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## ECONOMIC COST OF FULANI HERDSMEN – FARMERS CONFLICT IN AGATU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

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### Abstract

*In recent years, there have been a number of conflicts between farmers and Fulani herdsmen throughout Nigeria which have culminated into violent conflicts and the loss of lives and properties. The study was conducted in Agatu local government area of Benue state with the objective of investigating the causes and the economic cost of farmer-herder conflict in the area. Three (3) villages were purposively selected from the local government. This was followed by the selection of ten farmers, four Fulani herdsmen, two local government officials, three businessmen and a village head from each of the three villages through a simple random sampling to obtain a sample size of sixty respondents. Data were gathered with the aid of questionnaires and structured interview schedules; the twelve Fulani herdsmen were interviewed with the help of an interpreter while the other forty-eight respondents were served with questionnaires. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. The result revealed that land encroachment, crop damaged by cattle, inadequate grazing reserve, Contamination of river body by the cattle were the major reasons identified by the farmers to be the causes of the conflict in the area while Fulani herdsmen emphasis on Communication barrier, spraying of farms with poisonous chemicals and cattle rustling in addition to land encroachment as the causes of conflict in the area.*

**Keywords:** Conflict, Herdsmen, Farmers, Agatu

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### Introduction

Since 1960 when Nigeria got her independence, the country has experienced different types of conflicts that have negatively impacted on the country's population across the six geopolitical zones (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2017). In the North central zone for example, Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict remained a feature in the states located in the zone.

According to Amaza (2016), out of 389 incidents of Fulani Herdsmen and farmers' conflicts that spanned in 1997 to 2015, a significant chunk of 371 had occurred in North-Central geopolitical zone of the country consisting the states of Benue, Kogi, Nasarawa, Niger, Kwara, Plateau and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

The climatic change, Southward migration, the expansion of farming pastures and invasion of crop farm lands by cattle have been collectively

identified as some of the major causes of perennial conflicts in North Central. Other causes of Fulani Herdsmen and farmers conflicts as noted by Olayoka (2014) include assaults and allegations of rape, blockage of water points leading to fresh water scarcities, burning of rangelands, cattle thefts, inadequate animal health care and disease control, over grazing of fallow lands, defecation on roads and streams by cattle and ethnic stereotyping.

Herdsmen have complained of that the land available to graze has decline, in part, blaming communities for restricting the land available to them (Akinwotu, 2016). The expansion of farming on pastures and grazing reserves is another causative factor of Fulani- Herdsmen conflict in Nigeria. Subsequent to the Nations independence in 1960, the government of Northern region fumigated the law which demarcated grazing reserves and transhumance routes throughout the old northern region. According to International

Crisis Group report (2017), these grazing reserves and routes meant for the passage of animals where severely annexed, the encroachment lead to outbreak of the deadly crises, some scholars attributed this to the inability of government to implement the grazing reserves Act of 1968. This research work therefore seeks to investigate the causes and the economic cost of the activities of Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict in Agatu Local government Area of Benue state.

In recent years, there have been a number of conflicts between farmers and Fulani herdsmen throughout Nigeria which have culminated into violent conflicts and the loss of lives and properties. This came to a serious head in the Agatu local government area of Benue state, when farmers alleged that herdsmen have been destroying their farms with their cattle, raped women in the area and have attacked and killed farmers in the area. The activities of the Fulani herdsmen against the farmers have resulted in a huge economic setback in Agatu local government area of Benue state.

