

## **Migrant Fulani Herdsmen and Native Farmers Conflict in Nigeria: Implications for Food Security and Livelihood**

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### **Abstract**

In the past, the nomads have often come into conflicts with the local farmers. Growing clashes between crop farmers and herders have recently become one of Nigeria's most significant security concerns. The conflict in Nigeria has now extended over a huge geographic area. In most parts of Nigeria, resource conflicts between farmers and Fulani herders over land and agricultural productivity have turned into a threat to peace, human lives, and economic viability. This research investigates the migrant herdsmen/native farmers' conflict; implication for food security and livelihood in middle-belt region of Nigeria. The study adopted a desktop research approach in which a thematic analysis of existing literature on conflict and food safety articles and publications served as the basis for the arguments presented. This paper is anchored on the social conflict theory. The paper found that, above all other resources, land has remained a major cause of conflict between Fulani herders and native farmers, posing a threat to crop farming and grazing activities and causing low productivity, unstable food supply, low food consumption, inaccessible food, and insufficient food availability in Nigeria. As a result, the study recommends that state and local governments strictly enforce the Open Grazing Prohibition. Second, through stakeholder meetings, peace-talk activities should be managed effectively and strategically.

**Keywords:** Conflict, herdsmen, farmers, food security, livelihood, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Crop production and livestock rearing are major fields of agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa and the world over. Okwor (2016) asserts that pastoralism and crop farming

are two important sources of livelihood and subsistence in Nigeria and the world as human beings rely on meat, milk, grain, other crops and leather. One of the key difficulties affecting the world and national peace today is conflicts appearing in numerous dimensions worldwide. Conflicts abound in Europe, America, Africa, and Asia (Jeony, 2008). These two agricultural sectors have also been the source of concern and worries as a result of conflicts in almost all parts of Africa. Farmer-herder conflict is a common conflict that occurs between sedentary crop farmers and pastoralists livestock farmers. Amongst all the God-given resources, land has unquestionably remained a source of contention among various users and persons across time and space. Herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria often involve disputes over land, particularly between the Fulani herdsmen and the indigent farmers (Olayoku, 2014). Conflict between Fulani herdsmen and indigent farmers over arable land is becoming increasingly serious and widespread in Nigeria due to increased production activities demanded by a growing human population (Kazzah, 2018).

Herdsmen's movement from one section of the country to another is frequently spurred by an increase in demand for fresh grazing grounds, especially during droughts when herdsmen move southwards to find pasture. Herdsmen frequently clash with villagers because their livestock destroys crops (Olaleye, Odutola, Ojo, Umar, and Ndanitsa, 2010). Herders are becoming a bigger threat in many locations where they migrate to feed their sheep. They pose a serious threat to the communities where they live. Their actions have disastrous consequences for national security, food availability, and sustainability (Ojelade, 2019). The tendency to engage land and farm owners of the areas where they graze their cattle is growing by the day as they update their armament with incredibly powerful weapons (Ojelade, 2019).

Previous studies have shown that, serious conflict erupt between Fulani herdsmen and native farmers leading to loss of lives, valuable property and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands thereby posing serious social economic threat to food security since farmers for fear of attack could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce, while for the herdsmen they can no longer do their pastoral work without fear of reprisal attacks from the farmers, all of these creates an eventual fragile peace situation (Wey,

2019). Meanwhile recent attacks by Fulani herdsmen are on the increase, these often lead to food insecurity and negative economic growth (Wey, 2019).

