



FARMERS-PASTORALS CONFLICTS AND RURAL FOOD SECURITY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN TARABA STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examined effects of farmers and pastoralists conflicts on rural food security in southern Taraba state Nigeria. A purposive and multi-stage sampling method was used to select 180 respondents from the study area. Data was collected using a pre-tested Likert and open-ended questionnaire. Descriptive statistical tool was used to analyze the data. Results show that cereal crops such as rice (47%) and maize ((29%) were highly vulnerable followed by tuber crops such as yam (32%) and cassava (29%). As regards farming practices, land fallow (26%) was most affected, followed by mixed cropping (18%) and dry season (irrigation) farming (14%). Furthermore, data on responses relating to perceived issues on conflicts revealed that harvest is most affected by the conflicts followed by food availability, affordability and food accessibility. The study recommends strong government intervention in creating cattle routes, grazing areas and ranches or colonies to avert the farmers and pastoralists conflicts and ensure a sustained food security to the rural communities within the southern Taraba state where the conflict is now taking ethnic and religious posture with greater magnitude.

Keywords: Effects, Conflicts, Farmer, Pastoralist and Food Security

INTRODUCTION

Resource-based conflicts between farmers and pastoralists have become a major source of concern in northern Nigeria. In the first quarter of 2014, 16 separate violent conflicts took place in Plateau and Kaduna States claiming 139 lives and left scores of people injured. According to NSRP (2005) the incessant conflict has also taken its toll on livelihoods of both Farmers and Pastoralists as loss of livestock and interruptions of farming activities contributed to reduction in sources of livelihood in the affected areas.

The root causes of these persistent conflicts between farmers and pastoralists lie in the paucity of pasture and water. The impact of Climate Change in the form of desertification leading to loss of foliage, declining water points and failure of government to provided and protect the “Burtali” or

cattle routes, coupled with increasing human and livestock populations that has intensified competition over scarce land and water resources leading to exacerbated relationships between the two groups, Adamu (2007). For example, increase in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of cattle can compel the pastoralists to search for more pastures beyond their limited range.

Conflicts tend to create food insecurity by creating food shortages, which disrupt both upstream input markets and downstream output markets, thus deterring food production, commercialization and stock management. Depending on the location of the fights in a country, crops cannot be planted, weeded or harvested, decreasing dramatically the levels of agricultural production. In conflict situations, food producing regions experience seizing or destroying of food stocks, livestock and other assets, interrupting market supplies of food

not only in these regions but also in neighboring regions. The conflicts also diminish food availability and food access directly, because the teeming youth population supposed to be actively involved in farming was being recruited into militias for the protection of their communities (Pierre and Hitzhusen, 2006).

The idea of food security was presented for the first time at the world food conference in 1974, viewed solely from the perspective of having adequate availability of food on a national scale. It is a situation in which all people have access at all times to enough food of an adequate nutritional quality for a healthy and active life (Adebayo, 2010).

Earlier, Wolfe and Frongillo (2001) explained the concept of food insecurity to include not only the lack of availability, access, and utilization or use of food (for example, food preparation and intra-household food distribution), but also perceptions (for example, that food is insufficient, inadequate, unacceptable, uncertain, or unsustainable). However, food insecurity as experienced in other locations is likely to be different but will include similar components that go beyond availability and access as food insecurity affects dietary intake and ultimately, nutritional status and physical well-being of the people.

According to Kassam (2014) and Basil (2015), the conflicts had devastating effects on inter-group relationships especially in Nasarawa Egon, Nasarawa state, Agatu local government area of Benue state and Taraba state (in Takum, Ussa, Ibi, Wukari and Donga local government areas). Apart from loss of lives, farm produce and property, it has profound influence on residential relationships, leading to new trends in the polarization of communities. This is evident in a physical manifestation of mono religious areas in Nasarawa, Taraba and Benue states, with Christians and Muslims living in dominant religious clusters (Eyekpemi, 2016).

