

FARMERS-HERDERS CRISIS AND FOOD INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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UWUSEBA Austine Oghenekome

Department of Political Science, Faculty of the Social Sciences, Delta State University,
Abraka, Nigeria

ABORIBO Richard

Department of Political Science, Faculty of the Social Sciences, Delta State University,
Abraka, Nigeria
pokkaface@yahoo.com

Abstract: This study examined the effect of farmers-herders crisis on food insecurity in Uwheru communities in Delta State. This study adopted cross-sectional survey research design and a structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool for the study. Purposive sampling method was used to select 392 respondents and resource access theory, propounded by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) served as the theoretical framework of analysis for this study. With the use of SPSS version 23.0, the collected data were analyzed using percentages, Pearson's coefficient of correlation and linear regression, respectively. The results of this study revealed that Farmers-herders crisis negatively and significantly influenced food availability, food access, food utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State. The study concluded that farmers-herders crisis has resulted in displacement of people from their communities, women and girls' vulnerability to sexual and economic predation, huge economic burden on the government leading to loss of revenues, dwindling food supply and rising cost, increasing division among the Federating states and threat to National Security amongst others. Therefore, the study suggested, among other things, urgent upgrade response procedures to farmers-herders crisis, especially in the most vulnerable communities like Uwheru communities in Delta State. But this should be done within a larger framework that emphasizes proactive rather than reactive response to crisis. This shall go a long way to enhance food availability, access and utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

Keywords: Farmers-herders crisis, food availability, food access, food utilization and stability

Introduction

Agricultural sector is the largest employer of labour in Nigeria because it is not age bound, as different categories of people could freely engage in it, either on a commercial or subsistence basis. By reason of difficulty in getting white collar job after leaving school, a teeming number of Nigerian youths seems to have found solace in farming activities to safe themselves from the stigma of joblessness. Those that embarked on agricultural activities on a commercial basis, apart from making their own profit, have also met the food demand of consumers that are not given to commercial farming or that are not inclined to farming activities, hence balancing the equation (Abamyan, Gwambeka & Aver, 2020; Okolie, 2022). The major aim of food security is to ensure individual access to adequate food always needed and utilization of such food to meet body growth and development. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations identified four components of food security include availability, access, stability and these components must be simultaneously satisfied to meet it objectives. The major problem confronting food security

in Nigeria today is the farmers-herders crisis. For example, there is shortage of food supply that has resulted in non-availability, hence increases prices of available one by the reason of such crises (Ogbette, Attama & Okoh, 2018). The crisis seems to have become a source of discouragement to local farmers in embarking on farming activities because most of them are pessimistic of low turnout, or zero return on their labour and investment. Today, Nigeria has been plagued with different security challenges that are gradually making the country to lose its pride of place among the comity of nations.

Nigeria, according to Modupe, Gbenga, Olanrewaju, Kehinde, Apalowo, Oluwakemi, Oladapo & Ayantunde, (2023), is a country that once pride herself as the giant of Africa but has been unexpectedly brought to her knees by the overwhelming security challenges. The security issues range from Boko-Haram insurgency, armed banditry, farmers-herders crisis, kidnapping among others. A cursory historization of the past achievement of Nigeria in terms of military might, is that of a country that had played a pivotal interventionist role in ensuring sub-regional security. For instance, Olufemi (2021) noted that the establishment of ECOMOG was a direct initiative of Nigerian government under the leadership of Gen. Ibrahim Babaginda military regime. The primary reason that informed its establishment was to introduce peace and security in troubled and wanton parts of West Africa, success was archived in this regard in Liberia, Sierra-Loen among others during its formative years.

Conversely, Nigeria that once possessed the capability to secure not only her territory but that of the whole West Africa, the reality of the present time, is a country grappling with a seemingly insurmountable internal security quagmire. It is often said that an ambience void of security of lives and property could largely serve as discouragement to prospective investors, hindered infrastructural development, and destabilized farming activities (Erondu & Nwakanma, 2018). The herders' crisis is a problem across the country and the Fulani herders in Nigeria were named the World's fourth deadliest militant organization, with 1,229 killings in 2014 (Buchanan, 2015). Also, the United Nations revealed that Fulani herders kill 1,400 people in 2019 (Nwachukwu, 2019). While according to Amnesty International cited in Okoro (2018) (as reported by the New Telegraph) on January 29th, 2018, Fulani herdsmen killed 168 individuals in January alone. In their words, The Nigerian government's response to community violence is woefully inadequate, too slow and inefficient, and in some circumstances illegal. Hundreds of people have died as a result of this violence in 2017 alone, and the government is still not doing enough to safeguard communities.

In 2017, for example, 549 people died in 14 states, resulting in thousands more people being displaced (Okoro, 2018). In 2017, 549 people were killed and hundreds more were displaced in the states of Delta, Zamfara, Ekiti Benue, Adamawa, Enugu, Taraba, Kaduna, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Katsina, and Cross Rivers as a result of violence between nomadic herders and local farmers (Okoro, 2020). There has been a severe economic implication as a result of this violence, which is causing food shortages and costing the Nigerian economy up to \$13 billion per year. The herders' crises of various magnitudes have caused the local, state, and federal governments a significant amount of money (Oghuvbu, 2021).

