



CROP FARMERS-PASTORALISTS PERCEPTION OF RESOLUTION STRATEGIES TO END RECURRING CONFLICTS IN BENUE, STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzed crop farmers-pastoralists perception of resolution strategies to end recurring conflicts in Benue State, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select crop farmers and pastoralists for this study, a total of 100 crop farmers and 27 pastoralists were selected. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and interview schedule. Frequency distribution, percentages, mean scores and ranking were used in presentation of results. Crop destruction and lack of full permanent ownership of grazing land to settle pastoralists were ranked 1st and 2nd by the crop farmers as factors responsible for crop farmer-pastoralist conflicts while the pastoralists ranked unclear demarcation along routes and grazing reserves as well as inadequate infrastructural facilities as 1st and 2nd, respectively. Crop farmers ranked traditional and community leaders; 1st as efficient in conflict resolution and they disagreed with the statement that police were efficient in managing conflicts. On the other hand, the pastoralists ranked pastoralist leaders; 1st as being efficient in managing conflicts while traditional and community leaders was ranked 2nd. As regards the opinion on measures to end the recurring conflicts, 31.3% of the crop farmers agreed that anti-grazing law should be upheld to curb conflicts; and 18.3% revealed that both farmers and pastoralists should embrace dialogue. About 45% of pastoralists, however, revealed that provision of grazing areas will prevent conflicts and 37.1 % indicated that cattle routes should be established. The study established serious crops and properties, destruction of livestock and disruption of peace as the major effects of crop farmers-pastoralists conflicts in the study area. It was therefore, recommended that the traditional institutions should be strengthened through constitutional amendment for more effective alternative dispute resolution strategies for conflict resolution in the study area.

Keywords: Benue State, Conflicts, Crop farmers, Pastoralists, Resolution strategies.

INTRODUCTION

In sub-Saharan Africa, there has been an increase in resource-use conflicts especially crop farmer-pastoralist conflicts, since the Sahelian drought of the 1970s and 1980s. The Sahelian drought caused the movement of many herders to West Africa, especially the savannah areas for survival. The movement and settlement of the herders in the West African zone caused increased violent conflicts between herders and local farmers, especially the struggle for water and land for their activities (Antwi, 2018). Recurrent crop farmer-pastoralist conflicts threatens peace, food security, and economic growth in West Africa countries since such conflicts are on the rise and often violent in the sub-region (Antwi, 2018). Crop farming and Pastoralism have been the primary sources of livelihood for most people in developing



countries including Nigeria, making them depend mostly on renewable resources. Crop farmers and pastoralists remain the primary source of food crop and animal protein for the teeming population in developing countries such as Nigeria.

The farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria have a long tradition and commercial relationship, though there were cases of disparity existing between both groups that were usually resolved by both groups peacefully (Goke, 2018). However, in recent times, there has been an increase in the cases of farmer-pastoralist conflicts in many parts of Nigeria. Benue State which is regarded as the food basket of the nation is one of the worst affected areas by farmer-pastoralist conflicts (Ogebe *et al.*, 2019). These conflicts have deprived people of their farmlands and ancestral homes as well as leading to loss of their major source of livelihood and properties. Most worrisome in the present development is the raping, killing and kidnapping of innocent people where women and children are the most vulnerable and worst hit (Olusola, 2018).

According to The Vanguard Newspaper (2019), Benue State has recorded over 30 farmer-herdsmen conflicts across its rural communities of Agatu, Makurdi, Guma, Logo, Buruku, Tarka, Gwer-west and Otukpo. The crisis got to a peak in early 2016 when militia herdsmen stormed Agatu local government area, killing over 2000 persons in what many including the United Nations described as genocide (Abugu and Onuba, 2018). Similar trends keep reoccurring with the scores of death and injured persons on the rise. The most recent being the gruesome regime of attack following the enactment of the open grazing prohibition (anti-open grazing) law by the Benue State government in 2017. Among the worst hit by the recent incursion were Guma communities where many farming households were displaced and lived in government-provided Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps for many months.

