

## FARMERS-HERDSMEN CONFLICT AND CONSEQUENCES FOR LIVELIHOODS, FOOD SECURITY AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN WANSANGARE ALABAFE, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the farmers-herdsmen conflict in Wansangare Alabafe, a community in the Oke Ogun axis in the northern part of Oyo State, Nigeria. The study used a mixed research method to generate data. The questionnaire was the instrument used to generate quantitative data from 80 respondents amongst farmers and herders. Fifty (50) questionnaires were administered to the farmers and thirty (30) questionnaires were administered to the herdsmen in the same community. The oral interview was the instrument used to isolate participants for the study. The interview was the instrument used to generate data from the responses of both the heads of the farmers and herders. Five days were used to collect the responses of the farmers and three days were used to collect the responses of the herders.

Results showed that there is an intense conflict between the farmers and herdsmen in the community for reasons associated with the destruction of crops on farmlands and cattle rustling. Both farmers and herdsmen agreed that the conflict has a negative impact on their livelihoods and social status; and that the conflict has exacerbated ethnic suspicion and hatred between the natives (farmers) and the settlers (herdsmen). Results revealed that conflict occurs more during the dry season than during the rainy season. However, the

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community leaders have been successful in containing the conflict from burgeoning into violent conflict; but there is little hope that the conflict will not snowball into violent conflict in the future if urgent actions are not taken to address the root causes. Data revealed that both farmers and herders have a high level of confidence in the adjudicatory responsibilities of the community leaders; and preferred to take their disputes to the leaders of the local community than to the police and other statutory enforcement agents since the chiefs serve as the gatekeepers of the community. However, herders are more reluctant to report cases of conflict to the police than the farmers for reasons associated with the fear that they are settlers; and that the police are usually biased against the settlers. Results showed that both farmers and herders express confidence in the adjudicatory responsibilities of the community leaders since they expeditiously and judiciously resolve issues that are brought before them.

## Introduction

*Background of the Study:* Agriculture plays an important role in the Nigerian economy; and some of these roles have been emphasised by different studies (Okolo, 2014, Ugwu and Kanu 2012). Agriculture (crop and animal production) contributed between 31.2% and 39.2% of total GDP between 1986 and 1995, and over 40% between 1999 and 2006 (National Economic Intelligence Unit 2006). By 2017, the contribution of agriculture to the GDP had declined significantly to 20.85%. It is difficult to extricate the cause of this decline (in the contribution of agriculture to the GDP) from the prevalence, intensity and magnitude of the conflict between the farmers and herders.

One of the challenges straining the agricultural sector is the impact of grazing livestock animals on crop production. This is well appreciated when it is realized that Nigeria has a high herd of cattle population, the majority of which are in the hands of pastoralists (Obadiah & Shekaro, 2012). In 2009, the Agricultural Production Survey (APS) conducted by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development indicated that Nigeria's livestock farmers rear annually about 15.6 million cattle, 45.2 million goats and 26.7million sheep.

As a result of the implosion in rearing animals, the depletion in the quality of soil and the scarcity of arable land for farming, there has been an intense struggle between farmers and herders for the use of the available land, which often snowballs into conflict. For the herders, there has been a movement to areas where cattle can graze on green land and to areas where there is water. This movement is known as "transhumance", and the movement usually brings farmers into the web of conflict (Blench, 1994). The Global Terrorism Index (2015) had profiled the Nigeria Fulani herdsmen as the world's fourth deadliest group for its violent activities that claimed around 1, 229 lives in 2014.

Against this background, the significant underpinning factors that spawn farmers-herdsmen conflict are resource scarcity, depletion of the quality of land resource and the

contestation to give more access to the grazing of cattle and the effect of grazing on crop production. This study was conceived to address the lacuna in existing studies to interrogate the implications of such conflicts for food security in the South-Western part of Nigeria. For this reason, it becomes pertinent to interrogate the nexus between such conflict and food security.

Since the most frequent causes of conflicts between the crops farmers and pastoralists are linked to crop damages caused by animals belonging to herdsmen, farm encroachment on cattle routes and sometimes water points and grazing on harvested crops (Gefu and Gills, 1990), there is an urgent need to provide a broader and systematic understanding of such conflicts in areas that have been largely ignored in existing studies to avoid arbitrary generalizations. With the scarcity of quality land and the emergence of state failure, conflicts between farmers and herders become a recurring phenomenon that has assumed a frightening and dangerous proportion.