Olayoku (2014) and Nextier SPD, (2021), assert that over 120 cases of farmers-herdsmen conflict were reported around the country from June 2008 and September 2021, leading to over 3700 deaths and over 61 000 people injured and 15 kidnapped persons. Except for one death, all the victims were civilians. During this period, crops and livestock running into billions of naira were destroyed, while thousands of people were displaced leading to the breakdown of family units, the bedrock of our society. This conflict has also undermined agricultural production compromising the nation's food security, especially during these periods of rising food prices. (Olayoku, 2014, Adebayo, 2023). The North-Central region remains the hotbed for farmer-herder conflicts (in terms of incidents), while the North-West is the most violent in terms of casualties per incident. The North-Central region recorded 58 percent of the incidents and accounted for 61 percent of the casualties. At the same time, the South-West region recorded the second-highest number of incidents (25 percent of the total), only 12 percent of the deaths. The North-West region, on the other hand, recorded 4 percent of the incidents but 15 percent of the deaths. These proportions hold even when comparing all the victims (death, injured and kidnapped) to the total number of incidents. It is worthy of note that although the South-East recorded 6 percent of the incidents, it accounted for 9 percent of the deaths. The South-South had 6 percent of the incidents but only 3 percent of the casualties (Nextier SPD, 2021). Adebayo (2023) state that while fatalities were initially confined to the North Central, they have since spread across the country increasing pre-existing religious and ethnic tensions. This could partly explain why the Food and Agriculture Organization (2017) declared in March 2017 that about 7.3 million Nigerians were under food-security threat and required urgent intervention. This is the current security threat in numerous Nigerian towns and states (Ojelade, 2019).

With the current outbreak of violence between migrant herders and indigenous farmers, which has been related to herdsmen migration, the government has made multiple efforts at various levels to ameliorate these seemingly intractable problems. Nigeria, for example, has 415 government-designated grazing areas around the country, and farmer-herdsmen

reconciliation committees have been established in most conflict-prone states to handle resource-based conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. Nigeria's government is also working to create additional stock routes for herders (FAO, 2012, IRIN, 2010). The government is also demarcating a 1,400km livestock route from Sokoto State in the northwest to Oyo State in the southwest and another 2400km route from Adamawa State to Cross River State in the delta region. This is in addition to demarcating 175,000 hectares of grazing land, building veterinary service centers, and constructing settlements for nomads to use en route at US\$247 million (FAO, 2012, IRIN, 2012). Unfortunately, these conflicts not only continue to persist, but they also are on the rise and fast becoming a nationwide phenomenon. However, in Nigeria today, the herdsman-farmers conflict is frequently discussed without regard for the implications for food security. Food shortages, lives and property insecurity are two significant fallouts of these conflicts (Ojelade, 2019). Hence, it is more important than ever to investigate the migrant Fulani herdsman/native farmers conflict and its implications on food security.

### **Insight into Fulani's Migration**

The Fulanis, are unquestionably important migrants to Nigeria's economy. Fulani pastoralists started migrating into northern Nigeria from the Senegambia region around the thirteenth or fourteenth century (Okello, Majekodunmi, Malala, Welburn, and Smith 2014, Tonah, 2002) after the Uthman dan Fodio jihad to about twenty (20) nations in West Africa, the Sahel, Western Sudan, and the Central African Republic. Before moving to the Jos Plateau's Grassland, Fulbe herders are thought to have lived in the Bauchi = Emirates lowlands (Okello et al., 2014, Tonah, 2002). In Northern Nigeria's Hausa culture, the Fulani were assimilated. After that, Fulani pastoralists started driving their cattle into the Middle Belt region, which is dominated by non-Hausa communities, during the dry season when the tsetse fly population is decreased. They would then return to the north at the start of the rainy season. But occasionally, when driving cattle and maintaining the herd, cattle graze on farmlands, causing damage to the crops and escalating tensions (Okello et al., 2014, Tonah, 2002). Transhumance is practiced by Fulani herdsman both haphazardly and deliberately. The purely nomadic Fulani herdsman typically wander at random, whereas the semi-

nomadic pastoralists generally travel on a planned basis. The herdsmen's tendency to migrate is primarily due to the need to find regions where the cattle can find plenty of grass and water (Iro, 1994). The herdsmen also travel to avoid tax collectors, dangerous insects, bad weather, and an unfavorable social climate. Maximizing the availability of food supplies for the cattle and minimizing excessive grazing are two important advantages of the movement for the herdsmen (Iro, 1994). The herdsmen deploy a reconnaissance party before going to a new place to check the land for the presence of resources like grass and water. Fulani herdsmen are represented in Nigeria through advocacy organizations like Miyetti Allah (Blench, 2016).