Violence in Nigeria resulting from farmers and cattle herdsmen conflicts have disrupted socio-economic, religious, educational and political activities in the country which has threatened the national unity Kasarachi (2016). To this end, several conflict resolution strategies and measures have been put in place by the government at all levels (federal, state and local) and civil society organizations to curb the reoccurring conflicts. Farmers and cattle herdsmen have been coaxed to adhere strictly to lay down rules to avoid crisis and maintain peace between the two groups as well as increasing productivity of farm and animal output. Although a lot of research works has been carried out by many researchers on crop farmers-pastoralist conflicts in Benue State, Nigeria, little has been focused on crop farmers-pastoralist perceptions on the resolution strategies and measures adopted by stakeholders to maintain peace amongst the two groups in the study area. This study, therefore, assessed crop farmers and pastoralists' perceptions of resolution strategies and measures to end the recurring conflicts in Benue State. The specific objectives of the study were to: describe the factors responsible for crop farmers-pastoralists conflicts; examine crop farmers-pastoralists perceptions of resolution strategies; and describe the crop farmers' opinions on measures to curtail conflicts resulting from resource use in the study area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Study Area

This study was carried out in Benue State, Nigeria. Benue State was created in 1976 out of the then Benue-Plateau State. The State is in the North-central zone of Nigeria within the Southern Guinea Savannah agro-ecological region. The State lies between longitude 7° 47' - 10° 0' East of the Greenwich Meridian and Latitude 6° 25'N and 8° 8'N North of the Equator. The State capital is located in Makurdi and is celebrated as the Food Basket of the nation. Benue State covers a land area of about 31,276.7 km² an average population density of 137



persons per square kilometres. The population of the State grew from 2.7 million in 1991 to 4.22 million persons in 2006 and a projected figure of 5.85 million persons in 2021 at 3.2% annual growth rate (National Population Commission [NPC], 2006; Benue State Government [BSG], 2015). The State shares boundaries with 5 other States namely: Nasarawa to the North, Taraba to the East, Cross-River to the South, Enugu and Ebonyi to the South-West and Kogi to the West (BSG, 2015). Benue State has a tropical sub-humid climate characterized by distinct wet and dry seasons. The mean annual rainfall is about 1,137mm, with a distribution between the months of April to October. The dry season starts in December and lasts till March. The recession of harmattan for the rains is heralded by the moist tropical maritime air mass of the Southwest trade winds. This point is usually marked by hot sunny days with temperatures being highest between March to April with a mean maximum and minimum annual temperature ranging from 37°C to 24°C (BSG, 2015).

Agriculture forms the backbone of the Benue State economy, engaging more than 70% of the working population. This has made Benue the major source of food production in the Nation. Important cash crops include soya beans, rice, peanuts, mango, and citrus. The State accounts for over 70% of Nigeria's soya bean production. Other cash crops include palm oil, melon, African pear, chili pepper, tomatoes etc. Food crops include yam, cassava, sweet potato, beans, maize, millet, guinea corn, vegetables etc. There is very little irrigation agriculture and techniques. Animal production include, cattle, pork, poultry and goat but no dairy and dairy products yet (BSG, 2015).

The Tiv people of Benue State are found in Benue North-East and Benue North-West senatorial districts while Idoma and Igede are in Benue South senatorial districts. The State comprises of 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) namely; Ado, Agatu, Apa, Buruku, Gboko, Guma, Gwer-East, Gwer-west, Katsina-Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Logo, Makurdi, Obi, Ogbadibo, Oju, Okpokwu, Ohimini, Oturkpo, Tarka, Ukum, Ushongo, and Vandeikya (BSG, 2015).

Sampling Procedure

A multi-stage sampling procedure was used for the study. In the first stage 3 Local Government areas that have recorded high incidence of crop farmers-pastoralists conflicts were purposely selected. The second stage involved random selection of 2 farming communities from each of the three (3) selected Local Government Areas (LGAs), making a total of six (6) farming communities from the State. Lastly, Yamane formula was also applied to determine the sample size of 100 crop farmers (Table 1) who were randomly selected for the study.

