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Effects of Farmers-Herders Conflict on Food Security in Benue State (2013 – 2018)

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I. Introduction

Food security in the face of rising decline of farmers through violent conflicts is questionable. This justifies the reason for the increase in food insecurity in states like Plateau, Adamawa, Taraba, Zamfara, Nasarawa, and Benue. These states in recent times have been faced with the problem of violent conflicts between farmers and herders which has led to lots of devastating effects ranging from loss of human lives to loss of Agricultural products, lands and even animals. According to Ojekunle (2018), in the first half of 2018, Adamawa witnessed 540 deaths, Plateau 492, Zamfara 489, Kaduna 414, Nasarawa 196 and Benue 726.

In Benue state which is the area under study, no fewer than 2000 people have lost their lives to farmers-herders conflict between January 2016 and November 2018 (Amnesty International, 2018). Agbanya (2016) noted that farmers-herders clash in Ikpele and Okpopolo communities of Benue state resulted to the death of 7 farmers, the displacement of about 6000 children, women and elderly persons; and the burning down of houses, farmlands and economic trees. Whereas many has likened these conflicts to be caused by the herders, some are of the opinion that it is caused by the farmers, yet another segment of people believe it is an offspring of a long standing disagreement. Abounding also are people who's perception of the causatives of the conflict lies within nature in the dimension of lack of arable land and issues of climate change. Nevertheless, no matter what the causative is, these conflicts had done more harm than good both to the people of Benue in specific and to the entire Nigerians in entirety especially in the dimension of food security.

In the words of Okoli & Addo (2018), it appears that the herders-farmers crises in Benue state is intractably leading to increase in food shortage, damage to farmlands, destruction of crops and crop yields, hike in the price farm inputs and outputs, extermination of farmers, disharmonious co-existence of hosts and guests, depression of socio-economic activities, etc. The consequence of all these is the elusion of farm practices by the surviving farmers out of fear, the decrease in the level of manpower involved in agriculture in the state and the shortage of food available to the consumers. This in turn culminates into drastic rise in the price of food commodities and obviously food insecurity in the state.

It is also worthy to state that farms in the affected areas have been overtaken with weeds and those that were ready for harvest have been left unattended to (Okoli & Addo, 2018). These problems pose a major threat to efforts to boost food security within the state as seven out of the twenty three local governments in Benue State, namely Guma, Gwer-West, Agatu, Logo, Kwande, Buruku, Tarkam which are mostly affected are the ones with high agricultural productivity rate within the state. With the rate of these farmers-herders crisis, who would want to go the farm again knowing fully well that there exists a probability of getting killed over there? This is a question that imbibes fear into people regarding the issue of going to farm and the consequence is a negative affectivity of food productivity, availability and accessibility.

These problems need urgent and responsible steps which should be undertaken. It calls for great national and international attention as it dwells within the ambit of human survival and socio-economic development of the country. The already established measures to tackling the conflict such as government policy on open-grazing and confiscation of wandering cattle as could be seen in Ekiti state and some other states seem not to be solving the problem, rather

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exacerbating it. Hence, little or no solution is known regarding this issue, thus posing a problem on its own.

It is in cognizance of these problems that this research was embarked upon to ascertain the solution to the effect of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state. Having stated this, this study is predicated to finding answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the causes of farmers-herders conflict in Benue state?
2. How has farmers-herders conflict affected food security in Benue state?
3. What solutions can be adopted to tackle the effects of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state?

a) Hypotheses

1. Climate change, long standing disagreement, and intolerance amongst others are the causes of farmers-herders conflict in Benue state.
2. Destruction of agro proceeds, loss agro manpower and cessation of farmlands are the ways farmers-herders conflict has affected food security in Benue state.
3. Herders' anti-migration policy, Military deployment policy and intensive cattle ranching policy amongst others are the solutions to the effects of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state.

b) The Study Area

The study area of this research is Benue state. It is one of the 36 states of the Nigerian federation, located in the North-Central geopolitical zone of the country. Benue state is found within longitude $7^{0}41^{1}$ and $10^{0}0^{1}$ East, and latitude $6^{0}25^{1}$ and $8^{0}8^{1}$ North in a geographical coordinate, and is bounded to the North by Nasarawa state, to the East by Taraba state, to the West by Kogi state, to the South by Ebonyi and Cross Rivers state, to the South West by Enugu state; and to the South East by the Republic of Cameroon. The state constitutionally created on February 3, 1976 is named after the Benue River and has 23 local governments. It has rich agricultural lands and is known to be one of the highest producers of food and crop-agricultural products in the country, which has earned it the motto "*The Food Basket of the Nation*".

II. Causes of Farmers-Herders Conflict in Benue State between 2014 and 2018

To determine the causes of farmers-herders conflict in Benue state between 2014 and 2018, the hypothetical variables of this study are tested across thematic exposition and they include:

a) Climate Change

The issue of climate change has been greatly associated with the conflict of farmers and herders in Nigeria especially in Benue state. According to Olaniyan et al. (2015), climate change manifestation through desert encroachment in the natural abode of herders especially of Fulani origin have forced these herder into migrating southward in search of pastures for their livestocks. He stated further that their migration is not devoid of conflict as they (herders) often wander into areas long claimed and cultivated by settled farmers. In support of this view, Nwosu (2017) opined that the necessitation of desert encroachment by climate change has caused more southward movement of nomadic herders in search of lush grasslands thus, increasing the frequency at which they confront with farming communities.

According to Okoli et al (2014), global weather conditioning is natural phenomenon that has led to numerous man-made consequences. The trend of global weather conditioning emphasizes the change in the state global climate which has seen country's like America in North America witnessing flooding due to heavy rainfall, China in Asia witnessing Tsunami, and Nigeria witnessing both flooding and desertification in the southern and northern hemisphere respectively.

Mere human reasoning exposes one to the thought that areas of desertification witnesses relatively low rainfall and thus the forages within these areas are usually dry and often withered, unlike in the areas that are flooded which are usually subjected to high rainfall and the flourishing of forages for livestock feeding. With such a state, migration of both humans and animals from desert encroaching area becomes inevitable as source of food is drastically reducing to a point of severity. Abass (2012) noted that it is consequent upon the live sustainability of their livestocks (cattle) that the herders (Fulani herdsmen) are seen wandering far off their homeland into the heartlands of the southern Nigeria where the pastures are greener and livestocks have access to both good feed and adequate drinking water.

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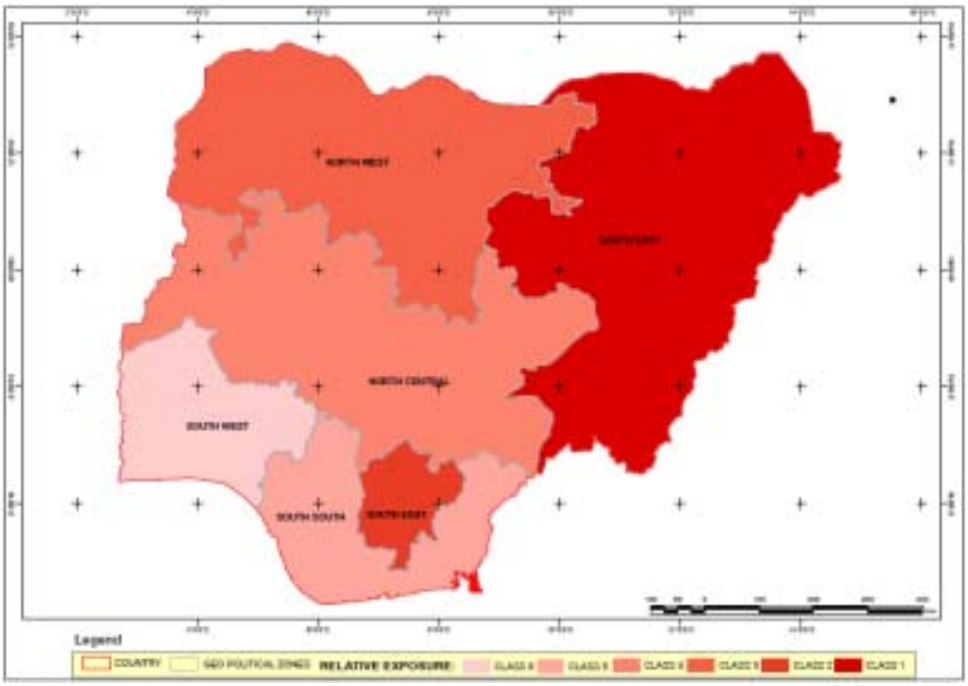

Source: Special Climate Change Unit, Nigerian Federal Ministry of Environment, 2018

Figure 1: Spatial Variation in Relative Exposure and Vulnerability for Climate Change over Regions in Nigeria

From the above figure, it is pictorially evident that the Northern region of Nigeria especially North East is subjected to climate change as it could be seen that they are both exposed and vulnerable to this negative weather conditioning. This justifies the reason for the migration of the herders out of their natural abode towards the south end (North central, South West, South-south and part of South East - Benue state and environs) in search of better living condition for their flocks and themselves. Within the context of this climate change in Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Environment hold that while rainfall decline and, therefore water supply, is an exposure issue in the northern part of Nigeria, land management to prevent water loss through infiltration is crucial in the south east.