### **The Role of Fulanis In Meat Production**

The importance of the Fulanis to the local food chain and national food security cannot be overemphasized. They are the principal cattle breeders in Nigeria, the primary beef source, and the most readily available and affordable source of animal proteins (Lezuya, 2021). Globally, livestock contributes about 40% to the agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) in the developing world (World Bank, 2009). It plays crucial and multiple roles in the livelihood of people ranging from the food supply, family nutrition, incomes, employment, animal power, manure, and sustainable land use for agricultural production and accounts for almost 30% of human protein consumption (Steinfeld et al., 2006). According to Rosegrant et al. (2001), demand for livestock products particularly milk and meat in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to grow by 3.2 and 3.9% per annum between 1997 and 2020 due to increasing population, income growth, and urbanization.

### **Insight into Farmer/Herders' Conflict**

According to Otite and Albert (2001), conflict is viewed as unnatural, dysfunctional, and repulsive in most parts of the world, including Nigeria. Conflict is a natural aspect of life and can be a forerunner to constructive change. The significance of conflict in society is the extent to which it is controlled so that violence does not threaten its survival (Mamman, 2020).

Conflict refers to the unjustified use of force. Because conflict is violence perpetrated by the State in the guise of power against the will of its citizens, this perception creates definitional issues. As a result, state-sponsored violence constitutes terrorism, especially when it is supported and controlled by those in positions of authority. Conflict combines the good, the evil, and the unknown (Lezuya, 2021). Conflict can have both beneficial and harmful consequences. As a result, conflict draws to the fore certain lingering difficulties. Conflict leads to a clearer characterization of issues in this way. After such issues have been discovered, they can be remedied amicably (Lezuya, 2021).

Conflict between two sets of resource users, such as a farming community and another agricultural community. Non-agricultural user groups compete with agricultural user groups on the one hand, while intra-user group competition occurs at different levels. Indeed, competition for land resources is becoming more intense and violent as human and animal populations grow (Hauna, 2011).

Farmer/herders' clashes are not new; they occurred throughout the time of the ancient patriarchs (Breusers, Suzanne, Teunis, 1998). Benjaminsen and Boubacar (2009) also mentioned biblical patriarchs as the genesis of the farmer-herder conflict; for instance, the conflict between Cain and Abel, which led the former to kill the latter (Benjaminsen et al., 2009). In West Africa, this conflict is not only rampant but also on the increase. Although some scholars dispute the rise assertion, it is evident that the conflicts exist and have drawn the attention of researchers and policymakers. Farmers and herders have experienced resource conflicts since the beginning of time. The farmers-herders conflict has been Nigeria's most significant resource-use conflict, despite its shifting nature and severity (Shettima & Tsar, 2008). Native farmers and migratory Fulani herders have a history of long coexistence in a mutually beneficial relationship. Both parties have significantly benefited from this mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship based on the local exchange of dairy products for grain, cereal residues, and fertilization of farmland through animal dung and the periodic sale of animals. Such coexistence has often been tensed because it necessitates a state of rural interests (Lezuya, 2021).

Increased human and animal activities has resulted in cropland and grazing area scarcity. As a result, competition for important land resources has arisen (Lezuya, 2021). However, when the conflict between the two resource users occurs, it affects the mutual trust that might have existed before the outbreak of conflict, causing either side to view the other with contempt and some level of mistrust. Conflict breaks down symbiotic relationships and harmony required for peaceful co-existence, and enhanced crop and livestock production (Lezuya, 2021)

Nigeria's implementation of the land use act of 1978 allowed the state or federal government the right to assign and lease land and also gave indigenes the right to apply and be given a certificate of occupancy to claim ownership of their ancestral lands (Okello et al., 2014). This placed the pastoral Fulani in a difficult position because most did not apply for lands of occupancy of their grazing routes, and recurring transhumance movement led to encroachment on the properties of others. Conflict arises when livestock is not properly managed, and herds wander onto cultivated fields. Clashes also occur when agricultural activities obstruct the movement of herds and cut off their access to water or pastures at important times in the yearly cycle, particularly during sowing when herds leave agricultural lands and during harvests if they return too early (Shettima et al., 2008). The Nigeria government designed some areas as grazing routes, but this has not reduced clashes (Okello et al., 2014).

