

Farmers-Herders Clashes in Agatu, Logo and Guma Local Government Areas of Benue State: Analysing its Implication on Food Production

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Abstract: This work was an inquiry into the implication of farmers-herders conflict on agricultural activities in Logo, Agatu and Guma local government areas of Benue state. The main objective of the study was to highlight the consequences of famers-herders conflict on agricultural production in the selected local government areas. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed to first divide the local governments into clusters in the first stage, and in the second stage, stratified sampling technique was used to draw the list of all the communities to be studied within the council wards and communities, while simple random sampling was used to select respondents for study in the last stage. Consequently, questionnaires were used as instrument of data collection to survey the opinions of 415 respondents across communities in the three local government areas. The findings of the study revealed that farmers-herders conflict has become a very challenging issue for farmers in Benue state and has impacted negatively on food production. Also that the clashes begin in form of attacks on famer lands and on cattle. Similarly, the study revealed that during the crises, houses are destroyed and communities are displacing dislocating farmers from engaging in serious farming. The study thus concludes that the destruction and displacement of farmers and threat of attack by herders negatively affect agricultural production in Benue state and other agro-business activities. The study calls for more involvement of traditional rulers to manage the conflict, similarly, it is also recommended that law enforcement officers be stationed in affected communities to protect lives and properties; amplifying the call for community policing. Also, the study suggests that the law against open grazing should be modified to serve the purpose of peace and should be respected by all.

Key Words: Farner, Herder, Clashes, food, Production.

I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that about 805 million people of the 7.3 billion people in the world, representing ratio one in nine, suffered from food shortage and hence chronic undernourishment in 2012-2016. Among all the hungry people, 791 million, (89%) live in developing countries (FAO 2001). One key factor that aggravates hunger and food shortage is inter-group conflict on the African continent. In Nigeria, herders and farmers are in constant violent conflict. Partly due to climate change, herders are increasingly in need of access to grazing lands to feed their cattle. Farmers on the other hand, are also constantly in need of expansive farm land to take care of both the food and

economic needs of the growing population (bringing them close to the corridors traditionally used by the Fulani). While farmers often accuse the herders of allowing their animals to destroy their crops and contaminate the community streams, the herders in turn accuse the farmers of poisoning and sometimes rustling their animals as well as denying them access to grazing areas when alternatives cannot be found. This back and forth accusation in most instances results to violent confrontation between the two groups. According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) report (2001), over 40% of farm produce is loss annually in agricultural oriented communities characterised by inter-communal conflict and clashes between farmers and herders.

According to Jibo Simbine and Galadima (2001), the Benue valley is one of the richest regions in Nigeria in terms of natural resources. The Benue valley is blessed with wonderful vegetation for farming and grazing. The areas have over the years attracted a lot of farmers and herdsmen jostling for farming and grazing space respectively. Accordingly, farmers in Benue have enjoyed enormous yield; giving the state the title of the *food basket of the nation*. While Agatu local government is renowned for producing fish that serves both needs of the immediate community and that of communities in Nassarawa state, the yam that is produce yearly in Logo local government has been serving the needs of people in the Middle-belt and beyond (Gebehe 2007). Similarly, if properly harnessed and managed, the rice and fish that comes out of Guma local government area of Benue can equally sustains the entire nation. However, recurring clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in some of the communities in Benue state remains one of the major threats to food security in the country. According to a Human Rights Watch report (2013), violence between Fulani herdsmen, farmers and local communities had killed 3,000 people since 2010. Specifically, the report states that over the past five years, at least 400 people have been killed in clashes between crop breeders and Fulani herdsmen in Benue and Nasarawa, state.

In Jigawa State alone, more than 70 cases of conflicts have been recorded since the beginning of the 2015 farming season. These cases bordered on encroachment into farms by cattle and farmers misuse of cattle routes. While farmers accuse the herdsmen of farm land encroachment, the latter

blame the farmers and members of their communities for rustling of their cattle (Jibo et al 2001). In Benue and Nassarawa States, the farmers often blame the herdsmen for allowing their herds to invade their farmlands and destroy their crops, while the Fulanis on the other hand blame the farmers and local community for killing their cattle and poisoning sources of water.