In the opinion of Apenda (2014), the migrations of the herders especially of Fulani origin is not devoid of conflict as they are descents of the ancient wandering assassin group tribally referred to as the '*Tuaregs*'. This tribe according to him was known across Sudan, Chad, Nigeria, Dahomey and Central Africa to be the terrorist nomads employed by tribes to fight other tribes. Thus, even as they travel in search of pastures for their livestocks, they not only exert dominance and vandalism over people's properties (in this case farmers), but also war against them in a bid to take their lands. Furthermore, the conflict is now being intensified with the transformation of the old pattern of transhumance from being the temporary abode of herders in a particular region for a limited and defined period of time to staying permanently for a long period of time (Azeez, et al, 2015).

Adducing it from the perspectives of Abass (2012), Azeez et al (2015), Apenda (2014) and Okoli et al (2014), one can easily infer that when climate change negatively affects the northern Nigeria, the herders over there who holds the survival of their livestock high in priority index tend to migrate southward and pending the innate quality of vandalism and conflict in these nomads, they tend to clash with the farmers over the farmers' own land.

From the perspective of Odoh & Chigozie (2012), it is rather too misleading to state that the cause of the conflict between these two parties is climate change. He stated that climate change is peculiar to the world and is an age long natural occurrence. He believed that the cause of the conflict should be viewed rather from humanitarian approach, contending that if climate change is negatively affecting the northern part of Nigeria and forcing the nomad herders to wander into the south, then the issue of climate change can easily be corrected through continuous irrigation, afforestation and ranching. In addition, he stated that virgin forests abound in the northern region where the livestock of the herders can be ranched and fed for years without any much depreciation of the forest. The validity of the opinion of these researchers could not be written off as in the words of former Ekiti State Governor – Ayo Fayose on Vanguard Newspaper dated March 25, 2015:

> ... Had these nomads taken the sambisa forest (in the north) as their grazing center before the camping of Bokoharam, they wouldn't be causing the problem of this incessant conflict with the farmers, Bokoharam wouldn't have camped there and their livestock would have lived in proper feeding

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for nothing less that 50 years... (The Vanguard, March 25, 2015; p. 3)

However, the above dimensional perception of the causative of farmers-herders conflict was faulted by Okoli & Addo (2018) who viewed the cause of the conflict from the perspective of climate change by stating that afforestation, ranching and irrigation projects adduced by Odoh & Chigozie (2012) as means of correcting the impact of climate change are capital intensive for the nomads to handle and at the same time has not been undertaken by the governments of these regions. The implication is that the devastating impact of climate change affects the nomads in their environment directly and consequently forces them to migrate southward. They however noted that the conflict could not generally said to be caused by climate change in the sense that climate change does not condition one's mind to go into disagreement with others, rather the conflict could be said to be caused by the psychological reasoning of the farmers-herders towards one another in the perspective of relationship. What Okoli & Addo (2018) meant by the above is what Ijirshar, Ker & Talumun (2015) adduced when they stated thus:

> Farmers-herders conflict in Benue state like other conflicts has no natural cause without a human dimension, the herders could easily leave the farmers' community if they are not welcomed and prevent any form of conflict or destruction of the crops and farms of the people. In the same vein, the farmer's can easily give a route to the herders to pass to other communities without necessarily confiscating their cattle, extorting the herders or pursuing them violently (Ijirshar, Ker & Talumun, 2015; p. 6)

By the virtue of the assertion of Ijirshar, Ker & Talumun (2015), it becomes ostensibly clear that there is more to humanitarian cause of farmers-herders conflict than climate change. On a similar parlance, one deduces that the persistent refusal of herders to leave farmer's community in Benue state as well as their destruction of the farmlands and farm-produces of farmers construe to the causes of the conflict between farmers and herders in the state. Little wonder, Musa & Shabu (2014) asserted that farmers-herders conflict will continue in Nigeria especially in Benue state unless the farmers understands that the herders cannot leave because their homelands are desertified and the herders understands that farmland vandalism is negative upon farmers' wellbeing and has the tendency of bringing out the bad in them.

Also observable in the context of Ijirshar, Ker & Talumun (2015) opinion is that confiscation of herders' cattle, extortion of the herders by the farmers and youths of their host communities and violent attempt to evict the herders from their host communities in Benue state are among the factors that has immensely fuelled the farmers-herders conflict in Benue state. This is not to say that climate change has not contributed to the farmers-herders conflict in Benue state as a viable causative as outrightly, it marks the origin and beginning of all factors that cause farmers-herders conflict in the state. Had the herders not left their home territory in search of a better climate condition that would be suitable for their livestock husbandry which they found in Benue state, farmers-herders conflict in Benue state wouldn't have emerged in the history of the state.

b) Long Standing Disagreement

Long standing disagreement is also a tentative causative of farmers-herders conflict in Benue state as assumed under hypothesis one. Quite a few scholars gives credence to this factor as part of what fuels the incessant farmers-herders conflict not only in Benue state in specific, but also in Nigeria in general. Among them are Muhammed, Ismaila & Musa (2015), who opined that farmers-herders conflict in Benue state is largely due to the historical overlap of farmlands with cattle routes, where farmers grow crops on the routes designated for extensive pastoral cattle husbandry because they the historical disagreement of such government policies. This is to say that the sedentary farmers have always seen the pastoral herders as a threat to their society for a long time and as such wouldn't want them to harbor their livestocks within their domain as they are in ethno-culturally in disagreement with the social practices of one another. This can be inferred to be the rationale upon which Shettima & Tsar (2008) stated that the age-long wars between the dwellers in the middle-belt region and those at the northern region of Nigeria has done more harm than good in shaping the interaction culture of the people. This implies that the intolerance and consequent conflict between the pastoral nomadic herders and the sedentary farmers in Benue state is rooted in their historical differences which has made them to perceive each other as enemies in as much as they are Nigerians.

Differing from this perspective is the direct findings of the study of Uker & Orkar (2018) which exhibited the responses of the farmers and herders in Benue state on long term disagreement as causative of their conflict. It was held in their study that long term disagreements are rare in the relationships of farmers-herders within the state, whether or not these farmers and/or herders are natives of the state. They further held that such disagreement can only be traced to the 19th century and not now. But judging from the perspective of Erondu (2014), the hatred that emanates from a conflictual situation cannot die no matter the longitude of years passed, they are rather bequeathed from parents to offspring through generational transfer. In justifying this, he stated that this is the reason that the struggle for bear and the aggression for secession is recurrent in Nigeria as till date the people that warred in the Nigerian civil war still have hatred for one another. If

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the assumption of Erondu (2014) holds true, then Uker & Orkar (2018)'s perception becomes a mere sham.

However, no one cannot simply write off the possibility that the farmers-herders conflict in Benue state is not caused by age long disagreement. As in the report of International Crisis Group (2017), the conflict of farmers and herders in Nigeria is not rooted in age long disagreement as part of what constitute Benue state today is mapped out from Northern Nigeria and some settlers of Benue state were original migrants from the Northern region of the country which explains the Christian-Muslim proportionate ratio in the state as most migrant herders are Islam while the sedentary farmers have mixed breed of religion consisting of Christianity, Islam and traditional religion.

In cognizance of the above, it becomes crystal clear that age long disagreement cannot be said to be a causative of farmers-herders conflict in the Benue state, but can be said to be a catalyst that can fuel the fire of the conflict if brought to the shadow of such conflict in the coming generations.

c) Intolerance

Intolerance which is a state of discountenance or disallowance of a particular person, being, thing or phenomenon from thriving in one's sight is ascribed the status of a causative of the farmers-herders conflict in Benue state. According Dare (2017), intolerance is a fundamental conflict causative in Nigeria, it has its affluence cutting across ethnic, religious, and egoistic lines and destroying the fabric of unity and social harmony in the country.

With regards to farmers-herders conflict in Benue state, John (2014) noted that ethno-religious intolerance has immensely contributed as a cause of the conflict. To him, this intolerance exists in a vertical-reciprocal dimension. On the part of the sedentary farmers, they have failed to tolerate the excesses of the herders in their communities, when cattle stray across the communities whether in the farm or not, these cattle are confiscated and rustled to the detriment of the herders thereby aggravating the angers of the herders which they usually exhibit through violent confrontation often leading to conflict and lots of social damages. On the part of the pastoral herders, they are neither tolerant nor exercising any sense of harmonious conflict resolution strategy in their relationship with the farmers. This is the reason that they are constantly on a warring term with the farmers whenever the farmers attempt to ask them out of their (farmers') community (ibid).