Although farmers and herders mingle together in the Alabafe community in the Shaki axis of the northern part of Oyo State, there is no existing study that has captured the nature of the relationship between the farmers and herders for livelihoods in the community. It is also important to state that although livestock and farming are well-practiced in the community, violent conflict of a consistent pattern and high magnitude has not been reported in the community. This study seeks to find out the nature of the social mechanism for containing conflict from assuming a disturbing and recurring pattern in the Alabafe community; despite the contestation for resources and protection of livelihoods by both farmers and herders in the community.

*Statement of the Problem:* Until recently, both farmers and herders had co-lived peacefully in their respective communities. However, there has been an increasing conflict between farmers and herders in the most recent time. The recurring nature of the conflict between farmers and herders poses a real threat to food security; and has the potentials of inflaming ethnic hatred between an ethnic group whose preoccupation is majorly farming and another ethnic group that is largely associated with pastoralism. This development would not only deepen the level of poverty and inequality in the country but would fracture ethnic harmony in a heterogeneous society (like Nigeria) whose state structure is fast experiencing governance problems.

Since the return to civil rule in 1999, there has been a frightening intensity in the occurrence of conflicts between farmers and herders. Despite the effort of the government, there is little or no credible evidence that the government's intervention and its containment strategy in resolving the conflict have been effective. The lingering conflict and its escalation lend credence to the fact that the effort of the government in stemming the conflict has not been quite successful. Incidentally, the recurrence of farmers-herders conflict poses a

serious threat to the livelihoods of both farmers and herders. Indeed, clashes between the Yoruba-speaking people who are dominantly farmers and the herdsman who are overwhelmingly Fulani have led to negative ethnic profiling and ethnic suspicion and sometimes hatred. The recurring nature of the conflict has affected the productivity of the farmers and herders, with dire consequences for food availability in the country.

The farmers-herdsman conflict has not only heightened the level of insecurity in the country but has the potentials to exacerbate the food crises in Nigeria due to a continuing decline in farmers' production of crops and the turndown in livestock of herders as a result of the underfeeding of cattle and wanton killing of cattle. Nweze (2005) observed that as a result of the conflict, many farmers and herders have lost their lives, properties and also livelihoods. The consequence of food insecurity has escalated the growing circles of extreme poverty and hunger; consequently, degrading the social status of those affected and making the existing conditions of vulnerable groups (including women and children) grow worse. The farmers-herders conflict has equally undermined the security and stability of the Nigerian State.

As a result of the recurring nature of the conflict, there has been a drop in the enrolment of children in schools for reasons connected to insecurity. It is difficult for children to attend school in an atmosphere of instability and conflict between/amongst groups. Recently, UNICEF statistics showed that Nigeria accounts for **one in every five** of the world's out-of-school children and that 10.5 million children are not in school; even though, primary education is free and compulsory in Nigeria. As a result of the intensification of the conflict, the out-of-school children have increased to 13.2 million based on sources credited to the Executive Secretary of Universal Basic Education (UBEC), Hammid Bobboyi. This figure has ranked Nigeria as having the highest number of out-of-school children in the world, and account for 45% in the West Africa region. Thus, the destruction of the livelihoods of farmers and herders would further lead to the deprivation of children to access education since their parents would not have the money to send them to school and would also be disinclined to send their children to school in an environment where conflict defines the landscape. The conflict situation presents a disturbing context for security issues and human development.

In conclusion, the knowledge gap is that several studies have focused on farmers-herdsman conflict from the economic perspective with minimal attention to issues of how the conflict has affected food security and human development. Another lacuna is that studies have been largely conducted in response to the magnitude and persistence of the conflict in some communities; rather than paying sufficient attention to some communities where both farmers and herders coexist without reporting large scale and recurring conflict.