Bearing the risks of attacks in mind, the farming populations tend to flee, decline or stop farming. Agriculture production may be reduced to subsistence and/or survival production by farmers who manage to stay, because there is no incentive to invest deeply in production. The recruitment of young men into militias and thousands of battle-related deaths not only reduces family income but

also take away labor from agriculture. On the basis of this research was conducted, aimed to assess the effects of farmers pastoralists' conflicts on food security in the study area especially in the three local government areas of Ibi, Takum and Wukari where conflicts were prevalent and pervasive. To address the research problem outlined in the research background are the following research question and objective:

- a) Research question: What is the effect of farmers and pastoralists conflict on food security in the area?
- b) Research objective: To assess the effect of farmers and pastoralists conflicts on food security in the area?

Materials and methods

a) Study area

The southern Taraba State is a political zone comprising five (5) local government areas which includes Wukari, Takum, Ibi, Ussa and Donga, covers with a landmass of about 14,000km². The area has a total population figure of 729,572 according to NBS and NPC data (2015). It has a tropical wet and dry season, well drained alluvia soil and characterized by both savannah and rainforest vegetation which supports both crops and livestock farming and therefore prevalence of clashes between farmers and pastoralists due to competition of land resources between the farmers and the herders.

Additionally, the area is predominantly rural with an estimated 80% of the population engaged in rain-fed agriculture for cultivation of staple food crops such as yam, maize, cassava, guinea corn, sesame and rice. Grazing of animals, fresh water fishing and forestry are other agricultural activities taking place in the area. The main ethnic groups found in the area are Jukun (Kuteb, wapa, wanu, kpanzun and Ichen). Others are Tiv, Chamba, Hausa and Fulani.

b) Sample and sampling techniques

A purposive multi-stage and simple random selection technique was used in to select three local government areas and five villages from each and based on prevalence of clashes and a total of 180 respondents for the study. The three local government areas selected were Wukari, Ibi and Takum. The 180 respondents selected were in a ratio proportional to the sizes of their population of the respective villages (see table 1).

Table 1: Selection of respondents in the study area

Selected LG	No. of wards Selected	Sampling Frame	No of respondents Selected (10%)
Wukari	5	700	70
Ibi	5	570	57
Takum	5	650	65
Total	15	1920	192

c) Data collection tool

Questionnaire was used to obtain information from the respondents. The questionnaire was designed to analyze the effects of farmer and pastoralists' conflicts on food security using the following Likert type and open-ended questions.

- i) What is the vulnerability of farm products due to farmers and pastoralists conflicts?
- ii) How has the conflicts affected farming and agricultural practices in your area?
- iii) What is the level of food availability and accessibility in your area?

b) Analytical tools

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and means were used to analyse the results. The

results were compared with similar findings of researches carried elsewhere and inference drawn.

Results

Table 2 revealed that cereal crops; rice (47%) and maize (29%) are highly vulnerable crops followed by roots and tuber crops; yam (32%) and cassava (29%), while other crops such as groundnut (29%) and cowpea (19%) are moderately vulnerable. These crops are the major food and cash crops not only in the study area but in the country generally. Therefore, it can be deduced that farmer and pastoralist conflict has negative consequence to major crops being cultivated by the farmers.

Table 2: Vulnerability of Major Crops due to Conflicts (n=140)

Crops	Highly Vulnerable	Vulnerable	Moderately vulnerable	Low	Not vulnerable
Yam	45 (32%)	40 (29%)	29 (21%)	15 (10%)	11 (8%)
Cassava	40 (29%)	40 (29%)	29 (20%)	26 (19%)	5 (3%)
Groundnut	40 (29%)	40 (29%)	40 (29%)	26 (19%)	5 (3%)
Plantain	35 (25%)	45 (32%)	30 (21%)	25 (18%)	5 (4%)
Banana	25 (18%)	26 (19%)	34 (24%)	35 (25%)	20 (14%)
Rice	65 (47%)	35 (25%)	29 (20%)	8 (6%)	3 (2%)
Maize	40 (29%)	40 (29%)	29 (20%)	26 (19%)	5 (3%)
Beans	26 (19%)	39 (28%)	48 (34%)	22 (16%)	5 (3%)

Source: Field Survey, 2018

The result in the table 3 revealed that the agricultural practices most hampered by conflicts in the study area are livestock breeding and land fallow (26%) followed by mixed cropping (18%)

and dry season farming (14%). This result confirms the results in table 2 which says cereal crops and root and tuber crops are more vulnerable. It can also be deduced that the farmers and pastoralists conflicts do have negative consequences on livestock breeding in addition to crops production.