On similar parlance, Blench (2004) opined that in the struggle for land resource control, the farmers and the herders in Benue state have been seen on the edge of intolerance with the farmers kicking against the old grazing route by extending their farm cultivation to these areas and the same is applicable to the herders who allow their flocks to move beyond their grazing reserves and routes into people's farm thereby demolishing farm crops and reducing farm yields. Of course in the view of a typical Fulani herder nothing is more important than the herd of flocks that it rears, hence they don't tolerate any move against the survival of their cattle. This is well captured in the words of Abbas (2012; p.42) as could be seen below:

> Our herd is our life because, to every nomad, life is worthless without his cattle. What do you expect from us when our source of existence is threatened? The encroachment of grazing field and routes by farmers is a call to war

The consequent of the above scenario is the violent demonstration and counter violent demonstration by both the farmers and herders which has led to the unending problem of conflict between the two parties.

From the foregoing, it is not only a matter of certainty but a matter of evidence that intolerance has immensely been a causal factor to the farmers-herders conflict in Benue as it is observable within the context of previous research literature (both of primary and secondary source) on the subject matter.

Summarily, it could be deduced from the analysis of hypothesis one that climate change and intolerance are the main causes of farmers-herders conflict in Benue state while age long disagreement only play a passive contributory role. It was also deduced that cattle rustling, persistent refusal of herders to leave farmer's community in Benue state as well as their destruction of the farmlands and farm-produces of farmers construe to the causes of the conflict between farmers and herders in the state.

III. Consequences of Farmers-herders Conflict on Food Security in Benue State

According to this hypothesis, farmers-herders conflict has had a number of consequences on food security in Benue state especially within the period under study. These consequences are here-below tested across themes:

a) Destruction of Agro-Proceeds

Agro-proceed loss through conflict destruction has been alleged as one of the consequences of the farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state by this hypothesis. There is no doubt that the farmers-herders conflict has towed the direction of agro-produce destruction as cattle are rustled and killed, crops and farms are vandalized and left in a pitiable state and even the members of the parties involved have their lives placed on the altar of death.

There is no gainsaying to the fact that majority of Benue state people are crop farmers with only a few engaged in animal husbandry. According to Okoli & Atelhe (2014), about 73% of the farming practices in

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Benue state concerns itself with cropping and about 86% of Benue territorial occupants are into crop farming either as a sole business or on a partial or subsistence scale. The table below embedded in the report of Food and Agricultural Organization on Nigerian food security and vulnerability report gives credence to the opinion of Okoli & Atelhe (2014) as it shows that an average of 83.8% of Benue state dwellers engage in crop farming and gardening.

Table 1: Nigerian Food Security and Vulnerability Report: Distribution of Main Livelihood Source by State

States	Products from Crop Farming and Gardening	Livestock and Poultry Raising	Wholesale and Retail Trade	Skilled Salaried Employment	Transport, Petty Trading and Services	Daily/ Common Labourer	Manufacturing/ Handicraft
Adamawa	50.1	6.1	10.4	10.4	2.7	2.2	1.3
Bauchi	63.0	5.7	5.9	8.5	5.7	1.8	1.3
Benue	83.8	0.3	1.7	4.5	0.3	0.5	0.3
Borno	22.6	4.0	7.7	8.5	6.9	4.0	1.5
Gombe	61.5	4.7	9.0	7.7	4.8	2.0	1.8
Jigawa	76.0	3.0	4.5	6.2	3.7	0.2	1.2
Kaduna	54.7	1.6	9.1	7.0	2.3	1.8	6.3
Kano	64.1	4.8	9.9	2.8	8.4	1.9	2.0
Katsina	70.5	3.0	11.0	4.2	1.5	1.0	2.7
Kebbi	74.5	7.7	3.5	2.7	1.3	0.2	0.5
Niger	60.1	4.3	6.2	13.2	4.7	0.5	1.0
Plateau	72.7	0.9	3.1	6.1	3.5	2.2	0.9
Sokoto	76.3	1.8	6.7	4.8	4.7	0.0	1.0
Taraba	54.0	0.2	5.8	16.7	4.0	1.5	0.7
Yobe	60.0	6.5	6.9	4.5	8.1	0.3	2.4
Zamfara	86.0	2.2	3.2	2.8	0.6	0.4	0.8

Source: Food and Agricultural Organization (2017)

According to Ofuoku & Isife (2009), more than 40 million worth of crops are usually lost annually due to the invasion of cattle herders and their livestocks in the North central region of Nigeria, especially Benue state. This has not only had negative humanitarian impact but has also immensely contributed to the issue of food insecurity in the state as many crop farmers tend to abandon both their farms and their farming occupation for other lesser occupations which in turn brings about fewer crop production and poor food availability within the state.

Table 2: Nigerian Food Security and Vulnerability Report: Reasons for Lack of Crop Production across States in Nigeria (2013-2017)

States	Lack of Access to Land	Adverse Weather	Lack of Seeds	Lack of Fertilizer	Inaccessibility of Land	Insecurity	Sample Size
Adamawa	13.0	0.8	5.9	5.0	8.8	13.4	239
Bauchi	22.8	0.0	6.3	10.1	6.3	2.5	79
Benue	19.1	0.0	3.1	3.3	5.3	22.0	55
Borno	18.2	1.3	2.2	3.1	14.5	70.0	456
Gombe	17.1	7.6	6.7	7.1	6.7	5.2	210
Jigawa	35.1	19.3	14.9	7.0	7.0	4.4	114
Kaduna	13.4	0.5	0.9	4.1	3.7	0.5	241
Kano	44.8	16.1	3.6	4.7	9.4	1.6	192

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Katsina	22.7	0.0	0.7	0.0	8.5	4.3	141
Kebbi	22.8	5.4	2.2	9.8	4.3	2.2	92
Niger	16.1	8.3	2.3	2.3	9.2	8.3	218
Plateau	12.7	0.0	4.8	15.9	3.2	7.9	63
Sokoto	53.3	7.8	2.2	4.4	7.8	1.1	90
Taraba	22.2	2.9	18.8	22.2	7.7	10.1	208
Yobe	14.5	0.6	14.0	14.5	11.0	36.0	172
Zamfara	36.4	0.0	9.1	31.8	13.6	4.5	23

Source: Food and Agricultural Organization (2017)

A cursory glance at the reasons for poor crop production across Nigeria as could be seen in the table above, leaves one with the justification for farmers-herders conflict consequenting to poor crop production in Benue state. Among other factors that are listed in the table above in regards to the reasons for poor crop production, insecurity stands tall in Benue state with the support of 22 out of 55 respondents. This poor crop production in the state simply explains why food insecurity could be said to be on the increase in the state as food crop availability has declined and so is its accessibility and utilization which thus culminates into a drastic rise in food price in order to match the increasing demand of food amidst scarcity and poor supply. In a more understandable manner, the above is simply expressed in the exact words of Okoli & Addo (2018; p. 20) as thus:

> …This reduction in production and income has serious implication on food security with the capacity to reduce coping capacity of those depending on food resources for their livelihood…

On a similar note, Aliyu (2015) observed that only in 2014, the herders have lost about three thousand, two hundred (3,200) cattle. The death of these cattle although might seem insignificant to the people of Benue state because they (the cattle) belong to the migrant herders, but it has a positive correlation to food security in the state as cattle still remain the widely consumed source of protein in the state and hence, its death diminishes its availability and consequently lead to the risk of food insecurity if the trajectory of such death remains on the increasing pace.

From a prospective dimension, one can argue that destruction of agro-proceeds associated with the conflict of farmers and herders in Benue state affects not only the present food security of the state but also the future food security of the state. This is justifiable from the perspective that agro-proceeds of both plant and animal specie which are imperative for human survival through food are not only meant to satisfy the present human hunger, but are also meant to solve food security challenges of the future. Hence, they have implications for human and societal sustainability and thus are meant to be sustained either through preservation for further cultivation or through preservation for further breeding and development of offsprings.

However, with the destruction of these crops and animals that consist the major food of Nigerians as produced by the Benue people of the North central region, one begins to wonder if preservations and storage of crops and animals for future cultivation and breeding can be done when those available are not even sufficient to satisfy the hunger index of the society resulting from the conflict as people no longer farm as before and neither do they go to the farm to harvest the already planted crops, not to mention that most of the crops in the farm are either beyond maturity stage and are withering, or have already been destroyed by the herders and their straying cattle.

To this end, it becomes obvious that one of the dimensions through which the farmers-herders conflict has affected food security in Benue state is through destruction agro-proceeds.

b) Loss of Agro-Manpower

This is another variable hypothesized as a consequence of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state. Agro-manpower in this context is seen as all human requirements employed in agricultural practices to improve and increase food productivity and availability. Food security cannot be sustained without corresponding food producers. These producers are the agricultural manpower that are instrumental in the production of agricultural products – both crops, animals and other of their complementary parts.