This study investigated the conflict between the farmers and herdsmen in the Wansangare Alabefe community in Oyo State intending to find out the implications of such conflict for livelihoods, ethnic relations and food security. The study was also motivated by the need to study what has helped the community in its social control mechanism to contain the disagreement between the farmers and herders from degenerating into full scale conflict; despite reported incidences of conflict and the relative absence of the government and its institutions in the community.

*Literature Review:* Clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers have become so recurring in communities that are located in the North Central geo-political zone of Nigeria, namely, Benue, Plateau and Nassarawa. In the North West, Kaduna State has been the hotbed of conflicts. The North East has states like Taraba and Adamawa as the hotbeds. The conflict in these states has not only been so recurring, but it has assumed a frightening dimension that inflames ethnic suspicion and hatred in a way that has undermined national security. It is, however, important we understand that this conflict can be characterized as a resource-related conflict between farmers and herders.

There has been an intensification of conflicts that assumed the colouration of ethno-religious issues since the return to civil rule in 1999. Despite the smoldering nature of this conflict, the Nigerian government has not been able to successfully contain the conflict, with obvious consequences for the security of the state and the unity of the country. A group of youths in Southern Kaduna recently aired their frustration on Channels TV at the way their citizens have been killed by a bandit of assailants. The reality is that the conflict has spread to the other parts of the country, with little or no successful containment strategy by the security agencies that are overstretched.

Since the beginning of the conflict in 2009, more than 20,000 people have been killed, more than 4,000 people abducted and more than 1.7 million people remain displaced, most of them in Borno State (UNICEF, February 2016). Benue and Taraba states have witnessed the intensity of conflict between Christian farmers and Muslim herders. In some states militia have evolved to respond to what seen is as the violent aggression of the cattle herders, who are mostly described and alleged to be Fulanis from other parts of Africa. Recently, both electronic and print media reported the death of a local militia in Benue State known as Terwase Akwaza popularly known as “Ghana” who was killed by the military on his way to accept amnesty granted by the Benue State Government. His militia group had taken the illegal route to “defend” their people against what they saw as the aggression of the Fulani herdsmen against the Benue people.

In the most recent time, the farmers-herdsmen conflict has spread to the southwest part of Nigeria and has assumed a frightening proportion in terms of its frequency, intensity, prevalence and magnitude. In some instances, Yoruba farmers have been abducted in their

farm settlements. For example, elder statesman, Chief Olu Falae, became a victim of this menace in 2015 when part of his farmland was destroyed by herdsmen who brought their cattle to graze there. In the recent past, the son of the former minister of health, Professor Isaac Adewole, was abducted on his farm in Oyo State. Not quite long ago, the daughter of a frontline NADECO statesman, Funke Fasoranti was gruesomely murdered around the Ore-Kajola axis by a group of bandits suspected to be herdsmen. Though, the Police have reported that those behind her gruesome murder have been apprehended, and would appear soon in court. Of recent, Sunday Igbowo, a Yoruba militia from Igbowo town in the northern axis of Oyo State, has been challenging what he referred to as the aggression of the Fulanis against the Yorubas in the South West. He has even gone further to provide an anchor for the realization of the Oduduwa nation that would comprise only people of Yoruba extraction. The agenda of the group is self-determination, a euphemism for secession in Nigeria. The Nigerian security has declared Sunday Igbowo wanted for acts that “undermine” national security and the stability of the Nigerian state.

In explaining the reasons for the farmers-herdsmen conflict, some studies have implicated climate change as one of the major reasons (Nweze, 2005, Abbas, 2009, and Okello, 2014). For example, the desertification in northern Nigeria as a result of low rainfall has considerably reduced the availability of water sources and quality grazing land for cattle. As a result of herdsmen’s migration to places where is good vegetation to nurture their animals, cattle lunge on farmlands and consequently demolish crops planted by farmers. In reaction, farmers have to fight back over the destruction of their means of livelihood. It is important to state that this conflict has affected the productivity of both farmers and herdsmen in solving the food security challenges confronting the country (Haro and Doyo 2005). Another issue that has given rise to conflict between the farmers and the herders is that both farmers and herders now compete for grazing land that is fast disappearing to urbanization, industrialisation, population expansion and land grabbing by the governing political elites for selfish reasons. Another important dimension of the conflict is the absence of “symbiotic relationship” that had once existed between the farmers and herders in the past. In recent times, the practice of livestock ownership has increased amongst farmers as they hardly need manure from the herders (Moritz, 2010). This development has made farmers less dependent on herdsmen for manure; and has also heightened the contestation for the decreasing grazing lands, leading to a recurring clash between the farmers and the herders. It might not be incorrect to state that the distortion and encroachment on designed routes for cattle grazing for farming purposes and the resultant destruction of farm crops by cattle have also accounted for the conflict.