Adetula (2016) noted that the herdsmen were known to wreak havoc in certain communities in Nigeria, but now the rate at which they are committing these crimes has increased exponentially. This threatens the peace, security and unity of the nation as one geographical entity and will retard growth and development in all spheres of people's lives. This negative attitude tends to negate their huge economic contribution to the gross national product (GNP) (Christopher Ndubuisi, 2018). This study seeks to examine the underlying causes of Fulani herdsmen-farmers conflict and the economic cost by carrying out a case study in the Agatu local government area of Benue state. Apart from the introduction, the rest of the paper is organized into section 2, literature review, section 3, is the materials and methods used, section 4 is the data presentation and discussion of the results and section 5 is the conclusion and policy recommendations.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Realistic Conflict Theory**

This research work adopts realistic conflict theory. Realistic conflict theory can help in analyzing drivers of the conflict. It is a theory which suggests that prejudices can arise competition between groups for scarcely available resources, power, or territory. This theory states that whenever two groups are seeking the same resources, it will lead to conflict (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Resource scarcity, climate, and resource depletion could impact the decision-making of parties. Pressures of climate change and poor economic performance could weaken states and make the population more

vulnerable, which reduces the capacity to manage conflict (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2016). Different beliefs prejudice, and discrimination between groups can potentially initiate conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). This theory explains how intergroup hostility and conflicting goals caused violence reactions between different groups.

### **Methodology**

This study will employed quantitative approach using a cross-section survey to collect primary data from selected units of analysis. A quantitative study is most appropriate for the research study because it allows for the measurement of relationships between two variables (Chipuunza & Berry, 2010). The population of this study comprised of all the residents in the three selected villages in Agatu local government area of Benue State. This study adopts purposive sampling technique. This a type of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which one will be the most useful or representative (Babbie, 2007). The use of the purposive sampling procedure required that people who have certain characteristics and are therefore deemed to be relevant for the study are selected and interviewed in-depth. Some of the characteristics considered within this sample include Fulani herdsmen, farmers, businessmen, local government officials and the village heads.

The first step is that three villages in Agatu local government area which is the worst hit by the menace were selected. The three villages selected were Okokolo, Ugboju and Abugbe. In each of the village, ten farmers, four Fulani herdsmen, three businessmen, two local government officials and a village head were selected for investigation. A total of 60 respondents were therefore selected to participate in the study. The questionnaire was administered to farmers, businessmen, local government officials and the village head by the Researchers in each of the three chosen villages at different time while the Fulani herdsmen were interviewed in the three locations with the help of an interpreter.

Data collected were analyzed with the used of descriptive statistic. Simple descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions. A five point rating scale was used and the design value of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 for strongly agreed, agreed, strongly disagreed, disagreed and not decided respectively. The responses of strongly agreed and agreed were merged to be agreed. The responses of strong disagreed and disagreed were

merged to be disagreed. The mean of the responses were computed using the formula below:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum x_i}{n}$$

where  $\bar{X}$  = mean,  $x_i$  = variables,  $n$  = number of sample,  $\sum$  = summation sign.

Thus,

$$\bar{X} = \frac{5+4+3+2+1}{5} = 3$$

This implies that the decision mean is 3. Mean score greater than 3 were considered as agreed

while mean scores less than 3 were considered as disagreed.

**Presentation and Analysis of Data**

**Table 1: Causes of Herdsmen –Farmers Conflicts in Agatu LGA**

Causes of Herdsmen-Farmers Conflicts	Strongly Agreed	Agreed	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Undecided	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1. Land encroachment	25 (52.1%)	12(25.0%)	4(8.3 %)	6(12.5%)	1(2.1 %)	<b>3.4</b>	<b>1.1</b>	Agreed
2. Crop damaged by cattle	31(64.6%)	13(7.1%)	1(2.1 %)	3(6.3 %)	-	<b>3.7</b>	<b>1.3</b>	Agreed
3. Inadequate grazing reserve	22(50%)	16(33.3%)	2(4.2%)	7(14.6%)	1(2.1 %)	<b>3.3</b>	<b>1.0</b>	Agreed
4. Communication barrier	4(8.3 %)	18(37.5%)	12(25.0%)	10(20.8%)	4(8.3 %)	<b>3.2</b>	<b>1.3</b>	Agreed
5. Rapping/kidnapping of women	10(20.8%)	11(22.9%)	10(20.8%)	14(29.2%)	3(6.3 %)	<b>2.5</b>	<b>0.7</b>	Reject
6. Spraying of farms with insecticides and pesticides	8(16.7%)	15(31.3%)	10(20.8%)	12(25.0%)	3(6.3 %)	<b>3.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>	Agreed
7. Contamination of river bodies by the cattle	18(37.5%)	14(29.2%)	5(10.4%)	11(22.9%)	-	<b>3.4</b>	<b>1.1</b>	Agreed
8. Cattle Rustling	6(12.5%)	10(20.8%)	17(35.4%)	13(27.1%)	2(4.2%)	<b>2.8</b>	<b>1.4</b>	Reject