### **Extent of Farmer/Herders' Conflict**

The conflict, which began gradually and was frequently mediated by local community officials, has highlighted the traditional conflict resolution system that has previously assisted in resolving all forms of conflict between farmers and cattle herders. This is primarily due to the two factions' growing distrust and suspicion of each other. (Lezuya, 2021). This conflict situation has now expanded across large geographical areas on the continents of Africa, particularly in Nigeria. In Nigeria, this situation is no longer confined to the northern region, it spreads across the southern parts, including Oyo, Ondo, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. The conflict between crop farmers and cattle herders has wreaked havoc in Nigeria. Since 2007, no week has gone by without reports of farmers and herders

clashing. These confrontations frequently result in large-scale loss of life and property (Lezuya, 2021). The most affected states are those of the Nigerian Middle Belt like Benue, Taraba and Plateau. Since the fourth Nigerian republic which emerged in 1999, farmer-herder conflict has killed thousands of people and also displaced tens of thousands more. This followed a trend in the increase in the farmer-herder conflicts throughout much of the western Sahel due to expansion of agricultural population and cultivated land at the expense of pasturelands, deteriorating environmental conditions, desertification and soil degradation, breakdown in traditional conflict solution mechanisms over land and water disputes; and proliferation of small arms and crimes in rural areas (Lezuya, 2021).

Adebayo (2023) asserts that between 2016 and now, at least 4000 people lost their lives in these farmers/herders' conflicts, with several thousand others sustaining injuries, both physical and emotional. Herdsmen attacks claimed the lives of nearly 1600 people in Benue State between 2013 and March 2018, recorded that 117,771 were internally displaced and relocated to eight camps in the State (Godwin, 2018). Recently, more than 92 Nigerians were massacred by suspected Fulani herdsmen in Benue and Niger States. In tandem to the forgoing, Governor Samuel Ortom also reported that more than 1,878 people were killed between 2014 and 2016 and that attacks by herders coming from more northerly states, and possibly also from Cameroon and Niger, had cost his state N95 billion (about \$634 million at that time) between 2012 and 2014. Conversely, this implies that over 1,800 killed in herdsmen, farmer's clashes in Benue in three years (Godwin, 2018).

Besides, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) recently placed Nigeria's Fulani herdsmen as the world's fourth deadliest militant group, accounting for high percentage of death. Thus, while Boko Haram was associated with about 330 casualties in the first quarter of 2016, the Fulani herdsmen accounted for nearly 500 deaths and have shown no sign of slowing down (GTI, 2015). It is very risky to ignore such clashes because it can lead to deadly conflict in the future.

### **Food Security In Nigeria**



Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Tyomlia, 2020). According to Tyomlia (2020), four major dimensions evolve from this definition as follows:

a. Physical availability of food: Food availability focuses on the "supply side" of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels, and net trade (Tyomlia, 2020).

b. Economic and physical access to food: This refers to an adequate supply of food at the national or international level, which does not in itself guarantee the household level of food security (Tyomlia, 2020).

c. Food Utilization: Utilization is often viewed in terms of how the body makes the most use of various nutrients in the food (Tyomlia, 2020).

d. Stability of the other three dimensions over time: Even when one's food intake is adequate today, he/she is still considered to be food insecure where there is no adequate access to food periodically, risking a deterioration of the individual status. Factors like weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices) may affect one's food security status (Tyomlia, 2020).

Food security is an indispensable prerequisite for humanity's survival and economic activity, including food production. Food is unique among commodities because it is necessary for survival and existence (Otaha, 2013). In Nigeria, there has been a high level of food insecurity for the past four decades as a result of neglect in food production as oil has become the primary export product, and as a result of neoliberal economic policies such as the devaluation of the naira, trade liberalization, and government withdrawal from economic activities, ethnic and religious conflicts; disasters such as flooding, and drought have also contributed to food insecurity (Otaha, 2013)

### **Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Farmers/Herders Conflict In Nigeria**

Socio-cultural factors continue to provoke violent conflicts among the Fulani pastoralists and native farmers. The combination of the factors below affects farmers/herders' conflict in Nigeria.