We must aver that the structural root of the conflict cannot be extricated from issues of land degradation, land scarcity and the increasing lower quality of the land resource,

which is accentuated by the poor strategy of maintaining the ecosystem. Okello (2014) associated the escalation of the conflict with dwindling natural resources and land availability in the country. However, the decreasing linkages and interdependence of agricultural and pastoralist economies (Blench, 1984) and the cultural dissimilarities between the farmers and herders (Adebayo, 1997; Hagberg, 2000 and Blench, 1984) in a seemingly failing political context (Gausset, 2005) have led to reinforce institutional failure to resolve the recurring conflict (Beeler, 2006; Benjaminsen and Ba, 2009). It is instructive to adumbrate that the emergence of a failing state that is driven by corrupt leadership seems to account for the absence of effective containment strategy and adroit response to the conflict. The state is neither trusted by the farmers nor the herders in its adjudicatory roles. Sometimes the state is seen as a cause of the conflict and its inability to frame adroit responses to the conflict have become suspect.

In stemming the tide of the conflict, there has been a plethora of methods and strategies that have been articulated by scholars. Gyong (1998) stated that the traditional method of conflict management before the advent of colonialism in Africa was better than the present formal strategies. According to him, the focus was to remove the cause of the dispute and reconcile the two parties in such a way as to restore the social structure of the society to its state of equilibrium. That settlement of conflict was usually done in a “village square” under the leadership of a team of elders representing various clans, who amicably settle and reconcile the parties involved.

Despite the recurring conflict between the farmers and herders in postcolonial Nigeria, Adebayo and Olaniyi (2008) argued that traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution are still relevant, useful and efficient in contemporary society because both farmers and pastoralists are not opposed to the issue of conflict arbitration. The desire for sustaining relationships, the speed of the dispensation of justice, and the less bureaucratic nature of the traditional mechanism resolution of conflict appear to be the major drivers that informed farmers and pastoralists’ greater preference for informal authority to formal authority. This preference might not be unconnected with the understanding that reporting conflicts to formal authority like either the police or courts of law worsens the already tenuous relationship between the disputants; and lengthens the process and period for resolving the conflict, with a huge cost to the disputants.

Best (2009) identified some basic methods for resolving conflict as follows: alternative dispute resolution focuses on the application of, “non-conventional” and non-formal peaceful methods of resolving conflict situations in an effective way that does not incur a huge cost to the litigants. African traditional conflict resolution strategy, according to him, is a method used to resolve conflict with the use of the authority given to and reverence for the traditional leaders. Thus, Africans use collaborative methods of conflict resolution

that are inclusive to engender peace and mutual respect. Another method is Western alternative dispute resolution, which is a process of conflict resolution without violent means and collaborative in nature (Best, 2009). He affirmed that the elements of western alternative dispute resolution include grassroots community-based activities, good governance, collaboration, negotiation, reconciliation, mediation, arbitration, adjudication and crisis management.

The best way of dealing with conflict situations is to nip them in the bud (Nkom, 1999). This implies the ability to isolate the crisis for effective resolution at the inchoate level by understanding the nature, character and causes to contain and/or mitigate possible danger signals that may herald their eruption into violent conflict. He gave three important dimensions in conflict management, namely, conflict analysis, conflict containment and confrontation, and conflict resolution. The most recent letter of former President Olusegun Obasanjo on the growing insecurity in the country addressed to President Muhammad Buhari also emphasized the idea of using carrot and stick as well as the integration of community leaders and civil societies as mechanisms for stemming the burgeoning conflict. Obasanjo's letter was so clear that the full military option to stemming the conflict has very severe limitations in the containment strategy of the government to address the perennial conflict. Former President Obasanjo's admonition to President Buhari's administration handling of conflict-related issues is an instance of conflict containment and confrontation strategy, as identified by Nkom (1999) characterization of the typologies of dimensions of conflict management.

