8%) were crafts men.

A total of 74 (61.7%) participants were married while 46 (38.3%) admitted to be single. Seventy six (63.3%) participants were professed Christians while 44 (36.7%) professed Islam. Among the randomly selected ethnic groups across the study areas, 43 (35.8%) were Kilba, 23 (19.2%) were Ga'anda, 21 (17.5%) were Bura and 33 (27.5%) were Fulanis.

**Table 2:** Distribution of respondents by socioeconomic characteristics

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Age	10-19	24	20.0
	20-29	26	21.7
	30-39	36	30.0
	40-49	21	17.5
	50-59	9	7.5
	Above 60	4	3.3
Sex	Male	86	71.7
	Female	34	28.3
Years of formal education	None	66	55.0
	1-6	32	26.7
	7-12	22	18.3
Other form of education	None	39	32.5
	Adult	45	37.5
	Quran/Arabic	46	38.3
Primary Occupation	Farming	101	84.2
	Trading	9	7.5
	Civil service	3	2.5
	Handcraft	7	5.8
Marital Status	Married	74	61.7
	Single	46	38.3
Religion	Christianity	76	63.3
	Islam	44	36.7
Ethnicity	Kilba	43	35.8
	Ga'anda	23	19.2
	Bura	21	17.5
	Fulani	33	27.5

**Question 1: What are the causes of farmers-herders conflict?**

Table 3 presents the causes of conflicts between farmers and herdsmen across the study areas. The average mean score was 2.5. From the table above, the major cause of farmers-herders conflict (mean= 4.6 and 4.1) was the destruction of farm produce on farmlands as it was accepted by both parties. The second major cause of farmers-herders conflict was sexual harassment of girls and/or women by herders (mean=3.0 and 2.5). Both farmers and herdsmen accepted this anomaly to be one of the root causes of conflicts. Another cause of farmers-herders conflict was harassment of herdsmen by local youths (mean=2.6 and 3.0). Both the youths and the herdsmen accepted this needless behaviour to have caused conflict. Another major cause of farmers-herders conflict was indiscriminate bush/farm burning as both parties accepted (mean= 2.7 and 3.4) the practice to have resulted in conflict. Stray cattle was another cause of farmers-herders conflict. This however, was rejected by herdsmen as a cause of conflict. In the same vein, farmers rejected cattle theft as a cause of conflict while herdsmen accepted this to have caused conflict. On the other hand, farmers accepted disregard to local authorities (mean=3.5) to be a cause of conflict; however, the herders denied any form of disregard to authorities, hence rejected it (mean=2.0) to be a cause of conflict.

**Table 3:** Causes of Farmers-Herders Conflict

SN	Causes	Farmers		Herders	
		Mean	Remark	Mean	Remark
1	Stray cattle	2.8	Accepted	2.2	Rejected
2	Crops destruction	4.6	Accepted	4.1	Accepted
3	Over- grazing of fallow land	2.1	Rejected	2.0	Rejected
4	Harassment of herdsmen by host youths	2.6	Accepted	3.0	Accepted
5	Theft of cattle	2.0	Rejected	3.5	Accepted
6	Sexual harassment of women by herdsmen	3.0	Accepted	2.5	Accepted

7	Indiscriminate bush burning	2.7	Accepted	3.4	Accepted
8	Disregard for traditional authority	3.5	Accepted	2.0	Rejected

**Question 2: What are the effects of farmers-herders conflict?**

Table 4 presents the impacts of farmers-herders conflicts across the study areas with average mean score of 2.5. The table reveals destruction of lives and properties (mean=4.1) beyond the farmland to be a major impact of farmers-herders conflict. Another primary effect of farmers-herders conflict was the resultant distrust between farmers and herdsmen (mean= 4.1) as they perceive each party to be an enemy; hence, finding it difficult to co-habit in the same communities. Another effect of farmers-herders conflict was the displacement of locals (mean=3.9) thereby rendering them internally displaced persons. Acquisition of arms/weapons (mean=4.0) by both parties was observed to be one of major effects and a threat to peaceful co-existence and increase in criminal activities. Another consequence of farmers-herders conflict was disruption of farming activities (mean=3.9). Farmers admitted to feel insecure; hence, abandon their farmland. Increased sexual harassment and rape (mean=3.5) was reported to be another major concern especially on the farmland during farming activities by the herdsmen. As a result of farmers-herders conflict, disruption of economic activities (mean=3.0) has been accepted to be another challenge in the affected communities. Drug abuse has been rejected to be an effect of farmers-herders conflict.