Yecho (2006) submitted that when conflict becomes a prominent feature of a community, farmlands, building markets, roads and other institution crucial to the smooth operation of the economy are destroyed. Alubo (2006) also asserted that conflict have significant effect on material life in several ways. He stated that during crises, food supply is affected in a predominantly agrarian community; as people cannot continue with their daily farming activities. Sometimes they are forced to flee their communities leaving their livestock and farms behind to other safer places to seek for shelter and protection. In either situation, food security becomes a major problem. FAO (2001) report summarised the implication of communal conflict on an agrarian community when it revealed that food supply becomes problematic because of the alteration in the mutual interdependence for labour and other aspects of agricultural production, processing and marketing. Consequently family income becomes unavailable with profound effects on poverty.

What is disturbing and in fact fast becoming a common feature of clashes between farmers and herdsmen is that bandits and perpetrators of these conflicts seem to target agricultural production deliberately as a way of inflicting pain and in the long run reducing food production and eventually causing food shortages. According to Abati (2020), in 2018, about 73 farmers were killed in two local governments in Benue state in what was described as a farmers-herders clash. The same 2018, a farm in Ondo State, belonging to Chief Olu Falae, former Secretary to the Government of the Federation and a Yoruba leader was attacked by bandits. Three years earlier, Chief Falae was also kidnapped on his farm. He was later returned but the farm was set ablaze. Incessant attacks on communities and farmlands across Nigeria have reduced food production in most parts of the country. Fishing and farming around the Lake Chad Basin have been halted due to insecurity. In Katsina state, farmers in places like Batsari, Kankara, Dandume and Damusa among others have sacrificed their farmlands to bandits. So many farming communities in both North East and the North West, have been displaced. Benue state (the food basket of the nation) which has been known for its rich fertile land and fishing activities producing varieties of agricultural crops in commercial quantity such yam, cassava, fruits, grains among others have recently become shadow of itself because of the impact of the violent conflict on farming communities. Both food production and transportation has been negatively affected.

The All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) has warned of an imminent food crisis. We might be experiencing the crises already as food inflation in Nigeria is over 17%

according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS 2020). COVID-19, and the epileptic rainfall may have disrupted food production in the Benue valley but farmers-herders clashes and the fear of being attack or kidnapped on your farm pose the biggest threats to agricultural production in most parts of Benue state. The thrust of this study is thus to assess the implication of clashes between herdsmen and farmers on food production.

Statement of the Problem

Three years after about 73 farmers were killed and farming as well as fishing communities were displaced in Benue in what was described as farmers-herders clashes, there has been reduction in food production and supplying and around Benue leading to price hike in the market. Staple food like rice, maize, cassava, flour as well as fish which were hitherto now produced in abundance in Benue have become scarce commodity even in Benue state.

While there are lots of studies into farmers-herders conflict, most of them are focused on its implication of on issues like security and inter group relations (see Aver 2018). Others like Ayua (2006) have focus the root causes of the conflict in Benue valley. Sambe etal (2013) how connected communal conflict to food crises in Africa but made very little reference to key food producing communities in Benue like Logo, Guma and Agatu, thus creating a gap in knowledge and hence justification for this study. Benue state is generally known as the food basket of the nation. But the incessant clashes between farmers and herdsmen has displaced farmers, sack agrarian communities, destroyed food crops on the farm, and has made affected communities unsafe for any serious agricultural activity leading to low output likely shortage of food supply. This study is thus intended to carry out an empirical inquiry into the implication of farmers-herders conflict on agricultural activities in some elected communities in the state.

Research Questions

The general research question for the study is; what is the implication of the clashes between farmers and herdsmen on Agricultural production in Benue state? The specific questions include the following.

1. What are the remote and immediate causes of violent clashes between Farmers and Herders in Agatu, Guma and Loga local government area of Benue state?
2. What is the nature and extent of the clashes?
3. What are the consequences of the violent clashes on agricultural production in the study areas?