Studies on conflicts between nomads and cattle herders have identified and/or suggested different strategies that could be explored by the government, communities, and researchers to either reduce significantly the recurring nature of conflict or contain its explosive violent nature. Blench (2010) in a research conducted in Kebbi and Plateau States found that most of the conflicts are settled directly between the two parties. If not unresolved, it is usually carried to a meeting between the Ardo (Head of the Herders) and the Village Head of the farmers. In rare cases, it would then be taken to the District Heads. The last resort, according to Blench, is to report to the police, a practice that is more prevalent amongst the farmers. He further explained that herders declined to go to the police for conflict resolution because they are always made scapegoats. It is salient to state that the increasing competition for scarce quality land and resources between the two groups provides the basis for the recurring violence that takes place between farmers and herders.

Tukur (2013) stated that the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations had also developed an Action Plan for Transhumance Livestock Breeding in West Africa. Some of these interventions, according to him, have been conceived and are at the



level of implementation. He argued that if these interventions are well monitored to be effective, it would drastically reduce conflicts between farmers and herders, increase pastoralism and engender economic, ecological and political stability in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa.

*Gaps in Literature:* The literature reviewed showed that there has been an avalanche of studies that have investigated the conflict between farmers and herdsman, especially in the North-central part of Nigeria. Despite this, scant attention has been paid to South West part of Nigeria where farmers and herders coexist in some communities. Studies need to investigate why the farmers and herders conflict in the southwest part of Nigeria has not assumed such a frightening proportion as we have in the North Central and North Eastern parts of the country. There is little or no effort to explain why the conflict, despite its occurrence in Southwest Nigeria, has not burgeoned into full-scale conflict to warrant both national and global attention.

Despite the occurrence of the conflict between the farmers and herders in the Wansagare-Alabefe community in the northern part of Oyo State, Southwest Nigeria, there is no systematic study that has been conducted to understand what may account for the reason why the conflict has not burgeoned into large scale recurring conflict. This study seeks to address the gap. Most of the systematic studies on the conflict have focused largely on the North Central geopolitical zone and to some extent some few states in the North-East geo-political zone, possibly because of the recurring conflict that has assumed a violent character.

*Theoretical Framework:* The study used the eco-violence theory. The central point of this theory espouses that scarcity of renewable resources and a welter of other social factors contribute and lead to violent outcomes that manifest in ethnic conflict and insurgencies. Instructively, the role of environmental scarcity in causing violence is rarely as simple as it sometimes presents. It is important to observe that violent outcomes are usually the consequence of sustained interactions between scarcity and a cluster of other factors, such as inequality, migration, the functionality of social institutions and poverty (Homer-Dixon, 1998). We need to point out that violence is rarely caused by scarcity alone.

Homer-Dixon (1998) gave summaries of nine physical trajectories of global change: human population growth, rising energy consumption, global warming, ozone depletion, cropland scarcity, freshwater depletion, the decline of fish stocks, and biodiversity loss as factors that precipitate conflict and violence. Scarcity or shrinking of these resources as a result of misuse, overuse or degradation under certain circumstances will eventually spawn conflicts, especially when there is contestation over the use of those depleting resources by competing groups with different sources of livelihood. Homer-Dixon (1998) explains that decreases in the quality and quantity of renewable resources, exponential population

growth, and unequal resource accessibility act alone or in combinations with other factors to increase the scarcity and pressure for certain population groups to access cropland, water, forests, and fish. This can diminish economic output and endanger sources of livelihoods both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the migrant groups in search of greener pastures, with broader implications for regional and national economies and security. The affected people may be forced to either migrate or be expelled to new lands. Migrating groups often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, whose resources are scarcely adequate to meet local population and needs. Thus, decreases in resource wealth are critical factors that could spawn conflict in a context of growing population experiencing decreases in the quality and quantity of renewable resources.