In Benue state, food security is challenged by loss of agro-manpower who consists of both the farmers and the herders. Through the incessant herders-farmers conflict in the state, many farmers and herders have lost their lives and many others are either displaced, badly injured or scared away from their agricultural practice for the fear of losing their lives. According to The Sun Editorials dated 21 August, 2014, hundreds of farmers have been killed in Benue states and scores are the deaths of the herders alike. Olayoku (2012) also noted

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that between the year 2006 and 2014, Nigerian Watch database recorded 615 violent deaths related to cattle in the year 2006, 22 deaths were recorded after the herdsmen farmers conflict in 2006, 54 in 2007, 31 in 2008, 83 in 2009, 39 fatalities in 2010 and a massive increase in death toll in 2011 which puts the figure at 116, 128 deaths in 2012, 115 deaths in 2013 and a total of 27 deaths was recorded in 2014. The implication of this is that the manpower required to cultivate and rear the food crops and animals that will ensure the sustainability and security of food in the state is lost. Thus, the actualization of food security in the state becomes the act of chasing wild goose.

In the perspective of Anyabe, Atelhe & Sunday (2017), the effects of loss of agro-manpower on food security can never be overemphasized. Fathers are lost during this battle and their children are subjected to perpetual penury with no body to fend for the families' feeding need financially.

Table 3: Statistics of Agro-Manpower lost to Farmers-Herders Conflict in Benue State between 2016 and 2017

Period of Occurrence	Place of Occurrence	Agro-Manpower Loss
Jan. 10, 2016	Agatu, Benue State	45 persons dead
Feb. 2, 2016	Agatu Reprisal Attack, Benue state	7 persons dead
Feb. 7, 2016	Tom Anyim, Benue State	10 persons dead
Feb. 24, 2016	Agatu, Benue State	300-500 persons dead
Feb. 28, 2016	Agatu, Benue State	9 persons dead
March 7, 2016	Logo, Benue State	8 persons dead
March 8, 2016	Guma, Benue state	11 persons dead
March 13, 2016	Logo, Benue State	9 persons dead
March 17, 2016	Mbaya, Tombu, Burutu, Benue state	12 persons dead
March 27, 2016	Tombu, Buruku LGA, Benue state	15 persons dead
April 18, 2016	Moor, Kwande LGA, Benue State	18 persons dead
April 23, 2016	Tarka, Benue state	1 Ape Chief dead
April 24, 2016	Mass Protest in Tarka, Benue state	17 persons injured
Jan. 24, 2017	Ipiga village in Ohimini LGA of Benue State	15 persons (13 villagers & 2 herders) dead
March 2, 2017	Mbahimin Community, Gwer-East LGA, Benue State	Over 10 persons dead
March 11, 2017	Tiv Community Mkgovur village, Buruku LGA, Benue State	7 dead
March 27, 2017	Fresh herders attack at Adam village, Kwande LGA, Benue state	1 dead, 1 injured, 8 women raped
May 8, 2017	Tse-Akaa village, Ugondo Mbamar, Logo LGA, Benue State	3 dead

Source: Author's compilation from Anyabe, Atelhe & Emmanuel (2017), The Vanguard Newspaper (June 1, 2017), and Kalu (2017).

From the above table, it could be deduced that just between 2016 and 2017, a minimum of 498 and a maximum of 698 agro-manpower have been lost in the conflict between farmers and herders in Benue state. Imagine what will happen to food production and availability if such death continues at the same rate for years. Outrightly, the manpower capacity in agriculture will be thrown into extinction and food security in the state will be a tale of the past glorious history of the state as the food basket of the nation. Already from the point of such death witnessed in the state, many farmers and herders are now displaced and are no longer ready to engage in their hitherto occupation for the fear of losing their lives, hence agricultural productivity is rapidly declining at a drastic rate and food security is sacrificed on the altar of this conflict.

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Table 4: Nigerian Food Security and Vulnerability Report: Prevalence of Livelihood Change and Associated Factors

States	Livelihood Change in a Year	Adverse Weather	Insecurity	Lack of Inputs	Lack of Capital	Displacement	Loss of Employment	Sample Size
Adamawa	8.6	3.9	13.7	9.8	41.2	15.7	3.9	51
Bauchi	22.9	0.7	3.6	66.4	84.7	0.0	2.2	137
Benue	67.2	12.2	53.1	3.3	8.2	19.9	4.1	49
Borno	56.9	3.6	79.3	7.2	28.6	23.7	3.6	304
Gombe	14.7	9.1	14.8	23.9	34.1	0.0	4.5	88
Jigawa	34.6	29.5	12.6	32.4	61.8	1.0	0.5	207
Kaduna	5.9	9.1	0.0	0.0	21.2	0.0	21.2	33
Kano	12.7	35.3	1.5	26.5	36.8	0.0	2.9	68
Katsina	26.8	1.9	11.2	45.3	64.0	1.2	2.5	161
Kebbi	16.3	8.2	5.2	10.3	75.3	1.0	3.1	97
Niger	10.0	15.0	13.3	26.7	68.3	0.0	13.3	60
Plateau	16.8	1.3	13.0	9.1	44.2	1.3	5.2	77
Sokoto	1.5	22.2	0.0	0.0	55.6	0.0	0.0	9
Taraba	12.9	2.6	26.0	14.3	33.8	14.3	2.6	77
Yobe	16.2	3.2	79.8	26.6	55.3	24.5	3.2	94
Zamfara	3.7	0.0	21.1	5.3	31.6	15.8	0.0	19

Source: Food and Agricultural Organization (2017)

Evidently underpinning the analysis above is the report of the Food and Agricultural Organization on Nigeria food security and vulnerability where Benue state ranked the highest in the number of states whose indigenes are fast changing their means of livelihood consequent upon some prevalent factors out of which insecurity ranked the highest. From the table, it could be inferred that the reason that most farmers and herders in Benue state are changing their means of livelihood is because of the farmers-herders crisis which has seen the fall of the heads of many farmers and herders alike, thus making other agro-manpower present in the state to decide between a change of occupation of joining others to the grave or the hospital as agricultural practices whether farming of animal husbandry now seem to be the shortest way to the grave in Benue state. The above is also in line with the observation of Ijirshar, Ker, & Terlumun (2015; p. 11), who posited thus:

> …this finding is in line with Musa and Shabu (2014) who reported that Yogbo town was the most affected in the area with estimated cost of property destroyed of ₦43.8 million, 30 people killed and 32 people injured. This implies that, a lot of farmers lost part or the whole of their crops resulting to low income particularly farmers who take farming as their major occupation. This conflict negatively affects their saving, credit repayment ability, food security and economic welfare of urban dwellers that depend on these farmers for food supply. Furthermore, host farmers especially women farmers who remain behind stopped going to distant farms for fear of attacks by the nomads in the bush thus becoming a source of liability to other farmers or urban dwellers…

The consequence of these deaths of farmers and herders alike, and also the shift in occupational practice of the living ones has huge negative impact on the state as their agricultural production capability is now a thing of the past, accessing food from the market is now quite difficult and the seen foods are usually at a very high price due to scarcity. Hence, the state is faced with the prevailing problem of food insecurity and consequently is skewed towards depending on others for their food sustainability. What a food basket with no underneath weave?

On a similar parlance, the table also depicts a picture of farmers and herders alike, changing their means of livelihood consequent upon internal displacement resulting from the farmers-herders conflict. Most of these agricultural producers are lost to other occupations when they are displaced and could no longer access their lands. This is because, they tend to look for alternative means of survival and livelihood since they tend to find themselves in a situation where they are displaced and are unable to access their lands.

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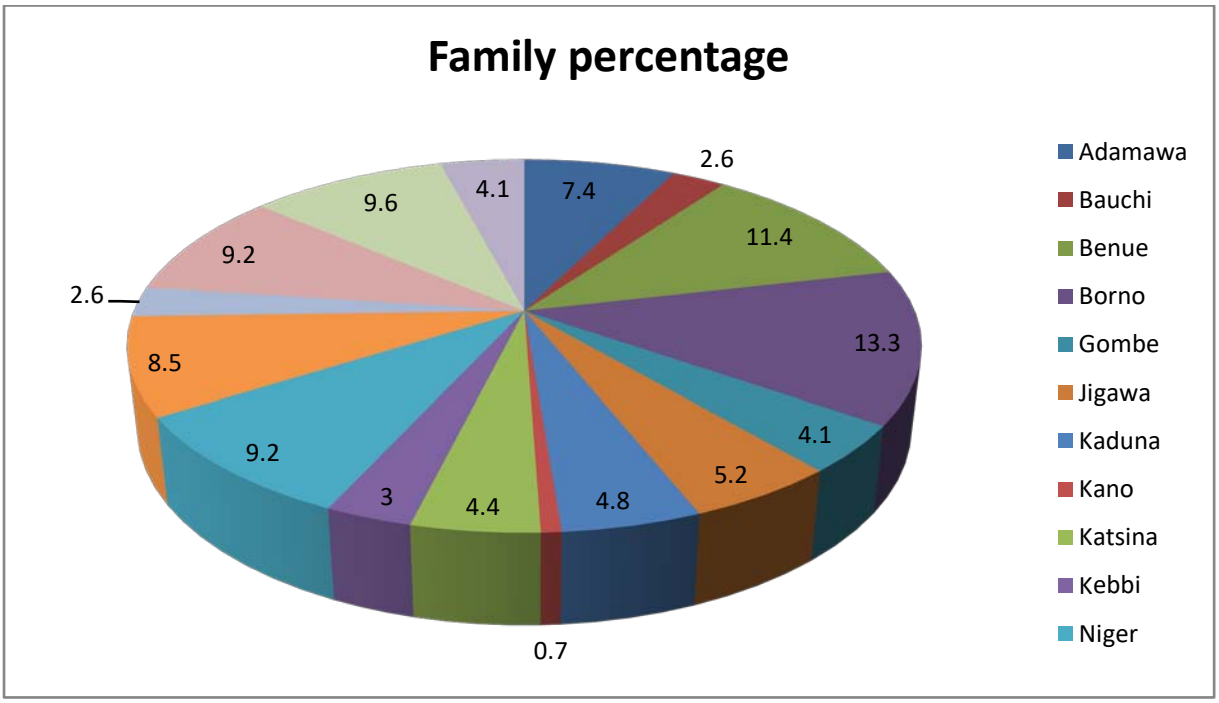

Source: International Organization for Migration (2017), Displacement Tracking Matrix (2018).