Research Objectives

The general objective of the study is to examine the implication of farmers-herders conflict on food production. The specific objectives include:

1. To identify the remote and immediate causes of violent clashes between farmers and herders in the study areas.
2. To highlight the nature and extent of the violent conflict between farmers and herders.
3. To analyse the consequences of the violent clashes in the study areas on agricultural production.

II. METHODOLOGY

This section deals with the procedures and techniques used to generate data for analysis presents the method used in the study and the structural framework of the research. Basically, survey techniques were used to collect data for study. The study was carried out in three (3) major food producing local governments in Benue state namely Guma, Agatu and Logo Local Government areas. This is because; the three local governments have suffered severe consequences of herders-farmers conflict with its attendant consequences on food production.

The study used descriptive survey research techniques to collect data through questionnaire. The reason for the choice of descriptive research method was to ensure detailed systematic analysis of facts and characteristics of collected data of the study to help proper analysis, comparison and evaluation of findings.

The Study areas

The three local government area that constitute the study areas of the study namely Agatu,

Guma and Logo local government area are local government in Benue state that have vast fertile land for arable farming. Logo for instance is known production of yam and other tuber crops among other staple crops, Guma on the other hand is known for its competitive advantage in rice production and maize production while Agatu is known for yam, cassava, vegetable farming and fishing along river Benue.

Agatu Local Government Area

Agatu local government area was carved out of Apa local government area in 1996. It used to be the Agatu district of the old Otukpo division. The headquarters of the local government is at Obagaji; it is one of nine local government areas in the southern senatorial zone which is mainly occupied by the Idoma people of Benue State whose dialect however is Agatu. By the 1991 census, it has a population of about 80,000.

The resident occupation is mainly farming. Most of the people are subsistence farmers, growing yams, guinea corn, millet, groundnuts and vegetables. Because many Agatu live along the Benue River, fishing is also an important source of food agricultural activity for the people. The local government is also blessed with other mineral resources like Limestone, Gypsum, Anhydride, Kaolin, Natural gas, Salt, and Petroleum.

The local government shares boundaries with Apa local government to the South, Gwer West to the East, and West by Kogi State to the West. For the most part, the Agatu live peacefully with neighbouring people groups. When disputes do occur, they are usually about land rather than religion. In particular, some serious disputes with itinerant cattle herders trying to claim Agatu land have broken out in violence leading to the death of 20 civilians and five military officers in 2014. This was later followed by series of clashes between farmers and herders.

Logo Local Government area

Logo local government is located on the map of Benue state around longitude 9°4 East and latitude 7°40 North. Like Agatu, Logo local government was created in December 1996 out of Katsina-Ala Local Government Area. The name is derived from the Logo stream which runs through the local government from the east to the West. The headquarter of the local government is Ugba. The local government shares boundaries to the East by Ukum Local Government Area, to the North by Wukari Local Government of Taraba state, on the North-West by Guma Local Government Area, in the West by Buruku Local Government area, in the south by Katsina-Ala Local Government area. Logo has a projected population of 120,000 according to 2006 population census report. Logo local government is composed basically of Tiv speaking people, the 6th most populous ethnic group in Nigeria. The local government is inhabited by two dominant groups namely; Ugondo and Gaambe-Tiev, and shares federal house of representative seat with Ukum and Katsina-Ala local governments and has one state house of Assembly seat. The local government is made up of nine council wards namely, Mbater, Mbagber, Tombo, Mbayam Yonov, Mbadyul, Nenzev, Mbavuur, Turn, Ukemberagya/Tswarev.

With its proximity to Ukum; the biggest yam market in West Africa, and penchant for Agro-business, Logo is fast becoming a cosmopolitan area with other ethnic groups from Nigeria and beyond coming for business activities or public services jobs or simply to settle there. Other notable towns in logo include Ugba, Anyiin, and Abeda, and. And these major towns among others have certain markets that take place week bases or periodically for trading in farm produce produce. Traders come from faraway places like: Kano, Maiduguri and Sokoto States in the far North, Enugu, Lagos and Port-Harcourt in the South to buy from those markets because of the abundance of yam and other agricultural produce. It is however regrettable that the Fulani-herders clashes that has bedeviled the state and the region have punctuated not just farming activities but also agro-business.