Homer-Dixon explains environmental scarcity as a deficiency in renewable resources caused by resource reduction, increased demand and disproportionate distribution. Environmental scarcity provokes tensions that could sometimes lead to the migration of the weaker group in search of dwindling resources that are deemed to be owned by a community. Those who have low access to resources migrate from one locality to another as a result of resource scarcity in their environment. This provides a basis for their migration to places that are perceived to provide greater opportunities for the enhancement of their livelihoods and status. Thus, scarcity of resources constrains economic development which leads to social instability. It is pertinent to adumbrate that decreasing yields in sources of livelihoods like agriculture and pastoralism, low economic productivity, social segmentation and exclusion, poverty and disarticulated social institutions often lead to stereotyping and negative ethnic profiling, which usually stimulates ethnic clashes and sub-national insurgencies.

Furthermore, eco-violence theory accounts that ecological issues and mindless misuse of scarce resources engender conflict and violence amongst competing groups. For this reason, climate change, appropriation of community land by the government for industrial purposes and sometimes land grabbing by top government officials for personal enrichment have significantly denied local community their sources of livelihoods and deny pastoralists good quality grazing lands that usually force pastoralists to look for greener vegetation for their livestock. Low rainfall in the semi-arid (Sahel) has equally forced the Fulani herdsmen to spread (migrate) into communities where there is either frequent rainfall or good vegetation for their cattle to graze and protect their sources of livelihoods. During the period of grazing, the herdsmen move into farmland to feed their cows and in the process destroy cropland. As a result of this, farmers sometimes either result to a deliberate effort to use pesticides that could be poisonous to the cattle when they graze on croplands or resort to cattle rustling. This scenario provides a fertile context for the orgy of violence to burgeon, especially when the sources of the conflict are either not promptly addressed or justly resolved to both contesting parties.

The logic of eco-violence theory conveys that violent outcomes are often the product of interactions between scarcity and several other factors, such as inequality, migration, dysfunctionality of social institutions and a failing state. With the scarcity of quality land in a context of an emerging state failure with a growing population, conflicts between farmers and herders become a recurring phenomenon that has assumed a frightening and dangerous proportion. Importantly too, the perverse culture of forceful and arbitrary conscription of lands by state officials for selfish reasons has also provided a context for conflict. Indeed, some studies have established that state officials and those saddled with the responsibility on land matters exploit the communal land for their personal interest, without consideration for local users and food products in the country (Transparency International 2011). As a result of the arbitrariness of state officials, some of the lands that were either reserved as grazing routes or for farming purposes have been conscripted by state officials for primitive accumulation like building of estates or appropriating those areas for the construction of businesses in which they have shares. In some local communities especially in the South West, South East and South-South, the issue of land grabbing has been violently resisted by youths in those affected communities who think the conscription of their land does not aid the development of agriculture productivity or empower indigenes of the affected communities. Thus, government officials have made access to land usage difficult as a result of the politics of land conscription that do not help in sustainable food production and food security in the country.

## **Research Objective and Methodologies**

### *Research Objective*

The main research objective was to investigate the conflict between the farmers and herdsmen in the Wasangare Alabefe community in the northern part of Oyo State, Nigeria; and identify the consequences of such conflict for livelihoods and ethnic relations in the community. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Investigate the causes of the conflict between the farmers and herdsmen in the Wasangare Alabefe community.
- Understand the socio-economic consequences of the conflict for farmers herdsmen conflict in the Wasangare Alabefe community.
- Probe the impact of the conflict on the ethnic relations in the Wasangare Alabefe community.
- Analyse the extent of containment measures and their effectiveness in stemming the conflict between the farmers and herdsmen in the Wasangare Alabefe community.

### ***Study Area and Location***

Wansagare Alabafe community is in the northern axis of Oyo State. It is close to Shaki town, and it is a rural community that is populated by farmers and herdsmen. It is a community that does not show any government presence. The population is overwhelmingly illiterate and less than five thousand inhabitants. The major sources of livelihood for inhabitants in the community are farming and pastoralism. It is essentially a Muslim dominated community.