Fig. 2: Food Shortage and Reduced Coping Strategy Index: Percentage of Household who did not enough Food or Money to buy Food in 7 days preceding FSVS

In addition, a cursory glance at the above figure reveals the evidence of the percentage of the families across states in Northern and Middle-belt region of Nigeria who neither have enough food nor enough money to buy food in a preceding 7 days. Out of the 640 families drawn generally from all the states (i.e. 40 families per state), it was noticed that 271 families are negatively affected and neither have enough food nor enough money to buy food in preceding 7 days. From the figure above, it is revealed that out of the 271 families affected, 11.4% representing 31 families from Benue state neither have enough food nor enough money to buy food in 7 days. This is to say that out of every 40 families in Benue state, 31 families are negatively affected by the problem of food insecurity. The big question is 'why is this so?'.

The answer to the above question lies on the fact that people who are the producers of these foods are gunned down in the violent clash between the herders and the farmers or are forced to either abandon their farms or change profession. With majority of Benue inhabitants specializing only in family as their source of revenue it becomes difficult for them to produce enough food for their family or have enough money to buy elsewhere when they are faced with is farmers-herders conflict. Thus, food availability, stability and security become negatively affected.

From the foregoing, it is established that one of the consequences of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state is the loss of agro-manpower employed within the agricultural fulcrum of the state.

c) Cessation of Farmlands

This is another factor hypothesized to be a consequence of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state. Cessation of farmlands is contextually seen as the forceful taking away of farmlands from the owners or any prohibition of the owners of the farmlands thereof, from accessing their farmlands.

Farmland cessation can lead to food insecurity, loss of means of livelihood and extreme hunger. This is because, in a situation where the farmland in which crops are cultivated and animals are reared is ceased, the production of these crops and animals are hampered as accessing of the land by farmers as well as cultivation and animal husbandry is prohibited. When these become the order of the day over a long period, then source of food becomes undermined and consequently food insecurity becomes prevalent as is extreme hunger, poverty and loss of livelihood means.

In Benue state, there has never been an account of complete seizure of farmlands emanating from the crises of sedentary farmers and nomadic herders. However, from the perspective of what comes out from violent conflicts, one can easily adduce that the superior opponent in such violent conflict will control the landed resources. For instance, in the case of the 2006 conflict between Aguleri and Umueri in Anambra state, as well as in the case of Awkuzu and Nteje 2016/17 where Aguleri and Nteje respectively overpowered their opponent and was utilizing the land of contention until the case was resolved.

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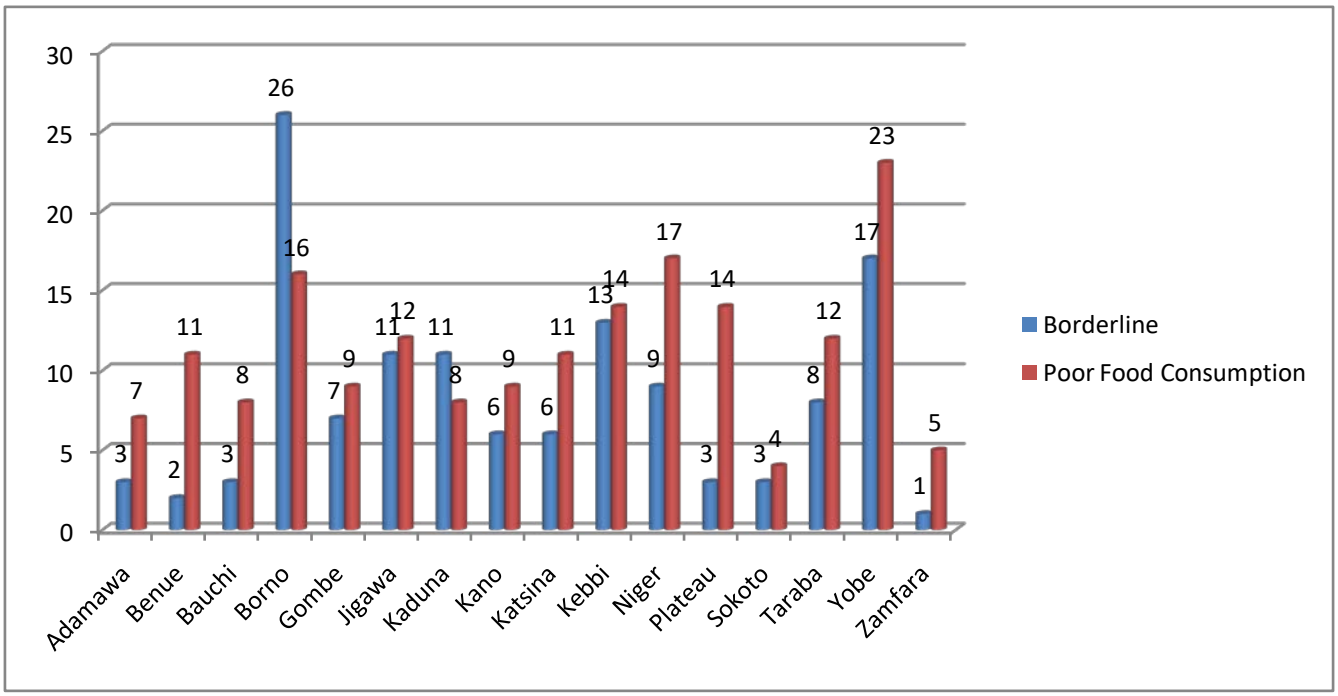
Following this, in Benue state, when the herders overpowers the farmers in their conflict through the use of ammunitions such as guns and other instruments of weaponry, they tend to dominate the lands and take over them as a grazing reserve for their cattle (Atelhe, Anyabe & Sunday, 2017).

In a similar note, Nformi, Mary-juliet, Engwali & Nji (2014) also submitted that Benue state is now a battle ground between the herders and the farmers where the victor takes all until the vanquish is strong enough to regain grounds. This is to say that resources such as land and farms are seized on temporary basis by either the herders or the farmers during their conflicting period based on who dominates in the conflict. In support of this perspective and in the establishment of the fact that farmers and herders are in constant tussle for land control in Benue state, Okoli & Addo (2018; p.19) stated thus:

> …both the farmers and pastoralists have engaged in fierce struggles for access to such valuable lands which, more often than not, result in increased conflicts and violence.

The temporary cessation of farm lands by either the farmers or the herders has negative implications on the food security of the state. This is because the struggle over land and landed resources discourages agricultural productions in the sense that the land is where food crops are cultivated and on land is also where the pastoral nomads rear their animals. Thus, whenever these lands are taken away from a particular group of farmers by destroying their produce and driving them away in a violent conflicting way, food productions becomes grossly affected.



Source: International Organization for Migration (2017)

Fig. 3: Prevalence of Borderline/Access to land and Poor Food Consumption

Also judging from the figure above adapted from the report of International organization for migration in 2017, one can easily observe that access to land/ prevalence of borderline in Benue state is highly minimal consequent upon the farmers-herders conflict. This is to say that both the sedentary farmers and the nomadic herders through their continuous violent clash deprive one another of the privileged to optimally utilize the agricultural relevance of the land in the production of agricultural products and the maintenance of stability in food security.

In support of this, Ibrahim, Abdurrahman & Umar (2015) projected that Benue state will have a marginal declination of food to the point that its inhabitant will be forced to leave to other states if the violent conflict between the farmers and herders which has imbibed the fear of going to the farm into the people should continue.

Evidently, as could be seen in the figure above, when access to land by either the sedentary farmers or the nomadic herders is denied and farms are left in abandonment; the growth of crops and the rearing of animals diminishes. In turn, food availability diminishes and all the inhabitants of the state become subjected to poor food consumption.