Guma Local Government Area

Guma Local Government was created out of Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State in May 1989. The Local Government derived its name from river Guma which transverse the local Government from the North-West and flows through the North Bank Area in River Benue. It is

situated on the North-eastern part of Benue State with a land mark of 240,000 square kilometres. Guma Local Government lies between longitude 9⁰North and latitude 7⁰ south, and longitude 10⁰ east and latitude 8⁰ west on the Map of Nigeria.

It shares common boundaries with Tarka and Logo local Government Area in the east, Makurdi Local Government in the south while Doma Local Government Area of Nasarawa State lies the west with Gbajimba town as the headquarters, located at the confluence of the state; River Benue and River Katsina-Ala.

According to the 2006 census, the local government has a population of 191,599; the local government is dominated by the Tiv people who speak Tiv language. There are settlements of Jukun in the local government area especially at Abinsi along the bank of River Benue and their main occupation is fishing, they speak the Jukun language. Other tribes are Kabawa people, the Fulani and the Hausa people also dwell in the local government.

Guma Local Government is characterized by low level land and few hills. The vegetation is that of Guinea savannah with fairly tall trees and a lot of grasses which cattle, goats, sheep etc. feed on. As a transition zone between the north and south, the Guinea savannah vegetation favours the growth of both roots and cereal crops, in other word, the local government is endowed with large expanse of fertile land both in the hinter land and along the valleys of the rivers within the local government.

The Tiv people are by natural endowment noted for the substantial cultivation of seasonal crops usually on a subsistence scale. The fertile alluvial soil can serve as an opportunity for investors who would want to practice commercial agriculture to step in and invest the rivers (River Benue and River Katsina-Ala) supports irrigation farming all year round for increased harvest. The crops which are cultivated here include; Yam, cassava, millet, maize, soya-beans, groundnut, guinea-corn, white and yellow melon, okro, pepper, tomatoes, Beni-seed, and Rice etc. The Fulani people on the other hand move within the Local government Area from one place to another in search of grasses for their herds. This is because Benue state produces nutritious pastures which help the herds to grow quickly. In comparison with the far north where desertification provides limited or no grasses for cattle feed. The confluence centre could be developed as a tourist center to attract foreign investment in tourism and could generate revenue for the local government. The Local government has advantage of being drained by three important rivers, River Guma, which flows into River Benue at Gbajimba town, the confluence on the social and economic life of the people of Guma as the rich Alluvial deposit favor agricultural production while the rivers provide great advantage for fishing. Investors could also use the availability of rivers as advantage to invest into fish production and cultivation. In spite of the large production of these crops in the 10 Local government area, there is virtually no agro-allied industry for processing these Raw materials, great

opportunities therefore exist for investors in this areas for Agro-allied industry as well as fish preservation and processing industries given the abundant fish product from Abinsi bank of River Benue and the confluence of River Benue and River Katsina-Ala.

Apart from farming and fishing, other economic activities of the people are carving, weaving, and artistically designed materials of various sizes and beautiful mortars and pestles are found along Makurdi-Lafia road. These activities which used to be secondary to farming and fishing have gradually become one of the major economic activities. Guma Local Government is also endowed with many other natural resources that have for long remained commercially untapped. These include;

- a) Salt deposit in commercial quantity at Tse-Taavaan and Kaseyo.
- b) Zinc deposit at Kaseyo.
- c) Barits at HyungwaDebu.
- d) Gypsum in Uvir, Nzorov, and Mbadwem.

These mineral deposits provide investment opportunities for foreign investors to key in for investments. In terms of infrastructure, Guma Local Government has a network of roads and water routs through River Benue and River Katsina-Ala.

Guma Local Government Area is made up of 10 council wards which includes

- a) Abinsi, (b) Kambe, c) Mbabai, d) Mbadwem, (e) Mbawa, (f) Mbaye/ Yandev, (g) Nzorov, (h) Nyiev, (i) Saghev, and (j) Uvir

Social amenities most especially electricity is provided in the following settlements: Abinsi, Agasha, Daudu, and Gbajimba.

