



Forest Insecurity and the Dilemma of the Farmers-Herdsmen Crisis in Nigeria

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Abstract: The objectives of the study are to examine the issues of the farmers-herdsmen crisis because of forest insecurity, identify the challenges that forest insecurity posed to farmers-herdsmen relationships, and interrogate the implications of these for food security in a country that seeks to diversify its economy from a dependence on oil to farming. The study finds that the main manifestations of forest insecurity in farmers-herdsmen relationships crises have included the crisis between farmers and herdsman, herdsman trespassing on farmland, insecurity of lives of forest users, poor initiation of government policies, breakdown of peace between farmers and herdsman, and government's loss of forest resources to n-state actors. The findings also reveal that the challenges forest insecurity posed to farmers and herdsman have included massive loss of lives and property, loss of earning power, crippling socio-economic problems, and deepening of farmers/herdsman crisis. The study recommends that government overhaul existing policies and provide adequate security for monitoring and control of Nigeria's forests for safe and productive cultivation by all forest users.

Keywords: administrators; destroy; security

1. Introduction

The issue of forest Insecurity is the most appalling challenge that different countries around the globe are encountering. The declining phases of security situations globally are gradually taking new shapes and dimensions in many countries. States in Africa are becoming susceptible as a result of rising episodes of

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ethnic and communal-related conflicts (Mohammed and Baba, 2018). In recent times, Nigeria has experienced a significant increase in conflicts over control of natural resources. The crisis between farmers and pastoralists has become worrisome, mainly in wetland areas of the Middle Belt, western and central parts of Northern Nigeria, with attendant implications for agricultural production and food security. The conflicts differ depending on the circumstances and situations associated with them. However, the grim nature of these new security threats often reported daily from diverse parts of the country has considerably aggravated the already appalling socio-economic, political, and security conditions of Nigeria. The cases of farmers-herdsmen conflicts are taking a new dimension and becoming more volatile. In many areas in northern Nigeria, the crises have not been adequately explained considering the extent of the violence involved (Mohammed & Baba, 2018).

Forest insecurity which could be seen as one of the contributing factors that gave rise to the farmers-herdsmen crisis has become a very important issue because it poses a threat to the existence and unity of the Nigerian state. There is a need to capture how this crisis manifested in different communities, what the relationship between the farmers and herdsmen was before it degenerated into crisis resulting in the loss of life and properties, and how forest and farmland are being used to perpetuate illicit acts of killings, cattle rustling, kidnapping and all manners of criminality within the region.

The genesis of the recent farmer-herdsmen crisis in Nigeria remains a matter for debate. What is clear is that the central issues linked to the crises are mostly attributed to a variety of factors which includes bad governance, poverty, tribalism/ethnicity, land disputes, and forest insecurity among others. Forest insecurity has contributed in no small measures to the crisis between the farmers and the herdsmen. The forest is no longer safe. The forest is no longer protected by the security personnel and this paves and aggravates the crisis. The federal government has adopted measures in response to the escalating violence which are not helping the matter. These range from consultations between senior federal officials and administrators and residents of affected states to the deployment of additional police and military forces, the prosecution of those responsible for violence, schemes for “cattle colonies”, or clusters of ranches with services for herders and, most recently, a National Livestock Transformation Plan. The herdsmen who until recently coexisted peacefully with their host communities all over the country are now perceived to be enemies. Hitherto, communities in the

North and elsewhere never had serious disagreements with Fulani herdsmen in their midst. It was a common practice to invite them to stay on the farms in communities after the harvest for purpose of enriching the farmlands. All these seem to have been lost due to the recent attacks. Also, seen in the context of peaceful coexistence the attacks by herdsmen are setting the stage for dangerous polarization of the country along ethnic and religious divides. Compounding the rather fragile situation are the unguided utterances of some individuals threatening to declare herdsmen *persona-non-grata* in their states. Equally very dangerous is how some unscrupulous persons have continued to fuel very disruptive sentiments for cheap political goals (Gadzama, 2018).