The situation is worsened when it goes beyond just access to farmland to include access to market. This is because when there is short or no food in supply to the market as a result of lack of production of food occasioned by denial of access to land, the access of

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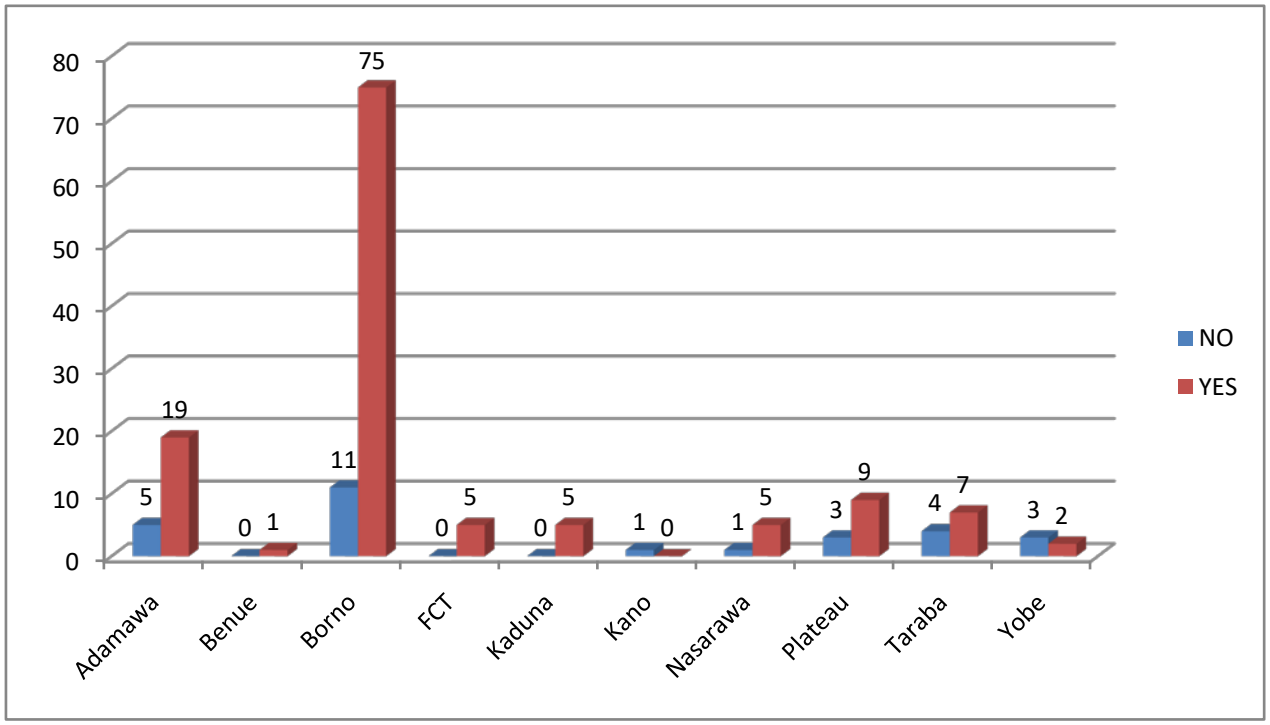
people to nutritious food in the market becomes indirectly tampered with as the little available ones will be sold at extreme high prices whereas the purchasing power of the people is relatively low. A condition like this is indirect denial of the people of their access to the market and an embrace to extreme food insecurity in Benue state. A deductive proof is seen in the figure below adapted from the report of the international organization for migration in 2017.



Source: International Organization for Migration (2017)

Fig. 4: Access to Market

In cognizance of the above, it is evident that cessation of farmland is one of the fundamental ways through which the farmers-herders conflict affect food security in Benue state. Although these farmlands are not seized on a permanent basis but on the virtue of who dominates the fore-front of the conflict until the other party regains the power of domination as rightly stated by Apenda (2016).

Summarily, from the analysis of hypothesis two, it is established that loss of agro-proceed, loss of agro-manpower, cessation of farmlands, loss of means of livelihood, displacement of farmers and herders alike, change of farming occupation, fear of going to the farm and deprivation of access to markets are the consequences of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state.

IV. Panaceas to the Effects of Farmers-Herders Conflict on Food Security in Benue State

This hypothesis looks at the solutions for solving the effects of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue State. It elicited alternative variables as the assumed solutions. These variables are thematically tested below to ascertain the prospects for solving food security challenges that are caused by farmers-herders conflict in Benue state and they include:

a) Herder's Anti-Migration Policy

Herders' anti-migration policy is a policy adopted by some states in Nigeria which restricts the movement of cattle herders across their state for the purpose of preventing conflict between these cattle herders and the sedentary farmers.

The problem of herders – farmers conflict is an age-long one that has attracted the adoption of different policies, measures and strategies towards putting an end to the hydra-headed monster which has severe consequences on the national security of Nigeria as well as its economic growth, development and food security.

One of the strategies adopted in this regard is the herder's anti-migration policy which is aimed at prohibiting the herdsmen from indulging in extensive cattle management system. This is to say that the herders are prevented from open grazing as a means of taking care of their cattle. Thus, they are neither allowed to wander through the states nor allowed to take their cattle to the open fields within the states where this policy is adopted and practiced.

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The essence of adopting this policy is to ensure that they (the farmers) don't collide and clash with the farmers who usually allege that these herders take their cattle on a destruction spree to their farmlands where their crops are being fed on by the cattle; a situation which often lead to violent conflict between the two parties – the farmers and the herders (This Day Newspaper, November 8, 2013; New Telegraph Newspaper, May 30, 2014; Ekah, 2014).

This nature of policy has been adopted in states like Ekiti, Taraba and Benue state in Nigeria. but the big question remains "has this policy been able to alleviate the problem of farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria and its corresponding effects on food security?" The answer is not farfetched as it could be seen in the research report of *International crisis group* in 2018 that despite the thriving and success recorded by this policy in Ekiti state, the reverse is the case in Benue state and Taraba state respectively. According to International crisis group (2018) the land use contest between farmers and herders which has adverse negative implication on food security in Benue state has done could not be curtailed by the herders' anti-migration policy on the account that the herders vehemently kicked against the policy and have intensified their violence on the basis of suppression of their fundamental human right.

Observable from the happenings in Benue state from 2014 - 2018 as could be seen in the research report of Okoli, Enyinnia, Elijah & Okoli (2019), upon the adoption of the policy in Benue state in November 2017, there was a mass exodus of herders from Benue state to the neighbouring states such as Nasarawa and Adamawa between December and January, 2018 where herders-farmers conflict increased in an alarming rate causing a death toll of 1,300 lives in January 2018 and displacing about 300,000 people who fled their homes.

On the account of solving a problem, creating another problem is a sin to humanity. Therefore, chasing out the herders from Benue state to other states as a an absolute way of managing their conflict with the farmers in the state and as a way of ensuring food security has only worsened the human and food insecurity problem of Nigeria as these states are on the verge of experiencing the anomalies that were witnessed in Benue state in their own state which in all absolutism is the creation of another problem for the Nigerian state.

From another perspective, the adoption of the herder's anti-migration policy in Benue state has proven itself to be an *impetus agitat* (driving force) towards societal vice of theft. This is seen in the dimension of the ongoing events in Benue state as was captured by Uker & Okar (2018) who in their findings noted that events of cattle rustling by youths in Benue state as instigated by traditional leaders are on the increased with the herder's anti-grazing/ anti-migration policy as a cover up for such horrendous act. They noted that this is one of the reasons that the herders are angrily pressing back in a conflicting manner towards the people of Benue state as no one will have his properties stolen on such ground without fighting to get it back.

According to Martin-shields & Stojetz (2018), the anti-migration policy in Benue state is only an opportunity for the aggressors (herders) to leave the state and reinforce for better attacks. This is to say that the peace, food security and development brought by this policy is only temporal and that it offers the ability for the herders to return in a more powerful way. The postulations of Martin-shields & stojetz (2018) are not doubt true as on January 10, 2018, 73 persons were recorded dead on a fresh offensive attack by the herdsmen in Guma and Logo local governments respectively (Sahara Reporters press, Jan.11, 2018). On a similar note, on March 4, 2018, another offensive attack was launched in Omusu village, Ojigbo ward in Edumoga Okpokwu local government area of Benue state by the herders on the farmers which left 26 people dead.

The most paramount thing to note in the nexus between the tripartite focus of this part of this discourse – anti-migration policy, food insecurity and farmers-herders conflict, is that the anti-migration policy in as much as it is meant to solve the problem of farmers-herders conflict and food insecurity in Benue state is a policy that is inconsistent with the provisions of the Nigerian policy. Recourse to the fact that the herders are also Nigerians and have their fundamental rights to freedom of movement guaranteed by S.41 (1) of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria as amended in 2011, one would see that prohibiting the movement of the herders is largely unconstitutional.