Wansagare Alabefe was chosen for this study as a result of the fact that it presents an appropriate context for this study. Most of the indigenes of the community practice farming and the Fulani settlers' rear cattle in the community, located within the northern fringe of Oyo State. The choice of the study area was informed by the fact that the Wansagare Alabafe community is predominantly an agricultural community with good vegetation that attracts the pastoralists, ostensibly for the survival of their cattle and the protection and/ or enhancement of their source of livelihoods. It also presents good vegetation for cash crop farming. Instructively, both indigenes (predominantly Muslims and Yoruba farmers) and the settlers (predominantly Muslims and Fulani pastoralists) have lived peacefully for many decades.

### ***Research Approach and Method***

The study used a mixed research method to investigate the conflict between farmers and herders and consequences for livelihoods and ethnic relations between the farmers and the herders in the Wansagare Alabefe community in the northern part of Oyo State. It employed both qualitative (In-depth Interviews) and quantitative (Questionnaires) as instruments for data collection.

*The population of Study:* The elements for this study were drawn from amongst farmers and herders in the Wansagare Alabefe community. The oral interview was used to select the respondents that have lived more than five consecutive years in the community, engaging in farming or herding from a group who have lesser years for data collection. This was to enhance the quality of responses on the issues that underpin the research.

*Sample Design, Respondents and Participants:* The study employed the nonprobability sampling method. This study used both snowball sampling and purposive sampling to identify the appropriate respondents for inclusion in data gathering. Snowball was used because the community head known as the "Baale" was the contact point that identified the heads of both farmers and herders. It was the head of both farmers and herders that gathered their members in their respective domains for the administration of the questionnaire. To identify the appropriate respondents for inclusion in the data gathering, an oral question was thrown to the respondents that those who have lived and engaged in

either farming or cattle-rearing in the community for a minimum of five consecutive years should form a group and those who have lesser years should form another group. This oral interview was done to ensure the appropriate selection of respondents that are well competent and knowledgeable about the issues the research seeks to interrogate. This was to ensure that respondents have adequate knowledge of the issues that structure the objectives of the research. Those who have spent more than five consecutive years in the community practicing either farming or rearing cattle were invited one after the other to respond to the items on the questionnaire. The items on the questionnaire were read to the respondents in their native language (Yoruba) and filled into the questionnaire by the researcher. The questionnaire was not self-administered by the respondents because they could neither read nor write.

The total sample size was eighty (80) responses in which fifty (50) questionnaires were administered to the farmers and thirty (30) questionnaires were administered to the herdsmen in the same community. Five days were used to collect the responses of the farmers and three days were used to collect the responses of the herders. The reason why the farmers constituted a larger population is that they have a larger population and they are the indigenes. The herders were allotted a smaller figure because they are the settlers with less population.

In addition to the sampling, two participants were interviewed: the leader of the farmers and the leader of the pastoralists were interviewed to have narratives that would strengthen the credibility of the data.

*Quality Assurance- Data Analysis and Techniques:* The study focused on four main variables, namely, the cause of the conflict that arose from the interaction between farmers and herders, consequences of the conflict for livelihoods and productivity, ethnic relations and mechanisms and its effectiveness for addressing the conflict.

Quantitative data were analysed with the use of descriptive statistics, that is, frequency tables and simple percentages. A thematic approach was followed to analyse the qualitative data. The qualitative data generated with the instrument of the interview were carefully written down after listening to the recorder. We transcribed the interviews and quoted verbatim the participant's narratives from their recorded conversations. Consequently, overarching themes were used for the categorization of the qualitative data; and we followed a thematic approach for the analysis of the qualitative data.

## **Results**

Findings demonstrated that there is an intense conflict between the farmers and herdsmen with grave consequences for food security and the supply of livestock. Despite the disagreement between the farmers and the herders, the community leaders have been

successful in containing the conflict to ensure it does not transform into violent conflict. It was also revealed that both farmers and herders have a high level of confidence in the adjudicatory responsibilities of the community leaders.

The data revealed that the major cause of the conflict is tied to the destruction of crops on farms when cattle graze on farmland, and also caused by cattle rustling. Forty-nine (61.3%) of the respondents reported that the destruction of crops on farmlands constitutes the major source of conflict. The respondents narrated that the conflict is more prevalent during the dry season. One of the interviewees put this issue in perspective when he said: “The conflict between us and the farmers happens anytime our cattle enter their farms and destroy things on their farm on our way to grazing the cattle.”