### **Scarce resource factor**

The struggle by different parties to appropriate perceived scarce resources for self or group survival often engendered conflict. Resource scarcity is induced by many factors and is not without consequences. This type of scarcity is essentially a decline in the availability of or access to natural resources. It is usually induced by climatic and environmental factors such as climate change, acute drought, environmental degradation, freshwater depletion, desertification, erosion, extreme heat, and wetland loss (Lezuya, 2021). For example, because of the increasing desertification on Nigeria's northmost fringes, many Fulani herdsmen have started pushing southwards in search of grazing land, accounting, to some extent, the conflict between indigent farmers and migratory Fulani herdsmen (Mamman, 2020).

### **Land use**

Nigeria's mysticism and proclivity for land ownership are also key factors in the conflict. Land-related concerns, particularly overgrazing fields, are at the base of the present surge in the conflict between the two groups, which accounts for the majority of the conflict (Okello et al., 2014). To put it another way, competition for land resources increases tensions and violence between herders, farmers, and farming communities. When there is a deliberate deprivation or perceived marginalization of one group in the distribution and utility of land and access to water, the indigene settler syndrome is always a factor necessitating conflict over land usage (Lezuya, 2021).

According to Tenuche et al. (2009), the State has played a key role in land conflicts at three critical levels: i) the State's inability to address the indigene and settler phenomenon in the Nigerian Constitution (Tenuche et al., 2009); (ii) the unresolved issues on grazing land and water sports, which are critical to the economic survival of both herdsmen and farming communities; and (iii) the Nigerian land tenure system, which has had serious implications

for land. Governments at all levels (federal, State, and municipal) have failed to solve the issue of inadequate grazing reserves to meet the needs of herders who are always on the move in search of food and water for their herds. The land is crucial to the socio-economic life of farmers and herders, so land conflicts are common (Tenuche et al., 2009).

### **Water supply**

Fulani herdsmen desire for land and resources has become one of the key causes of fighting, an outbreak of fatal competition over who should preside over overabundant but rare vegetation and water supplies essentially raises the likelihood of pastoral and agricultural severe conflict (Mamman, 2020). Deserts and droughts have engulfed up to 70% of grassland, and droughts are becoming more common. During the dry season, the cattle's only water source is to direct them to any available water source, usually a lowland location. Because of the dryness in the highland areas, farmers were often seen nursing their crops at the same water sources. This means that Fulani herders travel to areas with a push element to find a territory to settle in (Mamman, 2020).

### **Ethno-Religious Intolerance**

The ethnoreligious dynamics of the social ties between these groups of resource users are another key cause of conflict between farmers and pastoralists. The ethnic factor enters the struggle between two main ethnic groupings, herdsmen, who are mostly of Fulani descent, and sedentary farmers, who are made up of a variety of ethnic groups (Shetimma et al., 2008). A language barrier and religious intolerance also color the confrontation.

### **Population Explosion**

According to Ayih (2003), the conflict stems from what he refers to as a "population explosion," which he attributes to rising birth rates and migration. According to him, people are migrating from northern and southern Nigeria to the Middle belt region, where the population is relatively low and substantial agricultural land is available. As a result of the tremendous expansion in population, cropland is becoming increasingly scarce. As a result

of this expansion, once abundant grazing grounds are being taken up by scattered small farms, making grazing difficult in these places (Ayih, 2003).

### **Foraging**

The Magajin Fulani (Fulani head) once explain that it seems difficult to keep cattle, means of providing food for cows, especially in the dry season when grasses and leaves are dried or set on fire, they do lead their cattle to any place to seek for pasture. With this, it is noted that the cattle depend on what they see and thereby compete on little pasture available for them (Olalode and Ajibade, 2010).

### **Proximity**

Farmers that have their property adjacent to a road or animal route risk having their crops ruined if the cattle are allowed to run uncontrolled. This demonstrates how proximity frequently results in a significant threat to the farming system (Mamman, 2020).