It is also worthy of note to state that in cognizance of S.1 (1) of the Nigerian constitution of 1999 that the constitution is supreme in Nigeria and that by virtue of S.1 (3) of the Nigerian constitution of 1999, that any law (including the statute establishing the herders anti-migration policy) which is inconsistent with the provision of the Nigerian constitution is to the extent of its inconsistency void. Thus, the herders' anti-migration policy is void and not suitable for the purpose for which it is established and adopted.

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that in as much as the herders' anti-migration policy is laudable in purpose, it holds no virtue in bringing alleviation to the painstaking problem of farmers-herders conflict in Benue state neither is it a worthy panacea for the problem of food insecurity in the state unless it is modified in a workable form with the constitution and other fundamental resolutions that won't favour one party at the expense of the other. Hence the hypothesis of anti-migration policy as an ameliorative to the problem is on this note rejected within this research finding.

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b) Military Deployment Policy

Military deployment policy is a conscious effort by the government to curtail insurgence and other security threatening situations through the processes of taking the members of the military (either of the army, navy air-force or by joint task force) to the places where these insurgencies occur so as to put a check on the perpetrators through the force of the gun.

With the trajectory of insurgences in Nigeria in the dimension of Boko haram terrorism, the rise of the Niger-Delta militia, the secessionist struggle in the South eastern Nigeria and more connected to the topic of discourse, the herders-farmers conflict which has risen to the position of the 2nd most dangerous insurgence in the West African states (International Crisis Group, 2018) in contemporary times; the Nigerian state has been forced to employ her military as a social control mechanism to put-out the various insurgencies that risen against the peace of its territorial people.

This strategy is an age-long one that was introduced by the various military governments of the country during their various regimes; and it has continued to thrive till date as it has on many accounts been used especially by the present political administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. Instances include the use of the military in the 2019 general election of the Nigerian state, the use of military in curtailing the Biafran peaceful secessionist agitation in the south eastern Nigeria, the use of the military in fighting criminals after the death of Funke Olakunri in south western Nigeria and the mid-western military deployment to combat farmers-herders conflict (The Punch, August 28, 2019).

Narrowing the analysis of the deployment of military policy as a suitable panacea for the control of farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria in general and Benue state in specific. One can simply say from an outlook that the policy is worthy of emulation and most appropriate for driving away hoodlums and bringing back peace, serenity and tranquility in the state which will in-turn restore the state to the reality of it being the food basket of the nation by ensuring that there is food security in the state. On record is that on January 11, 2018 the Nigerian military deployed the members of the Special Forces unit of the army to Benue state to secure vulnerable communities and prevent further herdsmen attack on these communities (Africa News, January 11, 2018). Also on record is that the activities of the herders-farmers conflict drastically reduced within this period.

However, the question that should come to fore of the argument is, is the deployment of the military policy option the best alternative? Did it really put an end to the farmers-herders conflict in the state? The answers to these questions are obviously before us as it is also on record that on the 4th day of March, 2018, despite the presence of the military, an offensive attack was launched by the herders on the farmers, the result of which was the losing of about 26 lives. Similarly, on the 23rd of April, 2018, not lesser than 18 people (farmers and worshippers alike) including two priests were killed by suspected herdsmen in Mbalom, Benue state (The Guardian Newspaper, April 24, 2018). If the military deployment in Benue state was an effective mechanism for combating of the herders-farmers conflict and the restoration of food security in the state, then these negative occurrences wouldn't have taken place.

Nevertheless, it was also recorded by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on the 19th of April, 2018 that the members of the Nigerian army attacked Naka community in Gwer-west local government area of Benue state killing at least 7 people and destroying over 200 houses (BBC News, April 20, 2018). This is a scenario which depicts an act of being bitten by one's dog. The soldiers who were called to protect the people turned back to attack the people. Quizzed about the incidence, the Nigerian military stated that a soldier was killed by the people of Mbakyondo village of that community who they mistook for a herdsman and the soldiers had to retaliate for the killing of their own. How can the food security be achieved and farmers-herders conflict be resolved if the farmers or the herders who produce these foods are constantly being killed by the members of the Nigerian military?

Moreso, it is imperative to note that the farmers and the herders alike are all citizens of Nigeria and their death in the hands of the military is nothing but the Nigerian state warring against its own – a mother warring against its children; and just like the Latin legal maxim *domun contra ipsum poterit stare*, a house against itself cannot stand. Therefore, the policy of military deployment to Benue state as a means of alleviating farmers-herders conflict and fostering food security is bound to fail in its objective.

On a similar parlance, the constitutionality and legality of the adoption of the policy is a case of questionability. This is so because in line with the constitutional provisions under S. 217 (2) (b) & (c), the military are constitutionally mandated to defend the country and guard it against external aggression by staying at the borders as well as aid the civil authorities in tackling civil insurrections if called upon by the president. On this note, they are not empowered to take over the wheel of combating civil insurgencies, rather they are meant to aid the police and other civil authorities in ensuring peaceful mediation and resolution of conflicts. However, the reverse is the case in Nigeria and Benue state where the police was asked to hand over the entirety of the famers-herders conflict case to the members of the military. The result of which is the unstoppable blood bath within that region of the state.

Another pronounced factor within the ambit of military deployment policy is that it can be argued to be one of the reasons that the herders took up guns and other natures of military ammunitions with which they

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operate today. This is because, an ordinary nomad uses clubs and at most a cutlass as a weapon but with recent happenings, obvious it is that the herders now make use of sophisticated weaponry which were either forcefully collected from soldiers, collected from killed soldiers and even voluntarily given to them by corrupt soldiers upon their encounter at a price. It is with these weapons that large impacts are made by them in the destruction of crops, killing of farmers and even destruction of the farmers' residential houses.

From all indications as could be seen from the various dimensions of the analyses of the military deployment policy, it is proven to be a wrong policy in a wrong direction in the issue of combating farmers-herders conflict and food insecurity problem in Benue state where these issues are without doubt sending chills to the spines of both the government and the inhabitants of the state. Thus, on this note military deployment policy is not accepted as a solution to the farmers-herders conflict and food insecurity in the state.

c) Intensive Cattle Ranching Policy

Intensive cattle ranching is a system of animal husbandry as well as a farming practice in which animals are kept in large pens in the houses of their owners. This farming practice is usually associated with cattle or other livestock which can destroy crops and people's properties as it puts them in safety and where they can be frequently checked. Intensive cattle ranching is primordial to the native Africans of Igbo extraction that intensively or semi-intensively reared all their livestock ranging from fowl, goats, sheep, to cattle.

Intensive cattle ranching policy is one policy that has not been given wider attention by majority of cattle farmers especially the migrant cattle farmers in Nigeria. This policy which thrives in other countries such as United States of America, Australia, Brazil, India and China which are recognized in the world as the highest producers of cattle (FAO, 2019) has not received the consideration of Nigerians nor the Nigerian government.

However, relating the nature of this policy and its practice to the means of solving the farmers-herders conflict and the food insecurity problem in Benue state. One would consider the limelight of advantageousness of the policy in close comparison to its disadvantages as regards the farmers-herders conflict and food insecurity in Benue state.

On the basis of this, the intensive cattle ranching policy provides ample opportunity for the herds of cattle to be well taken care of. This is so because the cattle are usually ranched in ranges to avoid the killing of the calf by the adult bulls. Thus, it enables more production of beef and milk which on their own serve as food – providers of protein. With this food security will be improved. Thus the Benue state residing cattle farmers upon the adoption of this policy will help boost food security in this dimension.

From another perspective, the intensive ranching of cattle in pens at the farmers' home prevents the basic factor from which the farmers-herders conflict arises. This factor is nothing other than the destruction of farmers' crops and other farm produces by straying cattle. The adoption of intensive cattle ranching policy will absolutely keep cattle away from the public, crop farms and from wandering through the nooks and crannies of the communities where it destroys people's landed properties. Thus, in this, conflict between the farmers and herders will be curtailed in a drastic manner.

On the opposite extreme of the advantageousness of the intensive cattle ranching policy lie the fact that the herders that engage in the conflict with the farmers are usually from the far-northern region of the country where the problem of climate change leaves pastures for feeding livestock dried and non-palatable to the cattle. It is for this reason that they migrate from these region to other regions as nomads in search of better weather condition and environment where their livestock can be well fed. Thus, the argument of adopting intensive ranching of cattle is a move against them; it is apparently asking them to subject their livestock to the blow of death through poor feeding and un-conducive/unfavourable environmental condition, since they are to rear their livestock in their various homes.