The population of people in Agatu local government area is estimated to be over 90,110 while that of Guma local government is estimated at 191,200 and that of Logo local government stands at over 120,000 people (www.iambenue.com). The population for this study (i.e, those selected to participate in the study) however are people who are above 18 years and resident in the study areas as at the time of conducting the study.

The study used the multi-stage sampling technique to select representative sample for the study. The technique involves the following steps:

In the first stage, the researcher used cluster sampling procedure to consider communities in the study areas. Cluster sampling technique is recommended when elements in the studied population are scattered or spread over a very large area and there are sufficient reasons to believe that the population can be grouped into smaller units or clusters (Akintoye and Otite 1994).

In the second stage, stratified sampling was used to draw the list of all the communities to be studied within the council wards and communities in Logo, Agatu and Guma areas.

In the last stage, the respondents were selected using simple random sampling. The lottery method was used which involved drawing local market names and notable places in the local government where people are known to aggregate from a bowl where names of households were written, squeezed and dropped to give every household and the respondents therein an equal chance of being selected for the study. This technique was used to select 94 people from selected council wards in Guma local government namely Nyiev, Nzorov, Mbabai, Abinsi, and Mbawa. Also 159 respondents were selected from Tombo, Mbater, Mbadyul Mbavuur and the local government headquarters Logo local government area Ugba. Similarly 162 respondents were sampled from Obagaji, (Agatu local government headquarters) Enogaje, Ogbaulu, Agbachi, Ogam and Oweto bringing a total number of the sampled population to 415.

The instrument used to collect data from the respondents was the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained both closed and open ended questions that were consistent with the objectives of the study. The questionnaires were pre-coded and handed out in person to the respondents by the researcher and with the help of research assistants; who helped to distribute and retrieve the completed questionnaires.

Over 620 questionnaires were administered across the study areas, but only 415 were returned. The subsequent analysis was therefore done according to the total number of the returned questionnaires. The data were analysed quantitatively using frequency distribution table in a cross tabulated format.

III. RESULT AND ANALYSES

This section contains the presentation and analyses of data. The data are presented in bivariate tables beginning with socio-demographic data for easy interpretation and understanding.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to Age

Age	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
18-25	16	17.0	6	3.7	10	6.3
26-35	12	12.8	51	31.5	109	68.6
36-45	57	60.6	98	60.5	5	3.1
46 above	9	9.6	7	4.3	34	21.4
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

Data in the table on age distribution of the respondents who participated in the study indicate that while only a few (3.1%) were within the age bracket of 36-45 in Logo local government area, majority of respondents in Guma (60.6%) and Agatu (60.5%) on the other hand were within this category (36-45 age). Majority of those who participate in the study in Logo were between the ages of 26-35 years. This suggests that more youths participated in the study in Logo than they did in Guma and Agatu local government areas.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to Sex

Sex	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Male	71	75.5	109	67.3	125	78.6
Female	23	24.5	53	32.7	34	21.4
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

Table 2 indicates that majority of the respondents; (75.5% in Guma, 67.3% in Agatu, and 78.6% in Logo local government) were men. This indicates that men participated in the study more than women. This might be connected to the fact that the men are more involved in outdoor exercises than women especially in crises prone areas.

Table 3 Distribution of respondents according to Marital Status

Marital Status	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Single	10	10.6	30	18.5	10	6.3
Divorced	3	3.2	21	13.0	5	3.1
Married	21	22.3	68	42.0	109	68.6
Widowed	60	63.8	43	26.5	34	21.4
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

Table 3 above indicates that majority (63.8%) of the respondents in Guma Local government area were widowed. Similarly, majority of the respondents who participated in the study in Agatu (63.8%) and Logo (68.6%) were married. This indicates that majority of the respondents for the studies were married people.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to Religion

Religion	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Christianity	57	60.6	89	54.9	101	63.5
Islam	11	11.7	70	43.2	34	21.4
Traditional	26	27.7	3	1.9	24	15.1
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

Table 4 indicate that majority of the respondents in all the local government; Guma (60.6%) Logo (63.5%) and Agatu (54.9%) were Christians. It was only in Agatu that a significant number, 43.2% of the respondents were Muslims. But the number of Christians was nonetheless more.