In the case of the pastoralists, due to the nature of their settlement pattern and economic activities, their grazing places, markets and their extended family settlements (Ruga) were identified, and 9 pastoralists from each of the three (3) LGAs and 27 cattle rearers (Table 1) were selected using the snowball sampling method. The snowball method was used by identifying one respondent that helps the researcher to identify others.



Table 1: Sample size selection for crop farmers and pastoralists

LGA	Communities	Sampling frame	Sample sample	
			Farmers	Pastoralists
Agatu	Okoklo	840	15	9
	Ocholoyan	924	16	
Guma	Gbajima	1,197	20	9
	Mbasenga	994	17	
Gwer-East	Agana-Mbalom	856	15	9
	Aduku-Adagba	988	17	
Total		5,799	100	27

Source: Field survey, 2021

Method of Data Collection

Data for the study were obtained from primary source. This was achieved using a semi-structured interview schedule. Data on factors responsible for crop farmer-pastoralists conflicts. The respondents were asked to rank each item on a 5-point Likert scale: 1: Strongly Disagreed; 2: Disagreed; 3: Undecided; 4: Agreed and 5 = Strongly Agreed. The researcher used the following criteria to qualitatively describe and interpret the results: 1.00 – 1.50 = strongly disagree, 1.51 – 2.50 = disagree, 2.51 – 3.50 = undecided, 3.51 – 4.50 = agree, and 4.51 – 5.00 = strongly agree.

To obtain information on conflicts resolution strategies that were used in the study area. The respondents were also asked to rank each item on a 5-point Likert scale: Strongly agree 5, Agree 4, undecided 3, disagree 2, slightly disagree 1. A mean score of 3.0 was obtained by adding 1+2+3+4+5=15 and dividing by 5. The decision rule was any mean ($\bar{x}$) scores > 3.0, indicates agreed, while scores < 3.0 is term disagreed. Lastly, respondents were asked to mention measures to end the recurring farmers and pastoralists conflicts in the study area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factors Responsible for the Crop Farmers-Pastoralists Conflicts

In the case of crop farmers' perceptions, Table 2 shows that crop destruction ($\bar{x}$ = 4.53) was ranked 1st, this was followed by lack of full permanent ownership of grazing land to settle pastoralists ($\bar{x}$ = 4.10). Contamination and destruction of water sources ($\bar{x}$ = 3.99) was ranked 3rd while lack of permanent stock route and grazing reserves ($\bar{x}$ = 3.80) was 4th. Unclear demarcation along routes and grazing reserves ($\bar{x}$ = 3.74) was ranked 5th, inadequate infrastructures facilities for pastoralists ($\bar{x}$ = 3.47) was ranked 6th, cattle theft by cattle rustlers ($\bar{x}$ = 2.93) was ranked 7th. Encroachment of cattle routes and grazing reserves by crop farmers ($\bar{x}$ = 2.61) as well as sexual harassment by pastoralists ($\bar{x}$ = 2.44) were ranked 8th and 9th, respectively. This result agrees with the findings of Okoro (2018) that the causes of herdsman-farmers conflict in Nigeria are disputes over destruction of farmlands, crops and grazing rights. Also, this is consistent with (Bulus and Wizer, 2020) who opined that destruction of water source are causes of farmers-herder conflicts.



Table 2: Crop farmers' perception of factors in for crop farmers-pastoralists conflicts

Variable	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Rank
Crop destruction by cattle	4.53	1st
Lack of full permanent ownership of grazing land to settle pastoralists	4.10	2nd
Contamination and destruction of water sources	3.99	3rd
Lack of permanent stock routes and grazing reserves	3.8	4th
Unclear demarcation along routes and grazing reserves	3.74	5th
Inadequate infrastructural facilities for pastoralists	3.47	6th
Cattle theft by cattle rustlers	2.93	7th
Encroachment of cattle routes and grazing reserves by crop farmers	2.61	8th
Sexual harassment by pastoralists	2.44	9th