Source: Field Survey 2019

Table 1 revealed that the respondents accept all the variables rapping/kidnapping and cattle rustling as the major causes of Fulani-Herdsmen-Farmers conflict in Agatu local government area in Benue state since all the items had mean above the decision mean of 3.0 expect rapping/kidnapping and cattle rustling that have mean value of 2.5 and 2.8 respectively.

Item 1 of table 1 seeks opinions of respondent on whether land encroachment causes herdsmen – farmers’ conflict in Agatu LGA of Benue state. The response shows that 52.1 percent of the respondents strongly that land encroachment cause herdsmen-farmers crisis, 25 percent of the respondents agreed with the opinion while 12.5 percent and 2.1% remains undecided. Based on the interview conducted with the Fulani herdsmen, they agreed that the pressure on resource and the encroachment of their cattle into the farmer land resulting in tension between them and the farmers which breaks out into violent confrontation. Fulani herdsmen accused the farmers of the deliberate cultivation of crops over routes plied by cattle during grazing. According to the herdsmen, this situation makes it difficult to control the movement of the herds resulting in the trampling of crops along those routes.

Item 2 solicited opinions of the respondents whether crop damaged by cattle. 64.6% respondents strongly agreed with the opinion, 27.1

percent agree with the opinion; 2.1 percent strongly disagree while 6.3% disagreed. Based on the interview held with the herdsmen, the herdsmen agreed to the fact that the increase in the number of their herds result in the destruction of farms as they send the animals to graze on the field. The herdsmen also accused farmers of deliberately left their harvested crops on their farm unprotected, while others who had poor yield intentionally left their crops on the farm un-harvested for cattle to graze, so that they could claim heavy compensation.

In response to item 3 that sought for the opinions of respondents whether inadequate grazing reserve is responsible for the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in the study area. 50% of the respondents strongly agreed with the opinion, 33.3% agreed, 4.2% strongly disagreed, 14.6% disagreed and 2.1% were undecided.

Item 4 seek for the opinion of respondents whether communication barrier is the cause of herdsmen-farmers crisis in Agatu LGA of Benue state. The respondent’s opinion shows 8.3% of the respondents strongly agreed; 37.5 percent agreed; 25.0 percent strongly disagreed, 20.8 percent disagreed while 8.3 percent are undecided. The respondents with high percentage of strongly disagree and disagreed to this opinion indicate that

communication barrier is not the major cause of herdsmen-farmers crisis in the area.

Fulani herdsmen do not speak English language and Idoma language which is predominantly spoken in the study area. This makes it difficult for smooth interactions between the two groups. The farmers accuse the herdsmen of feigning ignorance of the English language even though they can comprehend what is been communicated to them. Even if you speak English they would tell you that they doesn't understand the language so if you want to have a dialogue with a herdsman it would not work. The Fulani herdsmen claimed that they do not speak English and Idoma language which is predominately spoken in the area. This makes it difficult for smooth interactions between them and the farmers in the study area.

Item 5 sought the opinions of respondents on whether of their women and kidnapping is causes conflict between Herdsmen and farmers in the area. 20.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that rapping of their women and kidnapping is responsible for the crisis in the area, 22.9 percent agreed to the opinion, 20.8 percent strongly disagreed, 29.2 percent disagreed while 6.3 percent were undecided. The Fulani herdsmen denied the allegation of raping and kidnapping. They claiming that they have no access to AK 47 used for kidnapping and that they do not undergo any weapon training of knowing how to operate the kind of weapon used by kidnapers.