Table 5 Distribution of respondents according to Occupation

Nature of Occupation	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Farming	46	49.0	51	31.5	97	61.0
Civil Servants	19	20.2	6	3.7	16	10.0
Fishing	7	7.4	98	60.5	12	7.5
Trading	22	23.4	7	4.3	34	21.4
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

The above table revealed that majority (60.5%), of the respondents in Agatu local government area were indicated that fishing is their major occupation. In Guma and Logo on the other hand, majority of respondents 61.0% and 49.0% respectively indicated farming as their occupation.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to Level of Education

Level of Education	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq.	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Primary School Level	19	20.2	57	35.2	41	25.7
Secondary Level	53	56.4	6	3.7	9	5.7
Non-Formal level	9	9.6	80	49.4	86	54.1
Tertiary	13	13.8	19	11.7	23	14.5
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

The above table revealed that 56.4 % of the respondents in Guma possessed a secondary school level of education. The same table revealed that majority of the respondents in Agatu (49.4%) and Logo (54.1%) local government possessed a non-formal level of education.

Table 7: Cross tabulation showing the distribution of respondents according to factors that facilitates Famers-Herders Clashes in Agatu, Guma and Logo Local Government Areas of Benue state.

Nature of post-election violence	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Porous Border	4	4.2	6	3.7	18	11.3
Poor Security in Communities	15	16.0	51	31.5	101	63.5
Struggle over land/Resources	67	71.3	98	60.5	34	21.4
Indegenship question	8	8.5	7	4.3	6	3.8
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

The data in table 7 contained information on the factors that facilitates farmers-herders clashes in Agatu, Guma and Logo local government areas. The table data indicate that struggle over land and resource was highlighted by majority of respondents in Guma local government area as one of the factors that facilitates farmers-herders conflict in Benue state. Majority of respondents in Agatu (60.5%) and Logo (63.5%) however, attributed poor security in communities as a factor that facilitates famers-herders clashes.

In earlier studies, Aver (2019) identified struggle over grazing/farming land as one of the major causes of conflict between farmers and herders in Benue state. Buttressing the importance of land to farmers, Utsaha et al (2000) submitted that land is to farmers as water is to fish for survival hence they (farmers) do everything to protect it.

Table 8: Distribution of Respondents According to the nature of Famers-Herders Clashes in Benue State

Persons that perpetrate Election Violence	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq.	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Occupation of Farmlands/communities	10	10.6	57	35.2	41	25.7

Destruction of Houses and Farm produce	8	8.5	6	3.7	86	54.1
Killing of people	3	3.2	89	54.9	9	5.7
All of the above	73	77.7	10	6.2	23	14.5
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

From table 8 above, majority (77.7%) of the respondents in Guma assess the nature of farmers-herders conflict to include occupation of farmlands, destruction of houses/communities and killing of people. In Agatu local government, majority of the respondents there assess killing of people as one the manifestation of the clashes in their community while a significant number, 54.1% of respondents in Logo agreed that destruction of houses and farm produce as a nature of farmers-herders clashes in their community.

Table 9: Distribution of Respondents According to their Assessment of Clashes between herders and Farmers in Agatu, Guma and Logo Local government areas of Benue state

Assessment of Farmers-Herders Clashes	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Very Destructive	51	54.3	23	14.2	107	67.3
Mild Destructive	14	14.9	3	1.9	19	11.9
None of the above	21	22.3	105	64.8	4	2.5
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

Table 9 contains data regarding the assessment of farmers-herders clashes in Benue state. The data from Guma and Logo and Agatu indicate that majority (54.3% and 67.3% in Logo) assess the extent of famers-herders clashes as being very destructive and 64.8% of those in Agatu assess it as being destructive. In similar studies, Aver (2019) in his survey of inter-Group conflict in the Benue Valley submitted that properties worth over 100 million have been destroyed between 2000-2018 in incessant conflict between famers and herders in Benue, Nassarwa and Taraba state. The study concluded that both the physical and social fabrics of the society are destroyed exacerbating mutual suspicion and distrust among groups.