Source: Field survey, 2021

Pastoralists' Perception of Farmers-Pastoralists Conflicts

Table 3 reveals that unclear demarcation along routes and grazing reserves was ranked ($\bar{x} = 4.40$) 1st as the most pressing factor responsible for crop farmers-pastoralists conflict in the study area, this was followed by inadequate infrastructural facilities for pastoralists ($\bar{x} = 4.33$) which ranked 2nd as a result of completion for scarce resources. Also, lack of permanent stock routes and grazing reserves ($\bar{x} = 4.29$) was ranked 3rd, cattle theft by cattle rustlers ($\bar{x} = 4.25$), lack of full permanent ownership of grazing land to settle pastoralists which ranked ($\bar{x} = 4.14$) 5th, encroachment of cattle routes and grazing reserves by crop farmers ($\bar{x} = 4.03$) ranked 6th. Crop destruction by cattle ($\bar{x} = 3.78$), contamination and destruction of water sources ($\bar{x} = 3.51$) and sexual harassment by crop farmers ($\bar{x} = 3.14$) were ranked 7th, 8th and 9th, respectively. This result corresponds with that of (Babagana *et al.* 2019) who stated that encroachment into cattle tracks, inadequate grazing reserves and cattle theft were major causes of farmer-pastoralists' clashes.

Table 3: Pastoralists' perception of factors responsible for crop farmers-pastoralists conflicts

Variable	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Rank
Unclear demarcation along routes and grazing reserves	4.40	1st
Inadequate infrastructural facilities for pastoralists	4.33	2nd
Lack of permanent stock routes and grazing reserves	4.29	3rd
Cattle theft by cattle rustlers	4.25	4th
Lack of full permanent ownership of grazing land to settle pastoralists	4.14	5th
Encroachment of cattle routes and grazing reserves by crop farmers	4.03	6th
Crop destruction by cattle	3.78	7th
Contamination and destruction of water sources	3.51	8th
Sexual harassment by crop farmers	3.14	9th

Source: Field survey, 2021

Analysis of Respondents Perception on Conflict Resolution Strategies

The results of the crop farmers' perception on conflict resolution strategies is presented in Table 4. The results indicate that crop farmers in Benue State agreed that traditional and community leaders were efficient in conflict resolution ($\bar{x} = 3.42$) ranked 1st as conflict resolution strategy. Also, farmer leaders are efficient in managing conflicts with mean value of 2.86, courts are efficient in managing the conflict with mean value 2.70 and pastoralists leaders are efficient in managing the conflict with mean value of 2.35 were ranked 2nd, 3rd



and 4th, respectively. According to Table 4 results, crop farmers however, disagreed with the statement, that police were efficient in managing the conflict ($\bar{x} = 2.48$), this was ranked 5th. This means that the traditional rulers in the study area are highly respected and any decision taken to resolve conflict are band on people. Likewise, farmers tend to believe that the police often find a way to exploit them in the event of a reported conflict because they alleged, they end up paying more in unofficial fees and fines. This finding is in tandem with that of Rukwe *et al.* (2019) who find out that Traditional rulers are the major arbitrators of conflict while Police is a rarely used institution for resolving conflict.

Table 4: Perceptions of crop farmers on conflict resolution strategies

Variable	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Rank
Traditional and community leaders	3.42	1 st
Farmer leaders are efficient in managing conflicts	2.86	2 nd
Courts are efficient in managing the conflicts	2.70	3 rd
Pastoralist leaders are efficient in managing the conflicts	2.35	4 th
Police are efficient in managing the conflicts	2.48	5 th

Source: Field survey, 2021

Pastoralists' Perception on Conflict Resolution Strategies

Table 5 on pastoralists' perception on conflict resolution strategies reveals that the pastoralists agreed with these Statements in Benue State; pastoralist leaders are efficient in managing the conflict with mean value of 3.22, traditional and community leaders with mean value of 3.07 while they disagreed with farmer leaders are efficient in managing conflicts with mean value of 2.70, courts are efficient in managing the conflict with mean value of 2.03 and police are efficient in managing the conflict with mean value of 1.96. To corroborate these findings, Fasina (2017) reported that traditional avenues are being sought to settle farmer-herders disputes and should be strengthened and cooperated into conflict management programmes.