### **Unregulated Transhumance**

Pastoral migration from one geographical location to another in search of a better climate and resources is known as transhumance, which, is a system of animal production characterized by seasonal and cyclical migration between complementary areas. Despite the many benefits of transhumance, this system of cattle rearing frequently brings herders and their retinues of cattle herds into contact and competition over land, water, and grazing routes, resulting in non-violent and violent conflict with local communities, who are predominantly sedentary farmers and fishermen who are always bent on asserting their exclusive right to land tenure and land inheritance (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014, Shettima et al., 2008),

### **Availability of social amenities**

The increased provision of social services in towns, such as health centers, schools, and food aid, as well as the increased economic opportunities, have led to settlement and concentration of grazing in areas around such towns (Haro & Doyo, 2005).

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## **The Farmers/Herders Conflict Implications/Consequences On Food Security In Nigeria**

The farmer-herder conflict has taken on a very serious dimension with unthinkable consequences for food security. All the states in the north-central geopolitical zones have been attacked in some way, resulting in low food production (Nnamani, Orjinta, & Ihejirika, 2018). The violence in Nigeria has also devolved to the widespread relocation of people from their original homes abandoning their farming pursuits. Economic operations, particularly food production, are frequently threatened to result in widespread famine and malnutrition" due to these disputes in all of these areas (Okoli et al., 2013).

The conflict's implications for Nigeria's food security cannot be overstated. The conflict's humanitarian, economic, and social effects have been the resulting security and livelihood issues that jeopardize the afflicted populations' collective subsistence and existence. Other externalities include a decrease in agricultural output and a decrease in household capital, both of which are bad for societal and national sustainability. It is therefore sufficient to state that the Nigerian farmer/herder conflict is detrimental to human security and, by extension, national security (Tanko 2021).

Studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between violent conflict and food insecurity and the reverse has also been presented by some researchers as positive (Brinkman and Hendix 2011). It has been emphasized that violent conflicts, especially resource use conflicts, can have a negative effect on crop and livestock production. The reason is that when violent conflict erupts, it affects farmers' ability to produce, and market their surpluses, negatively affecting individuals' ability to access food (Jeanty and Hitzhusen 2006). FAO (2000) also indicated that internal or communal conflicts negatively affect agricultural production and investment in several ways. For instance, violent conflict between farmers and herders may disrupt the supply and distribution of farm inputs such as fertilizers, because the government injects more resources into maintaining peace by cutting down its spending on vaccines for livestock, fertilizers, and other agrochemicals for crop farmers. The result is food insecurity due to low yields or no production in conflict areas, leading to higher food prices (FAO, 2000)

In a study from Uganda, Castagnini & Deininger (2004) concluded that small-scale land conflicts have the tendency to affect the agricultural productivity negatively. They estimated a 5 to 11 percent reduction in crop production due to land conflicts in Uganda. Also, Messer et al. (1998) estimated that during periods of conflict, agrarian production dropped by an average of 12 percent each year. A recent study in Northern Uganda shows that land conflict results in reduced farm production, causing food insecurity among smallholder farmers who farm for subsistence (Auma 2016). When this happens, food availability and access are negatively affected, and women, children, and the aged are the most affected in developing countries such as Uganda, Ghana, and Kenya including Nigeria (USAID, 2011). Brinkman et al (2011) have argued that refugees and internally displaced people are worst hit by acute food insecurity, whenever there is violent conflict over resource use, for example in the Darfur conflict, which involved herders and sedentary farmers. When land conflict between farmers and herders turns into violence, there are killings (humans and cattle), others get injured and farm produce is damaged. Also, such violence results in internal displacement, and farm laborers migrate from the farming communities to the urban areas for different opportunities and sometimes return after the planting season is over which negatively affects farm activities. Women who remain behind abandon their farms for fear of being attacked by the opposing members (herders). The effect is a reduction in the agricultural labor force resulting in food insecurity.