Table 10: Cross tabulation showing the Implication of famers-herders clashes on Food Production in Benue state

Factors facilitating post-election violence	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Shortage of Food	40	42.6	21	12.9	101	63.5
Hunger/starvation	35	37.2	121	74.7	29	18.2
poor yield	10	10.6	15	9.3	26	16.4
unemployment	9	9.6	5	3.1	3	1.9
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

While only a few (12.9%) of respondents from Agatu perceive food shortage as a major implication of clashes between farmers and herders, data from Guma and Logo local government indicates that majority (42.6%) and (63.5%) of

respondents respectively from the local governments see food shortage as a consequent of the conflict. However, majority of the respondents agreed that hunger and starvation could be attributed to clashes between farmers and herders. It is instructive to note here that while farming of crops like Rice, Yam, maize among other staple crops are the common agricultural activities in Guma and Logo local government, the main agricultural occupation of people in Agatu local government is fishing. This may account for their perception regarding the implication of conflict on agricultural activities in their community as shown in table 10 above.

Table 11: Whether farming Activities Take place During Famers-Herders Conflict in Benue State

Response	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Yes	41	43.6	121	74.7	116	73.0
No	35	37.2	31	19.1	30	18.9
Uncertain	18	19.1	10	6.2	13	8.1
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

Data in table 11 above is meant to explain the consequences of farmers herders clashes on agricultural activities and food production in Benue state. From the table, majority of the respondents in Guma (43.6%), Agatu (74.7%) and Logo (73.0%) local governments agreed that the clashes between farmers and herders in Benue state truncates agricultural activities as most farmers cannot go to the farm during this period. In a related argument, Abati (2020) submitted that, bandits target famers in Southern Kaduna and North Central Nigeria sacking and displacing agrarian communities. While farmers target cattle, herders target farm land hence reduction in food production at both subsistence and commercial scale.

Table 12: Distribution of respondents According to ways of reducing violent conflict between herders and farmers in Benue state

Solutions to post-election violence	Guma		Agatu		Logo	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Involvement of Traditional Rulers	16	17.0	101	62.3	5	3.1
Enforcement of local laws	28	29.8	21	13.011	134	84.3
Increase security in vulnerable communities	42	44.7	18	.1	12	7.5
Reorientation on need for peace	8	8.5	22	13.6	8	5.0
Total	94	100	162	100	159	100

Source: Questionnaire, 2019.

From the table 12 above, while a few (3.1%) in Logo and 17.0% of respondents in Guma local government areas agreed with the suggestion that traditional rulers should play a significant role in conflict management between herders and farmers clashes in Benue state, majority (62.3%) of the respondents in Agatu agreed. Similarly, majority of respondents in Logo local government agreed with the suggestion that lengthy sentencing of perpetrators of conflict can also serve as a useful mechanism to reduce conflict in

between famers and herders in Benue state. Only a few (29.8%) in Guma and (13.0%) in Agatu local government agreed with this suggestion. Other mechanisms suggested for conflict resolution by respondents include increasing security presence in vulnerable communities. Majority of respondents (44.7%) mostly in Guma agreed to this suggestion.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of findings will be done according to the research question earlier posed.

The first research question is meant to identify the remote and immediate causes of violent clashes between farmers and herders in Agatu, Guma and logo local government areas of Benue state. The findings as indicated in table 7 revealed that struggle over grazing land is one of the causes of farmers-herders conflict in Guma and Agatu local government areas. In Guma, poor security in communities has been singled out as one of the causes of clashes between the two groups under study. This finding is consistent with Aver (2018) submission which indentified porous border and scarcity of fertile farming land as the remote causes of herders-farmers clashes.

The second research question is meant to identify the nature and extent of farmers-herders conflict in the selected communities. While data from Logo local government indicated that houses and farm produce suffer severe damage during violent confrontation between farmers and herders in the community, findings from Agatu indicated that people are killed during clashes between the two groups. In Guma, the findings indicated that farm produce are destroyed, people are killed and that communities and farm lands are occupied by invaders (see table 8). According to Ker (2007) farming communities suffer total collapse during and after conflict between farmers and herders. He specifically indentified the characteristics of famers-herders conflict to include rape, arson and destruction of homes.