Item 6 of the questionnaire solicited for the opinion that Spraying of farms with insecticides and pesticides causes conflicts between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in the area. The responses show that 16.7 percent of the respondents strongly agree with the opinion. 31.3 percent agreed, 20.8 percent strongly disagreed, and 25.0 percent disagreed while 6.3 percent were undecided. According to

Fulani herdsmen, farmers attempt to curtail their access to grazing pasture by spraying their farms with poisonous chemicals to deliberately kill their cattle.

Item 7 of the questionnaire seek the opinion of respondents whether Contamination of river bodies by the cattle is a cause of herdsmen-Farmer conflicts in the area. The responses indicated 37.5 strongly agreed to the opinion, 29.2 percent agreed; 10.4 percent strongly disagreed while 22.9 percent of the respondents disagreed. The contamination of river bodies by cattle was another source of conflicts between farmers and Fulani herdsmen. The rivers in those villages serve as a source of drinking water for communities in villages. It is within these same rivers that the herdsmen send their cattle to drink and in the process pollute the water with their faecal matter and secretion from the mouth of the cattle. According to the farmers in the study area, they share the same water with the cattle when they go to the farm. By the time they get to the river, the animals would have messed the river with their hoofs and defecated into the water as well. Based on the interview held with the Fulani Herdsmen, they claimed that their cows actually use the same rivers with the people in the area but their cattle do not contaminate the river as claimed by the farmers.

Item 8 solicited the opinions of respondents whether cattle rustling are responsible for Herdsmen-farmers conflict in their area. The responses show that the 12.5 percent of the respondents strongly agreed to the opinion; 20.8 percent agreed, 35.4 percent strongly disagreed, 27.1 percent disagreed while 4.2 percent remained undecided. According to one cattle owner, increasing rate of cattle theft which is often accompanied by violence and that they killed cattle in the forest and the transport the meat to the town market to sell.

**Table 2: Economic Cost of Herdsmen-Farmers conflict in Agatu LGA of Benue State**

Economic Effect Herdsmen-farmers conflict	strongly agreed	Agreed	strongly disagreed	disagreed	Undecided	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1. Creation of artificial scarcity	33(68.8%)	11(22.9%)	-	4(8.3%)	-	3.8	1.7	Agreed
2. Inflation and devaluation of naira	18(37.5%)	22(45.8%)	2(4.2%)	-	6(12.5%)	3.5	1.3	Agreed
3. Decrease in output per capita	27(56.3%)	13(27.1%)	2(4.2%)	1(2.1%)	5(10.4%)	3.4	0.9	Agreed
4. Discouragement of investment in the conflict area	17(35.4%)	20(41.7%)	2(4.2%)	7(14.6%)	1(2.1%)	3.5	1.4	Agreed
5. Change in population size	20(41.7%)	13(27.1%)	3(6.3%)	10(20.8%)	-	3.9	1.5	Agreed
6. Increased unemployment gap	31(64.6%)	17(35.4%)	-	-	-	4.1	2.0	Agreed
7. Destruction of life and property	48(100%)	-	-	-	-	4.2	1.9	Agreed
8. Extra financial burden on the government	15(31.3%)	20(41.7%)	2(4.2%)	6(12.5%)	2(4.2%)	3.3	1.3	Agreed
<b>Ground Mean</b>						<b>3.7</b>		

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table 2 revealed that the respondents accept all the variables as cost of Fulani-Herdsmen-Farmers

conflict in Agatu local government area in Benue state since all the items had mean above the

decision mean of 3.0. This implies that the respondents accept all the variables to be the economic cost of Herdsmen-Farmers conflicts in the study area.