Moreover, Adisa (2012) studied the impact of farmer's herder conflict on agricultural and rural development in Kwara State, Nigeria. His results show that farmers and herders involved in such conflict suffer a reduction in income, production death, and injury of members. Respondents who were farmers' income loss was 91%, yield loss of 85%, and 23% loss in stored products but herdsman claimed to have suffered losses of 14.3%, which were income, yields, and stored products respectively (Adisa 2012:107). The research shows that even though both parties involved in the conflict suffered losses, comparatively losses were high for farmers and low for herders. Therefore, there may be a shortage of crop production leading to difficulty in physical availability and access, especially for the marginalized group and the outcome will be short/long-term food insecurity (Adisa 2012). Finally, it is imperative to note that land conflict or resource use conflict has a direct or

indirect effect on the lives and livelihoods of the actors. They tend to disrupt and threaten the sustainability of agriculture and pastoral production in Africa, thereby causing food insecurity (Moritz 2010)

### **Insight from Social conflict theory**

Karl Marx is the proponent of conflict theory. According to Akinrinde et al (2021). The causes and characteristics of the herder-farmer conflict in Nigeria are the subjects of numerous academic hypotheses. The social conflict theory best captures the disagreement. Theories of social conflict emphasize the significance of conflict in establishing social conditions and the dynamics of social life. Actually, as we study and participate in social life, we frequently encounter conflicts or potential conflictual situations between individuals, social groups, political parties, and other entities (Akinrinde et al, 2021). The idea emphasizes the distribution of finite resources and power, which are not allocated equally by nature, and views social existence as a battle. According to proponents of this idea, society is made up of a diverse group of individuals with a variety of needs and interests and scarce resources to meet those needs. Following inequality, societal unrest and, finally, social change occurs (Akinrinde et al, 2021).

According to Karl Marx, who is the principal proponent of this viewpoint, the main source of conflict is the system itself and the disparity it produces. Conflicts for power and control in society are a key source of conflict, according to social conflict theory. When two or more actors oppose one another in social contact, they are engaged in conflict. They use reciprocal social forces to try and advance their own limited or incompatible aims while impeding the opponent's progress (Akinrinde et al, 2021). The drive for domination and power becomes the currency rather than coming to an understanding. The main tenet of the theory is that society always competes for limited resources. This explains why farmers and herders are frequently engaged in a never-ending conflict over resources that are both highly wanted. While farmers frequently view farmland as sacred and essential to their sustenance and existence, herders see farmland as a crucial necessity for the survival of their herds (Akinrinde et al, 2021).

Herdsmen and farmers are two social groups. These two social groupings have constantly engaged in the competition. Once more, in this situation, the scarce resources are lands and water, and the conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria has always been fueled by the struggle for land and water. Administrations at the local, state, and federal levels have not been able to resolve the conflicting interests between herders and farmers or assist them in finding a solution, despite the fact that the conflicts have taken on political, religious, and ethnic components. The social conflict theory, however, gives us the chance to comprehend the "why" of the conflict. (Akinrinde et al, 2021)

### **Conclusion**

Conflict over a few resources is a major cause of contention for both native farmers and migrant Fulani herders. Despite depriving these people of their livelihood, it left them poor and led many of them to die young. Cattle, property, schools, churches, and residential structures were all destroyed, among other things. Long-term consequences include shortages of essential food supplies such as staples, animal protein, and other foods, and these reasons hamper the country's efforts to attain food security. To avoid further conflict, the government should ensure that arable and grazing land is distributed relatively and easily accessible.

### **Recommendations**

From the foregoing, the following recommendations were made:

1. All government, non-governmental, and civil society plans should prioritize the resettlement of displaced populations, particularly women and children. Other types of property loss aid, such as community re-establishment in areas that may have been damaged, should continue to be provided to victims.
2. State and local governments must strictly enforce the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment regulations. This implies that open grazing of animals or allowing cattle to roam freely in search of pasture and water, is absolutely prohibited, and operationalise already-designated grazing reserves. Also, the government provides migratory Fulani herders with social amenities such as



improved health care, homes/settlements, roads, and water via boreholes or wells along the tracks.

3. All stakeholders must be involved at all levels of conflict resolution and resource management. Traditional rulers used to act as police and courts, with responsibilities such as informal conflict resolution and organizing peace meetings when things got out of hand, but the officials from the local administration have weakened and abused their position in the community. This option needs to be utilized
4. Aside from established institutions, the government should lead in bringing together various components of the rural population, including community leaders, local vigilantes, and security services, to identify, monitor, and handle possible dangers before the conflict escalates or spreads. Peace-talk programs should be managed efficiently and strategically through stakeholder gatherings. The government should be tough and fair in making choices and carrying them out.

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