In recent times, the killings recorded by herdsmen and farmers clash has rampaged most communities displacing them from 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's crops

It has been established from communities 'reports around the country that besides the destruction of crops by the cattle, the herdsmen are involved in crimes like murder, rape, and stealing which has resulted in clashes between them and the host communities. The attacks by Fulani herdsmen have in recent years taken many dimensions with the use of new and sophisticated types of weapons and communication devices such as AK 47 rifles. In consequence, the sedentary agrarian communities have resorted to self-defence through local vigilante groups (Abass 2012; McGregor 2014). This has further aggravated violence, with the destruction of lives and properties (Fasona & Omojola, 2005). Conflicts resulting from cattle grazing accounted for 35% of all reported crises between 1991 and 2005 in Nigeria (Adekunle & Adisa 2010). Another study revealed ethnic conflict and integration as problems of inter-ethnic relations facing the grazers and their host crop farmers (Pelican, 2000). Stories of the nefarious activities of these herdsmen reverberate across the country and they have constituted themselves as a great threat to national food security by their brazen and deliberate destruction of crops resulting in avoidable crises and bloodletting. Crops farmers across the country are increasingly becoming apprehensive over the negative attitude of the nomadic herdsmen who unleash their herds on crops, destroying them to points of no redemption. As a result, farmers of cassava, rice, maize, guinea corn, and

groundnuts now incur extra costs to put hedges around their farms to fend off the marauding cattle whose owners have grown most insensitive to the plights of the average farmer (Hameed, 2014).

The objectives of the study are to examine the issues of farmers-herdsmen crisis because of forest insecurity, identify the challenges forest insecurity posed to farmers and herdsmen and to estigate the implication of forest insecurity on the farmers.

2. Methodology

This paper adopts the survey research design of the *ex-post facto* type. The populations of this study include all people living in Ibarapa Local Government. area of Oyo State. The sample for the study comprises hundred and fifty (250) respondents. A Random sampling technique was used to select the target population that satisfies the criteria for participation in the study. The questionnaire method was adopted to collect data for the study. Frequency count, percentages, the mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze the biodata of the respondent while chi-square was used in analyzing data collected from the field which was tested at a 0.05 level of significance

3. Results

Analysis of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	152	76.0
Female	48	24.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 1 shows that 152(76.0%) of the farmers are male, and 48(24.0%) are female

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
25-40 years	52	26.0
41-60 years	108	54.0
61 years and above	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0

Table.2 shows that 52(26.0%) farmers are between 25-40 years of age, 108(54.0%) are between 41-60 years, and 40(20.0%) are 61 and above years of age.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	32	16.0
Married	150	75.0
Divorced	10	5.0
Complicated	8	4.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 3 shows that 32(16.0%) farmers are single, 150(75.0%) are married, 10(5.0%) are divorced, and 8(4.0%) had a complicated marital status

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christianity	98	49.0
Islam	88	44.0
Others	14	7.0
Total	200	100.0

In table4, 98(49.0%) farmers are Christian, 88(44.0%) are Muslim, and 14(7.0%) belong to other religions which were not disclosed in the study.

4. Answering Research Questions

Research question one: How does foresatinsecurity to the farmers-herdsmen crisis?

Table 5. Ways to Winch Forest Insecurity Leads to Farmers-Herdsmen Crisis

s/n	Forest insecurity	SD	D	U	A	SA	\bar{x}	S.D
1	There is no forest guard	32 16.0%	18 9.0%	20 10.0%	80 40.0%	50 25.0%	3.49	1.378
2	There is no forest regulation	50 25.0%	80 40.0%	20 10.0%	30 15.0%	20 10.0%	2.45	1.287
3	The governments did not have control over what happened in the forest	21 10.5%	14 7.0%	5 2.5%	88 44.0%	72 36.0%	3.88	1.266
4	There are no adequate security provisions for forest users	16 8.0%	14 7.0%	1 0.5%	70 35.0%	99 49.5%	4.11	1.223
5	Herdsmen trespass on farmland increases violence in the forest	15 7.5%	10 5.0%	5 2.5%	62 31.0%	108 54.0%	4.19	1.188
6	The crisis between farmers and herdsmen is a result of insecurity in the forest	-	12 6.0%	8 4.0%	65 32.5%	115 57.5%	4.42	0.828
7	An inadequate peace accord between farmers and herdsmen contributes to forest insecurity	12 6.0%	28 14.0%	5 2.5%	70 35.0%	85 42.5%	3.94	1.247
8	Poor governmental policies and programs promote farmers/herdsmen crisis in the forest	22 11.0%	20 10.0%	3 1.5%	44 22.0%	111 55.5%	4.01	1.403
9	Forest insecurity comes as a result of an inability to bridge the gap that exists between the farmers and herdsmen	32 16.0%	28 14.0%	8 4.0%	72 36.0%	60 30.0%	3.50	1.449
10	Farmers and herdsmen are the main actors causing forest insecurity	60 30.0%	80 40.0%	6 3.0%	33 16.5%	21 10.5%	2.38	1.343
Weighted Mean = 3.64								