Table 3: Effect of Farmers and Pastoralists Conflicts on Agricultural Practices. (n=140)

Farming practices	Very Severe	Severe	Mild	Low	Not Severe
Mixed cropping	25 (18%)	15 (10%)	45 (32%)	36 (26%)	19 (14%)
Land fallow	36 (26%)	42 (30%)	37 (26%)	13 (9%)	12 (9%)
Irrigation	19 (14%)	21 (15%)	42 (30%)	38 (27%)	20 (14%)
Plantation farming	18 (13%)	25 (17%)	52 (37%)	34 (24%)	11 (9%)
Livestock production	36 (26%)	31 (22%)	43 (31%)	21 (15%)	9 (6%)

Source: Field survey

Table 4 indicates results related to issues perceived by respondents on farmers and pastoralists conflicts in the area. The result indicate that conflicts affect harvest (86%) followed by food availability (71%) and affordability (56%). This is because the conflicts could force premature harvest, displacing of farmers, destruction of farmers home and farm produce which resulted to shortage of food produce

and ultimately hunger in the area due to poor farm production and income. The finding agrees with the Godswill (2007) who states that severe and malnutrition in north central parts of Nigeria is caused by persistent rise in violence and insecurity in the area. Thus, conflicts result in food shortage, rise in price and make it unaffordable.

Table 4: Perceived issues concerning conflicts (n=140)

Options	No	Yes
Was there good harvest after conflict in area?	121 (86%)	19 (14%)
Was there food available in the area after conflict?	100 (71%)	40 (29%)
Was there food scarcity after conflict in the area?	51 (36%)	89 (64%)
Do you experience food scarcity as a result of conflict?	39 (28%)	101 (72%)
Were farm products affordable after conflict?	78 (56%)	62 (44%)
Was there increase in price of food item after conflict?	50 (36%)	90 (64%)

Source: field survey, 2018

Table 5 revealed that accessibility of food after conflicts is low (32%) followed by very low (28%) and moderate (19%). This means that food generally is not available after conflict and that it is not accessible to people in the affected areas. The result conforms with Oti, Onyia and Umounyang (2017) and Anyabe, Atelhe and Sunday (2017) who reported that farmers and pastoralists conflicts has

resulted in food scarcity due to destruction of farmlands, attack on farmers' homes and migration of people away from communities to IDPs camps. They further argued that the killings and destruction of farm land, crops and livestock drastically affect food supply within and outside the region and resulted into a high level of food importation into the communities.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents based on accessibility of food

Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very High	10	7
High	20	14
Moderate	26	19
Low	45	32
Very Low	39	28
Total	140	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

Summary/Conclusion

From the foregoing, adverse effect of farmers and pastoralists conflicts on food security has been confirmed in the study area. Major crops cultivated such as maize, rice, yam, cassava, groundnut and cowpeas were vulnerable to conflicts.

The level at which some cultural practices are carried out was also influenced by the conflicts. These include mixed cropping, land fallowing, irrigation and livestock production which are affected adversely by farmers and pastoralists conflicts in the study area. The research also confirmed that the conflicts affect level of major crops harvest that leads to shortage of food supply and incomes to the farmers resulting in increase in the price of food due to lack of accessibility and affordability staple food of the conflict survivors.

Recommendation

Government needs to intervene by creating cattle routes, grazing lands and cattle colonies in areas where the conflict is pervasive.

The farmers and pastoralists need to collaborate through their representatives such as Miyetti Allah and Nigerian Farmers Association or their community heads with a view to increasing interaction to enable early and peaceful conflict aversion and resolution before it escalates to higher magnitude.

There should be immediate supply of relief materials to affected communities by appropriate government agencies as well donor organizations. Government need to set up conflict mediation, resolution, reconciliation and peace building mechanisms in rural communities, local government areas and states affected by the conflicts.

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