Item 1 seeks opinion of respondents whether herdsmen-farmers conflicts create scarcity of food and raw material. The response shows that 68.8 percent agree with the opinion, 22.9 percent agreed while 8.3 percent disagreed. Anytime farmers are attacked they will run away from their farmlands and find it difficult to return for fear of being attacked again. This sometimes lasts for a long time, thereby hindering sowing and reaping. This undoubtedly creates an artificial scarcity of goods and services.

Item 2 solicited for the opinion of respondent whether herdsmen-farmers conflict leads to Inflation and devaluation of naira. 37.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 45.8% agreed to the opinion. The artificial scarcity created by the frequent attacks of the herdsmen on citizens as stated earlier leads to inflation, which in turn leads to devaluation of the naira. The respondents with this viewpoint argued that the money is devalued because much money is now chasing few goods and services.

Item 3 seek opinion of respondent on whether herdsmen-farmers conflict decrease output per head 56.3 percent of the respondents strongly agreed to the opinion, 27.1% agreed; 4.2% strongly disagreed. 2.1% disagreed and 10.4% were undecided. There is a decrease in output per capita, because of restrictions on people's movements as a result of curfews. Moreover, the daily output in goods and services is seriously affected. People can no longer move to their farms, shops and business centres freely as they wish. Lending credence to this view, the respondents averred that the overall output of the people was decreased because of the check placed on the people.

Item 4 in the questionnaire seek opinions of the respondents on whether herdsmen-farmers conflict in discourage of investment in the conflict area. The result revealed that 35.4% percent of the respondents strongly agreed conflict in the area discourage investment, 41.7% agreed, 4.2% strongly disagreed, 14.6% disagreed and 2.1 percent remain undecided. The incessant attacks by the Fulani herdsmen scare away both the indigenes and foreigners who have come to local government area to do business. In the course of the attacks, lives and property, public companies, film-producing houses and industries are destroyed. When investors see these things happen, they get discouraged and withdraw their businesses from the area.

Item 5 in the questionnaires seeks opinion of the respondents on whether herdsmen-conflict in the study area changes the population size of the area. The result shows that 41.7% strongly agreed with the opinion, 27.1% agreed, 6.3% strongly disagreed, while 20.8% disagreed with the opinion that conflict in their area has changed the population size in their area. People living in areas experiencing frequent Fulani herdsmen attacks usually relocate to areas not prone to attacks.

Item 6 in the questionnaire solicited for the opinion of respondents on whether herdsmen-farmers conflict in their area increased unemployment in the area. The response shows that 64.6% strongly agreed to the opinion that conflict in the area increase unemployment gap while 35.4 percent agreed to the opinion. Because companies, firms and industries are destroyed during such crises, it takes owners of these businesses time to rebuild their destroyed business centres. Their employees spend this long period without work to do. They add to the number of unemployed youths that are roaming our streets.

Item 7 in the questionnaire sought the opinion of the respondents whether conflict in the area leads to destroy of life and property. The results revealed that 100 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the opinion that herdsmen-farmers conflict in the area leads to destruction of life and property. It is common knowledge that whenever herdsmen carry out an attack, people are killed in the tens, hundreds or thousands and property worth thousands of naira is destroyed. To this end, all the farmers and the scholars averred that crisis or war leads to destruction of lives and property worth thousands of millions of naira and irreparable loss of human lives.

Item 8 in the questionnaire seeks the opinion of the respondents whether conflicts in the area increase extra financial burden on the government. The result indicate that 31.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that conflict in the area result in extra financial burden on the government, 41.7 percent agreed, 4.2 percent strongly dis agreed, 12.5 percent disagreed, and 4.2 percent were undecided about the outcome. In any serious attack on the citizens, houses are burnt down and people are rendered homeless. Consequently, some of them who are not well-to-do cannot easily find themselves a home and, therefore, they are quartered in public buildings as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Camp. In an every attack the government is required to provide relief materials like foodstuffs, clothes and medicines, to mention but a few, for victims of the attacks. The government spends a huge amount of money in

taking care of the victims of war, and sometimes this calls for a supplementary budget.