Table 5 showed how forest insecurity leads to a farmers-herdsmen crisis. “Crisis between farmers and herdsmen is a result of insecurity in the forest” (\bar{x} =4.420) was ranked highest by the mean score as the major outcome of forest insecurity to farmers-herdsmen crisis, and was followed by “Herdsmen trespass on farmland increases violence in the forest” (\bar{x} =4.19), “There is no adequate security

provisions for forest users” ($\bar{x}=4.11$), “Poor governmental policies and programmes promote farmers/herdsmen crisis in the forest” ($\bar{x}=4.01$), “Inadequate peace accord between farmers and herdsmen contribute to forest insecurity” ($\bar{x}=3.94$), “Government does not have control over what happens in the forest” ($\bar{x}=3.88$), “Forest insecurity comes as a result of inability to bridge the gap that exist between the farmers and herdsmen” ($\bar{x}=3.50$), “There is no forest guard” ($\bar{x}=3.49$), “There is no forest regulation” ($\bar{x}=2.45$), and lastly by “Farmers and herdsmen are the main actor causing forest insecurity” ($\bar{x}=2.38$) respectively.

Hence, the main outcome of forest insecurity in farmers-herdsmen crisis includes crisis between farmers and herdsmen, herdsmen trespassing on farmland, insecurity of lives of forest users, poor initiation of government policies, breaking of peace between the farmers and herdsmen, and lastly government losing their control to a non-state actor.

a Research question two: What are the challenges forest insecurity posed to farmers and herdsmen?

Table 6. Challenges Forest Insecurity Posed to Farmers and Herdsmen

s/n	Challenges of forest insecurity	SD	D	U	A	SA	\bar{x}	S.D
1	Farmers recorded a great loss as a result of the farmers/herdsmen crisis	20 10.0%	15 7.5%	-	65 32.5%	100 50.0%	4.05	1.306
2	Herdsmen recorded a great loss as a result of the farmers/herdsmen crisis	51 25.5%	49 24.5%	15 7.5%	40 20.0%	45 22.5%	2.90	1.538
3	Farmers/herdsmen crisis reduces productivity	25 12.5%	15 7.5%	-	32 16.0%	128 64.0%	4.12	1.436
4	The crisis has caused a socio-economic problem for both the farmers and herdsmen	8 4.0%	12 6.0%	5 2.5%	95 47.5%	80 40.0%	4.14	1.006
5	Many have been rendered homeless due to the crisis	42 21.0%	18 9.0%	4 2.0%	80 40.0%	56 28.0%	3.45	1.503
6	Food production has been grossly affected	30 15.0%	15 7.5%	10 5.0%	65 32.5%	80 40.0%	3.75	1.431

7	The crisis has claimed many lives	3 1.5%	12 6.0%	-	60 30.0%	125 62.5%	4.46	0.890
8	Many children have become an orphan	18 9.0%	22 11.0%	5 2.5%	57 28.5%	98 49.0%	3.98	1.332
9	Loss of earning power increases as a result of farmers/herdsmen crisis	10 5.0%	8 4.0%	12 6.0%	71 35.5%	99 49.5%	4.21	1.062
10	Poverty is on the high increase as a result of the crisis	26 13.0%	14 7.0%	10 5.0%	75 37.5%	75 37.5%	3.80	1.357
Weighted Mean = 3.88								

Table 6 showed the challenges forest insecurity posed to farmers and herdsmen. “The crisis has claimed many lives” ($\bar{x}=4.46$) was ranked highest as the major challenge posed on farmers and herdsmen based on forest insecurity, and was followed in succession by “Loss of earning power increases as a result of farmers/herdsmen crisis” ($\bar{x}=4.21$), “The crisis has caused socio-economic problem for both the farmers and herdsmen” ($\bar{x}=4.14$), “Farmers/herdsmen crisis reduces productivity” ($\bar{x}=4.12$), “Farmers recorded great loss as a result of farmers/herdsmen crisis” ($\bar{x}=4.05$), “Many children has became an orphan” ($\bar{x}=3.98$), “Poverty is on the high increase as a result of the crisis” ($\bar{x}=3.80$), “Food production has been grossly affected” ($\bar{x}=3.75$), “Many has been rendered homeless due to the crisis” ($\bar{x}=3.45$), and lastly by “Herdsmen recorded great loss as a result of farmers/herdsmen crisis” ($\bar{x}=2.90$) respectively.