Similarly the study also attempted to provide answer to the third research question which was meant to analyse the consequences of farmers-herders clashes on agricultural production in Guma, Logo and Agatu local government areas. Data on table Eight (8) Nine (9) and Ten (10) contains data which explains the consequences of farmers herders conflict on agricultural production. Table eight (8) indicate that farm produce are destroyed, farming communities in most instances are equally displaced and people are killed. Similarly in table nine (9), data from the three communities studied indicates that herders-farmers violent conflict is unhealthy to development as it leaves destruction in its path. Lending a voice to the consequences of farmers-herders conflict, Alubo (2006) submitted that a community that can no longer produce for itself will starve. Farmers-herders conflict thus creates fear, displace farmers generally and punctuate farming activities. Similarly, the invaders in most cases destroy both the harvested and yet to be harvested crops hence impacting negatively on food production and reducing food availability.

V. SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

The main objective of the study was to evaluate the implication of farmers-herders conflict in agricultural production in specific local government areas of Benue state. Other specific objectives of the study were also outlined and a suitable methodology was also developed and used to generate data for the study in line with to the specific objectives. The findings revealed that farmers-herders conflict is an existential reality in Benue state, specifically in the study areas (Guma, Agatu and Logo local government areas). Similarly, it was revealed that the clashes between these two groups manifests in attacks on each other's assets and resources. While herders target farm land and agricultural produce, farmers at any given opportunity target herder's cattle. This scenario persists for long depending on how long and the capability and effectiveness of law enforcement officers to restore order in affected communities. In a similarly study, Ker (2007) averred that there are act of arson, looting, harassment of women and children, since the state force sent to quell the dispute do not always help matter as they actively participate in the act of arson, looting and raping of women. The dispute hindered significant progress across Benue state.

Conflict especially communal and land dispute often affects agricultural activities in no small measure and poses a big threat to food security. This fear has been echoed by other scholars.

According to Best (2006), conflict especially during planting season has serious economic implication for the food security of Benue state and indeed the entire nation, the effect of this conflict on the farmers is that since little or no planting was done owing to conflict, they also expect little or nothing during harvest. The implication is that these farmers will be financially broke and without money, embarking on self-help group project likes local contribution or other cooperative initiatives for survival. Hagher (2002) on the other hand submitted that the noticeable of herders attacking famers during dry season (harvest) leads to a reduction in agricultural output and farmers' income in turn.

By and large, the farmers-herders clashes have lingered for so long and have resulted to a lot of destruction of properties, gruesome killing of people (most of them within the age of active labour force on the farm), destruction of farms hence reducing yield and total output. This is evident in the significant drop in total output of food crops like rice, maize, Guinea corn, Soya beans, cowpea, Cassava available in the local markets in affected communities. The multiplier effect of this is the hike in prices of food items, poverty and shortage of food supply to household and threat of famine.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

From the findings, majority of the respondents in Agatu local government were of the view that involvement of traditional rulers in crises management and resolution could go long way to reduce the farmers-herders conflict in Benue state. This

might prove very effective if executed well. This is because most of the communities affected are grassroots communities and hence traditional rulers do not only represent the interest of the grassroots people (at least in principle), but also in constant touch with them, they could understand the issues better.

Since the attacks come without warning and during odd hours, the constant presence of security and law enforcement officers could also help repel some attacks and also reduce frequency of clashes. But for this to be effective, the law enforcement officers will need to be well equipped, train and be familiar with the communities where they are posted. Advocating for community policing here might also not be a bad idea.

Relatedly, the Benue state Ranch Establishment and Anti-Open grazing law (2018) should be respected and duly enforce without bias and prejudice. The livestock guard should also be given adequate support political and finally to be motivated to enforce this law. Finally, for this to work, the federal government need to throw up its weight behind any effort aim at reducing famers-herders clashes that is backed by law.

Also, people need to learn and be reminded of the need and benefits of peaceful co-existence. This can be done through different types of re-orientation programs and projects. There are different Civil Society organisations and NGOs that can liaise with the National Orientation agency to archive this.

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