Table 5: Perceptions of pastoralists on conflict resolution strategies

Variable	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	Rank
Pastoralist leaders are efficient in managing the conflict	3.22	1 st
Traditional and community leaders	3.07	2 nd
Farmer leaders are efficient in managing conflicts	2.70	3 rd
Courts are efficient in managing the conflict	2.03	4 th
Police are efficient in managing the conflicts	1.96	5 th

Source: Field survey, 2021

Measures to end the recurring farmers and pastoralists conflicts

According to the Figure 1 results, 31.3% of the crop farmers agreed that anti-grazing law should be incorporated to curb the conflict while 18.3% revealed that both farmers and pastoralists should embrace dialogue. Also, 17.4% revealed that farmers should avoid farming on cattle routes, while 6.2% encouraged traditional rulers' involvement. This finding (Figure 1) revealed that most of the crop farmers agreed with anti-grazing and dialogue respectively to prevent conflicts between them and pastoralists. Ability to prevent crop farmers and pastoralists' conflicts could play important roles towards ensuring food security in the State. This agrees with the assertion by Njoku (2018) that establishment of dialogue as a resolution

strategy is key to ending farmers-herder's conflicts. Umoh (2017) in a study on Pastoralism in Nigeria's Middle-belt region: a resource or a curse revealed that anti-open grazing bill or law would provide a lasting solution to the herders-farmers conflicts.

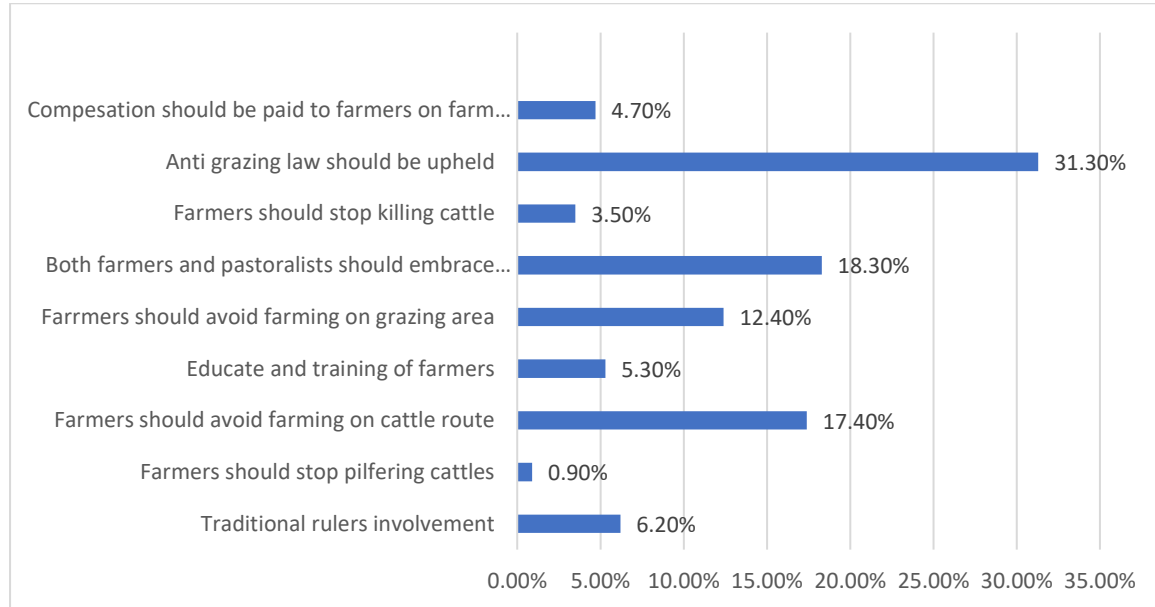


Figure 1: *Farmers' opinion on measures to end the recurring farmers-pastoralists conflicts*