Hence, the challenges forest insecurity posed to farmers and herdsmen includes loss of lives, loss of earning power, socio-economic problem, deepening of farmers/herdsmen crisis, and loss of property and lives.

Research question three: What are the implications of forest insecurity on the farmer?

Table 7. Implications of Forest Insecurity on the Farmer

s/n	The implication of forest insecurity	SD	D	U	A	SA	\bar{x}	S.D
1	The crisis has led to a loss of properties	20 10.0%	15 7.5%	-	65 32.5%	100 50.0%	4.05	1.306
2	The crisis increases the suffering of farmers	23 11.5%	17 8.5%	10 5.0%	80 40.0%	70 35.0%	3.79	1.318
3	The crisis has led to the loss of life	8 4.0%	12 6.0%	-	65 32.5%	115 57.5%	4.34	1.033
4	The crisis has displaced farmers in the affected community	23 11.5%	22 11.0%	5 2.5%	60 30.0%	90 45.0%	3.86	1.393
5	Farmers on the farmland are unsecure in the forest	8 4.0%	22 11.0%	10 5.0%	65 32.5%	95 47.5%	4.09	1.151
6	Farmers cannot go to their farmfarmspace	10 5.0%	4 2.0%	6 3.0%	92 46.0%	88 44.0%	4.22	0.978
7	FarmFarmer'ses and properties are not safe	18 9.0%	12 6.0%	5 2.5%	75 37.5%	90 45.0%	4.04	1.238
8	The crisis has affected the growth and development of the farmers	19 9.5%	11 5.5%	3 1.5%	111 55.5%	56 28.0%	3.87	1.166
9	Farmers cannot sleep with their two eyes closed	18 9.0%	12 6.0%	-	78 39.0%	92 46.0%	4.07	1.230
10	Population growth has reduced due to the farmers/herdsmen crisis	33 16.5%	17 8.5%	10 5.0%	80 40.0%	60 30.0%	3.59	1.419
Weighted Mean = 3.99								

Table 7 showed the implications of forest insecurity on the farmer. "The crisis has led to loss of life" (\bar{x} =4.34) was ranked highest as the major implication of forest insecurity on the farmer, and was followed by "Farmers cannot go to their farm in peace" (\bar{x} =4.22), "Farmers in the farm land feels unsecure in the forest" (\bar{x} =4.09), "Farmers cannot sleep with their two eyes closed" (\bar{x} =4.07), "The crisis has led to loss the of properties" (\bar{x} =4.05), "Farmers lives and properties are not safe" (\bar{x} =4.04), "The crisis has affected the growth and development of the farmers" (\bar{x} =3.87), "The crisis has displaced farmers in the affected community" (\bar{x} =3.86), "The crisis increases the suffering of farmers" (\bar{x} =3.79), and lastly by "Population growth has reduced due to farmers/herdsmen crisis" (\bar{x} =3.59) respectively

Hence, the main implications of forest insecurity on the farmer include loss of life, unstable peace, insecurity at home and farm, and lastly by loss of property

5. Discussion of Findings

The study shows that the main outcomes of forest insecurity in the farmers-herdsmen crisis include crisis between farmers and herdsmen, herdsmen trespassing on farmland, insecurity of lives of forest users, poor initiation of government policies, breaking of the peace between farmers and herdsmen, and lastly government losing their control to a non-state actor. According to Gefu and Kolawole (2003), the periodic clashes between herders and farmers in Nigeria are largely due to the intensification and extension of production activities that are necessitated by the increasing human population. Similarly, Fabiyi and Otunuga (2016), Mikailu (2016), and Alade (2018) have argued that the conflict between the two groups can be traced to problems relating to land and water use, obstruction of traditional migration routes, livestock theft, and crop damage which tend to trigger more disputes. Studies by Fabiyi and Otunuga in 2016 revealed the root causes of the conflicts stem from two events that have combined to exacerbate the resource challenges imposed by Nigeria's burgeoning cattle population. For Fabiyi and Otunuga (2016), and Onwuamanam (2016), climate change has slowly changed the landscape of Northern Nigeria. Much of the far north has been inundated by desertification. The Northern tip of the foraging grounds of Nigeria's cattle has disappeared. Watering grounds are disappearing. Lake Chad, once a massive oasis in the North-Eastern tip of Nigeria has lost 95% of its volume over the last 50 years.