**Table 4: Effects of Farmers-Herders Conflict**

SN	Effects	Mean	Remark
1	Destruction of properties and lives	4.1	Accepted
2	Displacement of inhabitants	3.9	Accepted
3	Disruption of economic activities	3.0	Accepted
4	Acquiring arms/weapons	4.0	Accepted
5	High cases of rape	3.5	Accepted
6	Drug abuse	2.0	Rejected
7	Distrust between farmers and herdsmen	4.1	Accepted
8	Disruption of farming activities	3.9	Accepted

**Question 3: What are the most effective and sustainable solutions to farmers-herders conflict?**

Table 5 presents some sustainable recommendations that may pacify the incessant farmers-herders conflicts. From the table, ranching method of cattle farming (mean=3.9) has a wide acceptance as a means to end the conflict. Another sustainable solutions with considerable acceptance was establishment of local policing and vigilante groups (mean=4.0) to secure their communities. Involvement of both parties (mean=3.8) in dispute resolution mechanisms for peaceful co-existence among farmers-herdsmen has been accepted as a means to forestall the avoidable recurrent conflicts. Reorientation of the locals (mean=3.7) on the essence of peaceful co-existence and tolerance irrespective of background and religion differences was seen as a sustainable recommendation to put an end to the age-long conflict. Both parties expects fair treatment without fear or favour in decision making processes (mean=4.1) by the law enforcement agents toward their people in curtailing conflicts.

**Table 5: Sustainable Recommendations to Farmers-Herders Conflict**

SN	Recommendations	Mean	Remark
1	Ranching method cattle farming	3.9	Accepted
2	Establishment of local policing/vigilante	4.0	Accepted
3	Involvement of both parties in decision making	3.8	Accepted
4	Reorientation on the need for peaceful co-existence	3.7	Accepted
5	Fairness in resolution/decisions by government agencies	4.1	Accepted

**IV. DISCUSSION**

Findings from this study revealed that the major causes of farmers-herders conflicts across Hong and Gombi LGAs in Adamawa State include; destruction of farm produce and/or farmlands, harassment of herdsmen by host youths, stray cattle, sexual harassment of women by herdsmen and indiscriminate bush burning.

The effects of farmers-herders conflicts as revealed from the study include; destruction of lives and properties beyond the farmlands, distrust between farmers and herdsmen as they perceive each party to be an enemy; hence, finding it difficult to co-habit in the same communities, the displacement of locals thereby rendering them internally displaced, acquisition of arms/weapons, disruption of farming activities, increased sexual harassment and rape and disruption of economic activities.

From the study, some of the sustainable solutions/recommendations to the age-long conflicts include; ranching method of cattle farming, establishment of local policing and vigilante groups, involvement of both parties in dispute resolution mechanisms for peaceful co-existence, reorientation of the locals on the essence of

peaceful co-existence and tolerance irrespective of background and religion differences and fair treatment without fear or favour in decision making processes by the law enforcement agents. The result of the current study agrees with the findings of Nweze (2005), Okereke (2012), Bello (2013), and Ajibefun(2018). Findings from the hypothesis revealed a significant association between farmers-herders conflict and the sustainability of resources in these areas. Findings from the hypothesis revealed a significant association between farmers-herders conflict and the sustainability of resources in these areas. Stories of the nefarious activities of herdsmen echo throughout the country, and they pose a major threat to national food security by boldly and deliberately destroying crops, leading to avoidable crises and bloodshed. Farmers across the country are increasingly concerned about the negative attitudes of nomads. Nomads unleash their herds on crops, destroying them to the point of no salvation. This continual wanton destruction of lives and resources has created a cycle of poverty in the affected communities and equally affects the education of younger members of the communities causing obstacles to human and economic development (Imo, 2017). In a study conducted in Demsa Local Government Area, Adamawa State, Heman (2022) reported that the violent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen has resulted in the destruction of lives and properties, with eventual displacement of the entire community and disruption of farming activities. According to his findings, women were killed, rape, beaten to pulp and displaced (Heman, 2022). Ndubuisi, (2018) in another separate study reported the activities of Fulani herdsmen. According to his findings, farmers-herders conflict has resulted to destruction of lives, resources and displacement of affected communities; and the peace, unity and security in conflicts prone areas has been threatened (Ndubusi, 2018).

## V. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the causes of farmers-herders conflicts are destruction of farm produce, sexual harassment of women by herdsmen, harassment of herdsmen by the locals, and indiscriminate bush burning. The socioeconomic effects of the conflicts are destruction of lives and properties, distrust between farmers and herders, displacement of local community, acquisition of weapons, disruption of farming activities and increased sexual harassment and rape. It can also be concluded that the solutions to the conflicts are establishment of ranching, local policing and/or vigilante groups, involvement of both parties in dispute resolution mechanism and reorientation on the need for peaceful co-existence. It can equally be concluded that a significant relationship exist between farmers-herders conflicts and resources sustainability in affected communities.

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