Pastoralists' Opinion on Steps to End the Recurring Farmers-Pastoralists Conflicts

Figure 2 revealed that 45.3% of pastoralists revealed that provision of grazing areas will prevent conflicts while 37.1 % indicated that cattle routes should be established. Also, 14.8% showed that compensation to farmers will prevent conflicts while 1.9% and 0.9% agreed anti- grazing laws and dialogue, respectively, were key measures to prevent conflicts in the area. The findings revealed that most of the pastoralists indicated that provision of the cattle routes and payment of compensation could play a vital role in curbing conflicts and making pastoralists food secured in the area. This finding is in line with that of Omkhoa and Okuchukwo (2018) that establishment of grazing reserves is one of the solutions to herders-farmers' conflict.

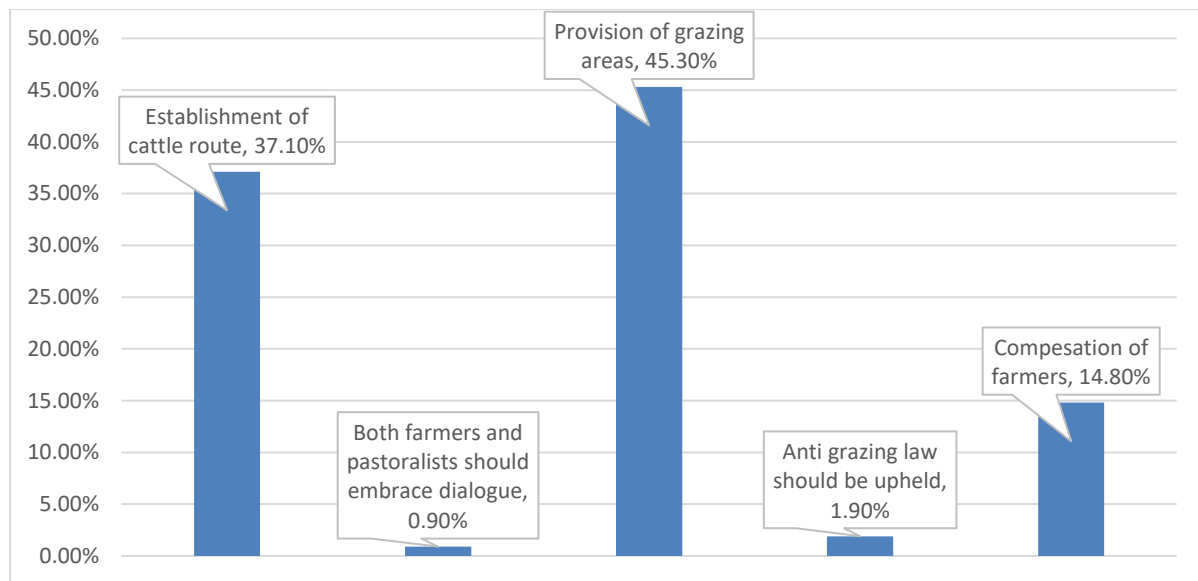


Figure 2: *Pastoralists' opinion on steps to end the recurring farmers-pastoralists conflicts*

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Factors responsible for crop farmer-pastoralist conflicts are lack of full permanent ownership of grazing land to settle pastoralists, unclear demarcation along routes and grazing reserves as well as inadequate infrastructural facilities. Crop farmers in the study area indicated that destruction of crops and destruction of properties were the major effects of farmers and pastoralists conflicts. Though, pastoralists indicated that serious destruction of livestock and disruption of peace were the major effects of crop farmers-pastoralists conflicts. Traditional and community leaders were effective in conflict management while the measures outlined to end recurring conflict were establishment and provision of education civic training for both crop farmers and pastoralists as well as re-establishment of grazing/cattle routes and establishment of grazing reserves. The traditional institutions should be strengthened through constitutional amendment to make available cattle routes, grazing reserves and permanent stock routes for pastoralists. In addition, anti-grazing law should be upheld and implemented by government and any pastoralist that breaks the rule should face legal actions.

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