**Table 3: Institutions involved in Managing Herdsmen-Farmers Crisis in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State**

S/n	Institutions	Frequency	Percentage
1	District heads	47	97.9
2	Police	15	32.3
3	Court	4	8.3
4	Famers associations	0	0
5	Government committees	12	25
6	Miyetti Breeders Cattle Association	3	6.3

Source: Field Survey 2019

Result from Table 3.4 indicates that 97.9% of the respondents acknowledge the involvement of traditional rulers in conflict management and resolution in the area. This was followed by police (32.3%), government committees (25.0%), court

(8.3%) and Miyetti Breeder cattle association (6.3%). From the result, the involvement of the courts and Miyetti Breeders Cattle Association seems to be very minimal as indicated by respondents.

**Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Method of Resolution Commonly Used**

S/n	Variables	Frequency	percentage
1	Payment of compensation	28	58.3
2	Amicable resolution	40	83.3
3	Verbal warning	35	72.9

Source: Field Survey 2019

Result from Table 4 shows the various methods of conflict resolution commonly employed in resolving the farmer-herder conflict in the study area. Greater percentage of the respondent indicated amicable resolution (83.3%) as the most popular method of managing/resolving conflict followed by verbal warning with a score of 72.9% and Payment of compensation (58.3%) was less popular in the survey area.

#### Discussion of the Major Findings

The practice of sending cattle to farm and sources of river bodies to drink is less desirable since this livelihood survival strategy leads to the destruction of farms. However, rustling cattle by unscrupulous persons and the shooting of cattle on sight by farmers in retaliation is an act that cannot be countenanced either. It must therefore be noted that the livelihood survival strategy of one group should not adversely affect the source of livelihood of the other. Crop farming and livestock rearing are both sources of livelihood for majority Nigerians which they are all out to protect.

In addition, the people of Agatu local government area of Benue state depend on river bodies as their source of drinking water as a result of their inability to access portable drinking water. It is therefore unimaginable for humans to be sharing the same source of drinking water with animals since this predisposes them to diseases. Water is the source of life for both humans and animals and conflicting relationships occur because of varying interests in accessing these natural resources.

Though accusations of rape and kidnapping were leveled against the Fulani herdsmen in the Agatu area, such allegations were factually unsubstantiated. Hence, they may not be the major causes of the conflict in the area. All the variables in the model constitute economic cost to the people in the study area and to Benue state in general.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations

The conflict in Agatu local government area of Benue state has attracted much attention among government and civil society organizations. It is an established fact that the Fulani Herdsmen-Farmers conflicts cause a lot of destructions to farms thereby endangering other people's means of livelihoods. The reasons for their occurrences in Agatu Local Government of Benue state varied ranging from land encroachment, crop damaged by cattle, inadequate grazing reserve and contamination of river bodies by the cattle. The herdsmen on their part identified land encroachment, cattle rustling and communication barriers as the major causes of the crisis in the study area. The crisis in the area has resulted in creating an artificial scarcity, inflation, decrease in output per capita, discouragement of investment, change in population size, increased unemployment, destruction of life and property, and additional financial burden on the government. Based on the discussions in this work, the researchers made the following recommendations:

1. There is a need for awareness, creation and sensitization among the

- key occupational groups on sustainable ways of resource sharing.
2. Farmers and herders should be educated on conflict prevention, peaceful co-existence and security of lives and property.
3. State governments in the zone should establish Peace Committees at both state and community levels comprising key stakeholders to address the farmers-herders conflict and other conflicts; where such exist, they should be strengthened.
4. State government should put in place measures for an enduring engagement of the herders and farmers, including structural facilities to enhance joint use of resource.
5. Development of well-resourced grazing reserves for animal production.
6. Communities, entrepreneurs should be encouraged to establish ranches for agro-business.

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