The findings also reveal that the challenges forest insecurity poses to farmers and herdsmen include loss of lives, loss of earning power, socio-economic problems, deepening of farmers/herdsmen crisis, and loss of property and lives. Forest insecurity has contributed in no small measures to the crisis between the farmers and the herdsmen. The forest is no longer safe. The forest is no longer protected by the security personnel and this paves and gives more strength to the crisis. The federal government has adopted measures in response to the escalating violence which is not helping matters. These range from consultations between senior federal officials and administrators and residents of affected states to the deployment of additional police and military forces, the prosecution of those responsible for

violence, schemes for “cattle colonies”, or clusters of ranches with services for herders and, most recently, a National Livestock Transformation Plan.

It was also revealed from the study that, the main implications of forest insecurity on the farmer include loss of life, unstable peace, insecurity at home and farm, and lastly loss of property. This was in line with the view of Ajibefun, 2018 who opined that the menace of Fulani-Herdsmen appears to have direct implications for socio-economic development in the states attacked and Nigeria in general. In the states where the Fulani herdsmen and farmers crisis is pervasive, the property destroyed and cases of rapes slog their economic and social opulence back by several steps. Besides the destroyed properties, socio-economic life in those states is usually grounded to a halt as people could not freely go about their farming and socio-economic activities for fear of being killed. The overall implication for sustainable development is that the farming, economic and social activities seem to be fast deteriorating. Also, a substantial part of the country’s budget has been spent on the compensation of families who lost their relations to the Fulani herdsmen and farmers crisis. Also, a huge amount of money is being spent on weapons and ammunition acquisition to equip the military to handle the situation on the ground. All these seem to have affected Nigeria’s economy. In a similar light, Michael, Inyang, and Ukpong (2017) observed that the attack has created social dislocation and continuous suspicion among Fulani and other ethnic groups within the areas of attack. Herdsmen are now looked upon as social stigma as people are no longer comfortable with herdsmen who are generally undertaking their legitimate nomadic business. The social integration and cohesion which often exist among herdsmen and residents have been battered as most communities no longer socialize with herdsmen. They further observed that previously, Fulani herdsmen were allowed to join community associations and relate with members of the community. Currently, they are strongly denied the privilege of joining such associations where they exist. This inevitably has created social dislocation. In some communities, it has been resolved that no member shall provide land for herdsmen to graze their herds. This has greatly affected social relations (Michael, Inyang & Ukpong, 2017)

6. Conclusion

The farmers and herdsmen crisis continues to thrive due to the government's slow response to the issue of Governance in Nigeria which has been assessed to have failed to provide the needed security for all her citizens most especially the herdsmen's attack on the farmers and vice versa. The government's ineptitude in the handling of the initial crisis has made it's widespread possible. This has led concerned people to have the opinion that the government has not only failed in her basic responsibility of securing the lives and property of her citizens but has been insensitive to the plight of the affected persons in the various clashes. This situation has led to several accusations being leveled against the government as being indirectly involved in encouraging the conflict.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that:

- Government should provide enough security guards that will help in monitoring the affairs of all forest users. This will help in safe guiding the life and properties of all concerned users of the forest.
- There should be forest regulations that will be well stated and available in all languages through this, whoever so ever that may want to go against what is in the available laws will not be able to do so because of the consequences of violating the rules and regulations.
- In addition, strengthen security arrangements for herders and farming communities, especially in the north-western zone for the governments and security agencies to sustain campaigns against cattle rustling and rural banditry; improve early-warning systems; maintain the operational readiness of rural-based police and other security units; encourage communication and collaboration with local authorities; and tighten control of production, circulation, and possession of illicit firearms and ammunition, especially automatic rifles. This would entail strengthening cross-border cooperation with neighboring countries and also providing adequate modern arms and other security and communication facilities required to fight bandits

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