In cognizance of the above, in as much as the intensive ranching of cattle will solve the problem of farmers-herders conflict and boost food security in Benue state, it will facilitate the incurring of loss and death of livestock on the side of the herders. It is on this note that the herders might have been reluctant to adopt such practice even though it is aboriginal to the locals of the African continent especially those of the Igbo tribe of Nigeria.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the issue of climate change affecting the productivity of cattle is one that can be solved in a twinkle of an eye by the government and by the herders and farmers alike. One might ask how? But it is glaring that if the Nigerian government makes a move in the northern region to irrigate their environment and adopt afforestation policy over there that the region will become as vegetative as other regions of the country. Drawing inference from Malaysia and United Arab Emirate that were once affected by desertification (Osuagwu & Oruebor, 2011), the governments of these two countries transformed their various countries into green grasslands and today Malaysia is the highest producer of palm and palm produces which it took from Nigeria. If these two countries can transform their deserts into grasslands, then there is no scintilla of doubt that the Nigerian government can transform the northern region into grassland too and solve the problem of climate change for the herders making it possible for them to adopt

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intensive cattle ranching policy and prevent further conflicts of farmers and herders while simultaneously boosting food security not just in Benue state but in Nigeria in entirety.

From another perspective, the by-product of the activities of farmers and those of the herders are essential to the two parties. The government of Benue state and those of the states where these herders are from can simply make arrangements on an exchange of pastures for manure while adopting the intensive cattle ranching policy. With this, each party will stay in their different location and have all it needs to boost production of either their cattle or their farm crops – while the pastures will aid the herders in feeding their cattle, the cattle faeces and excreta will aid the farmers in growing their crops. This will drastically reduce to the minimal level the conflict between the farmers and the herders, it will solve the problem of food insecurity and at the same time solve the problem of climate change that forces the migrant herders to leave their states in search of better pastures – the journey on which they conflict with the farmers.

In all, it is evident that although the policy of intensive cattle ranching is not practicable in the contemporary Nigeria, that it has the tendency of curbing the issue of farmers-herders conflict in Benue state and boosting food security in the state simultaneously if adopted. Thus, as a variable within the tested hypothesis, it is accepted as a valid panacea to the problem of farmers-herders conflict and food insecurity in Benue state.

Summarily, from the analysis of hypothesis three, it is established that neither herders' anti-migration policy nor military deployment policy proved a valid solution to the problem of farmers-herders conflict and food insecurity in Benue state. Rather, intensive cattle ranching policy which is not practicable in Nigeria in contemporary times proves to possess the essentialities required to put an end to the farmers-herders conflict and boost food security not only in Benue state but in Nigeria in general.

In cognizance of the analysis of the hypotheses, it is worthy to outline the findings of the analysis below and they include:

1. From the analysis of hypothesis one, it was found out that climate change and intolerance are the main causes of farmers-herders conflict in Benue state while age long disagreement only play a passive contributory role. It was also deduced that cattle rustling, persistent refusal of herders to leave farmer's community in Benue state as well as their destruction of the farmlands and farm-produces of farmers construe to the causes of the conflict between farmers and herders in the state.
2. From the analysis of hypothesis two, it was established that loss of agro-proceed, loss of agro-manpower, cessation of farmlands, loss of means of livelihood, displacement of farmers and herders alike, change of farming occupation, fear of going to the farm, rise in cost of food items and deprivation of access to markets are the consequences of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state.
3. From the analysis of hypothesis three, it was established that neither herders' anti-migration policy nor military deployment policy proved a valid solution to the problem of farmers-herders conflict and food insecurity in Benue state. Rather, intensive cattle ranching policy which is not practicable in Nigeria in contemporary times proves to possess the essentialities required to put an end to the farmers-herders conflict and boost food security not only in Benue state but in Nigeria in general.

V. Recommendations

Sequel to the research findings of this study, it has become pertinent to make the following recommendations. It is considered in the view of the researcher that if they are taken seriously and effectively implemented with a genuine sense of purpose and commitment; that they will go a long way in alleviating the effects of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state. These recommendations include:

1. The federal, states and local governments in Nigeria should combat desertification by buying into the practical idea of irrigation, afforestation and the Nigerian Great Green Wall policy. This will facilitate the growth of vegetation in every part of the country thereby curtailing the migration of herders which unavoidably breeds conflict with the farmers.
2. The federal and state government should fully take sanctionable legal actions against anyone that deprives another (in this case the herders) of their freedom of movement or settlement at a place; so long the herders do not in their settlement activity or movement attack anyone, violate or destroy anyone's property (landed or otherwise). This will curb the problem of intolerance and age long disagreement between the herders and the farmers which has catalyzed their conflict over the years.
3. The federal and state government should also fully take sanctionable legal actions against anyone that violates, vandalizes or destroys another's properties and /or anyone who's actions, activities or animals destroys the labour of another. In so doing, the herders will be put in control check as they will avoid vandalizing the properties of the farmers (landed or otherwise) and will in all alertness keep their cattle herd in check to ensure that it doesn't stray through communities destroying farmlands and its produces, lest they (the herders) become vicariously liable. This will also curb the destruction

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of farm produces of both the farmers and the herders alike and explicitly boost food security.

4. Subject to the second and third recommendations above, a monitoring committee should be set up by the federal government of Nigeria in all the states of the federation with a unit under the control of the state government. This committee will be responsible for the checkmating of the activities of the farmers and herders alike to know when any or both of the parties have crossed the borderline requiring sanctionable actions.
5. Intensive cattle management policy through ranching should be adopted in all states of the federation with the government creating an *exchange of pasture for manure* link between the farmers and the herders. This will help boost peace and communal living between the two parties, end their conflict, end the indigene-settlers dichotomy between them, and boost agricultural production within the state.
6. In support of the fifth recommendation, the government of each state should establish a pasture reserve center, where pastures for feeding livestock will be grown and sold to the herders and other animal farmers at a cheap cost. This will prevent them from unnecessary migration in search of greener pastures for their livestock feed and will inadvertently prevent further conflicts between the farmers and the herders.
7. The Benue state government should adopt with all commitment and seriousness an agriculturally inclined empowerment scheme in which all those who want to indulge in agricultural production are empowered with good capital assets such as crops and seedlings for crop farmers and young livestock for animal farmers. This empowerment scheme should also come with the provision of animal feed and crop fertilizers to all registered crop and animal farmers for one year. This will help to restore people who have lost their means of livelihood and those who have shifted from agriculture as their occupation back to farming practice, and will in no distant time stabilize the price of food items and restore/increase food security in that region.
8. The federal government should call on all displaced farmers (both crop and animal farmers) in all farmers-herders conflict affected region, and empower them with a house and a loan to restart their farming occupation.
9. The Nigerian borders should also be closely watched and regulated, to prevent the influx of nomadic herders from other countries who might have been affected by climate change into Nigeria. This should be done in compliance with international instruments such as the ECOWAS protocol on the prevention of transhumance pastoralism. This will help reduce herders' migration which lead to conflict with farmers and will also help regulate the proliferation of arms by the herders as it is no news that these herders usually attack with sophisticated weapons.
10. Public campaigns and enlightenment should also be launched by the government to educate the farmers and herders and herders alike on the need for peaceful leaving and the nemesis of their crisis on lives, properties and more importantly, on access to food in Benue state and other close-by states where farmers-herders conflict thrives.

VI. Conclusion

The growing trend of food insecurity in Benue state, Nigeria and the world at large is a phenomenon that threatens human sustainability and existence. It is however awful to think that this food insecurity is an issue that is caused by our own hands through our own carelessness by indulging in conflicts such as the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria that has had adverse effects on food security in the country. Thus, in a bid to put an end to such food insecurity problem and place human sustainability in a balance of certainty, it is worthy that a solution be given to the effects of farmers-herders conflict on food security. It is this that forms the thrust of this research with emphasis on Benue state where farmers-herders conflict has done more harm than could be merely thought about.

This study in fulfillment of its purpose has found out that farmers-herders conflict has large implications on food security in Benue state. Parts of its findings in regards to the above is that crops, animals, and other forms agricultural harvests and reserves are plundered, agricultural proceeds and manpower required for agricultural production are lost, farmlands are ceased, means of livelihood are lost, physical destructions of properties are done, farmers and herders are displaced, people change their farming occupations, access to farmlands and markets are denied, food production decreases, food items rise in price, and peoples access to food is decreased. These are the consequences of this farmers-herders conflict in Benue state which depicts a state of extremely negative food security where hunger, starvation and famine thrive. The above findings justify also the views of Okoli & Addo (2018; p. 22) who stated thus:

> …Fulani/herdsmen crises have both direct and indirect consequences on food production and security. It has been found to have led to food shortage, increase in price of food items and limit people's access to food through destruction of infrastructure necessary for food production and ultimately resulting to famine. Herdsmen crisis also lead to physical destruction and plundering of crops, and livestock, harvest and food reserves. Apart from this, it drives young people away from farming activities. Further, displacement of people creates acute food shortages in the receiving areas where they seek refuge.

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This study in its analyses also identified the solution for combating the effects of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state to be the adoption of intensive cattle ranching policy. Although the policy has not been officially practiced in Nigeria except in the ancient time, its adoption in other countries of the world such as United States of America, Australia, China and Brazil seems to yield effective result.

With the identification of the above consequences of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state, and the corresponding solution derived from the analysis of the hypotheses of this research with the data gathered, recommendations have been made above, which are tentatively the panacea to the trends and effects of farmers-herders conflict on food security if they should be adopted and committedly implemented.

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