The study established that the conflict has affected both farmers’ and herdsmen’s productivity, with consequences for the living standards of people in the community who are predominantly farmers and herdsmen. To this end, Forty-one (51.3%) of the respondents reported that the conflict has reduced the output and income of both farmers and herdsmen while twenty-four (30.0%) reported that the loss of produce in storage was the most damaging consequences of the farmers-herdsmen conflict.

We found out that both farmers and herdsmen believe more in the informal means of conflict resolution. The data revealed that forty-one (51.3%) of the respondents narrated that they preferred the local community leaders to resolve conflicts to reporting to the police. The respondents expressed that they believe more in the informal mechanism since the chiefs serve as the gatekeepers of the community and would expeditiously and judiciously resolve issues that are brought before them. One of the interviewees put this point in a succinct narrative when he said: “We hardly involve the police in this conflict. Anytime cattle eat things on the farm, the owner of the farm affected and the Fulani who is caught will all go the village Chief (Baale) and his elders who will help us settle the dispute...”

The data also revealed that the conflict has consequences for social cohesion and peaceful coexistence of the natives and the settlers in Wansangare Alabafe village. As a result of the conflict, there has been an increase in ethnic suspicion and hatred between the natives and the settlers. For example, Forty-three (53.8%) of the respondents contend that the conflict has engendered ethnic suspicion and hatred and twenty-two (27.5%) of the respondents said the conflict has strained the relationship between the farmers and the herdsmen.

### **Recommendation/Suggestion**

It is recommended that periodic consultations take place amongst the police, statutory agencies, community leadership and the stakeholders in having a holistic understanding of

the underlying issues of the conflict in order to provide an effective means of resolving those conflicts before they snowball into a major crisis.

It is also recommended that the appropriate agency of the government such as the National Orientation Agency be strengthened to carrying out regular sensitization to the community, leaders and associations of farmers and herdsmen on ways to ensure peace in the community.

Government should intensify international border patrol measures during the dry season to obtain information on the influx of Udawa and Bukoloji herders from the neighbouring countries, especially the Niger Republic. This will enable the authority to take a proactive decision.

It is recommended that government agencies responsible for agriculture, geography, lands, information, natural resources and forestry ensure proper delineation and regular revision of stock routes.

It is suggested that rural development and micro-finance banks, as well as agricultural insurance companies, should work towards financial assistance for victims of farmers-herdsmen conflicts. Banks and micro finance banks should come forward to provide financial support both farmers and herders so as to make them more productive.

Farmers and herders should form more cooperatives and associations that can represent their interests and enable them to speak as a group. This may reduce the frequency of “jungle justice” by seeking redress from relevant authorities whenever disputes arise.

It is also important for the government to ensure that whatever measure that would be taken as a solution to farmers-herdsmen conflict appreciates the peculiarities that define each of the communities where the conflict exists.

It is important that government must demonstrate the independence of state institutions and its capacity to dispense justice and fairness to aggrieved parties without favour or bias.

## **Conclusion**

This study did not investigate the cause of the conflict between farmers and herdsmen in communities where there is large-scale recurring conflict as observed in some states such as Benue and Taraba states that are located in the North Central and North-East geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Therefore, it might be difficult to generalise the outcome of this study to other geo-political zones where conflict has been recurring and has assumed a frightening and intense proportion.

Even though the community in which this study took place has both farmers and herdsmen engaging in their occupations, we observed that there is a low-intensity conflict between the farmers and herdsmen. We further observed that the structure of local

leadership in the community has been effective in ensuring that the conflict does not degenerate into large-scale recurring conflict. However, there is the likelihood that the prevailing low intensity of the conflict could assume high-intensity conflict in the future as a result of the complex processes of deepening poverty, contestation over dwindling resources, and ethnic suspicion. Further research is needed to investigate the broader factors that account for the momentary success recorded in stemming the conflict from snowballing into large scale conflict, despite the deepening poverty, contestation over dwindling resources and the growing ethnic ill-feeling between the indigene Yoruba farmers and the settlers Fulani herdsmen in Wansagare Alabafe community. Despite the limitations of this study, we believe that the causes of the conflict and the suggestions that came out from this study would be salient for other geo-political zones.

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