In 2016, the battle between the Fulani's herders and the Abraka indigenes was fierce as herdsmen unleashed attack on farmers thus, leading to the death of some farmers. The tear gas release into the air to disperse the angry mobs by mobile policemen caused long hours

of discomfort to inhabitants in Abraka. The situation resurfaced on the 25th of April 2017 and an indigene was slaughtered in the farm. Unlike Boko Haram which only operates in the Northern part of Nigeria, the Nomadic militants dominate the Southern and middle belt region (Ikenyei, 2020). She further argues that majority of Nigerian believe that Fulani Herdsmen are troublesome and policy should be made to restrict them to the Northern part of Nigeria or be confined to grazing their animal in a ranch, doing so is capital intensive. The cost of rising a cow in a ranch will affect the price of cows invariably meat. Thus, since they are diverse causes and consequences of herdsmen and farmer's crisis, the solutions as proffered by various authors have so far remain fruitless. The crisis has taken ethnic and religious dimension and if not, well handle could engulf Nigeria (Okolie, Onyema & Basse, 2019).

In Nigeria, the struggle between herders and farmers has become a recurrent theme. Control of land for grazing and farming, severe desertification of vegetative areas, and droughts in Northern Nigeria are all forcing herders to relocate to the middle belt and southern Nigeria in search of greener pasture and water for their animals. The nomadic herders' dwell in farming towns where there is green foliage and water, such as the Benue valley/tough, throughout their migration. Farmers sometimes accuse ranchers of intruding on their property, ruining their crops, and polluting their major source of water supplies. Farmers, on the other hand, are accused by herders of poisoning, murdering, or even stealing their animals, particularly cattle. The farmers are also accused of impeding the herdsmen's grazing paths, which were allegedly created in the early 1960s (Oghuvbu, 2021).

With the employment of modern weaponry such as the AK47 by herders who were previously known for grazing with sticks and cutlasses, the farmers-herders crisis has taken on a frightening new dimension. Unfortunately, the war has resisted the Nigerian government's security measures. Several people have died as a result of these attacks in Delta State communities. The assaults have demolished villages and damaged houses, displacing nearly 25,000 people. Constant resource-based disputes between farmers and herders, if not resolved, would surely jeopardize the economy (Okoro, 2018; Orhero, 2020).

Despite the necessary measures put in place by community heads, religious leaders, federal and state governments in Nigeria in order to bring to an end the clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers, the situation still persists in some parts of the country. As a result of the clashes, there appears to be loss of lives and destruction of farmlands. Indeed, the clashes appear to have resulted into dire consequences which include shortage of food production and supplies such as rice and yams as well as destruction of properties such as houses and fanning equipment. It is on this premise that this study investigated the causes and effect of farmers-herders crisis on food insecurity in Uwheru communities in Delta State. The specific objectives were to:

Examine the effects of farmers-herders crisis on food availability in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

Examine the effects of farmers-herders crisis on food access in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

Access the impact of farmers-herders crisis on food stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

Literature Review

Food insecurity results from a lack of availability of adequate nutrition within a nation; this deficiency can be either temporary or chronic. Chronic food insecurity is caused by a lack of resources to produce and obtain food, which results in a persistently inadequate diet. According to Shehu (2018) farmers-herdsmen conflict contributes to the high rate of poverty and hunger and also leads to social disorganization amongst families. Additionally, the conflict destroys the peaceful symbiotic relationships that exist between farmers and nomads. In the same direction, Dimelu, Salifu, Chah, Enwelu and Igbokwe (2017) affirm that structural factors contribute to farmers-herders' conflicts but however, not all form of conflicts basically lead to a great degree of violent and ethnic clashes rising amongst local communities. Moritz (2010) argued further that herder-farmer conflict has led to several deaths and dislodgment of many people in local communities. Also, the conflict has affected the sustainability of the agricultural and pastoral production in Nigeria and West Africa at large, because the financial base and the source of livelihood of different groups of people have been affected. Idowu (2017) posited that, whereas the Fulani herders kept up that they are free to move all over in Nigeria as a result of flexibility of development, the ranchers see this development as intrusion and infraction on their communal and individual properties acquired from their grandparents most particularly, when such development is into their farmlands. Adisa (2012) asserted that, often times the competition between agriculturists and herders has turned into extreme threats and social grinding in numerous parts in Nigeria. The clashes have illustrated tall potential to aggravate the frailty and nourishment emergency especially in rustic communities where most of the clashes are localized with muffled penalty across the nation. In his own quest, Aluko (2017) observes that the strife between pastoralists and ranchers has been in presence since the starting of the hone of farming and the strife was as a result of rare assets. Aluko (2017) further proceeded that in later times, the struggle has projected a diverse shape frailty with an increment in expansive numbers of casualties and individuals over the influenced states. In the event that the struggle is permitted to heighten, the impacts will be on nourishment and creature items for the reason of the grave misfortune of creatures, crops and profitable properties.

The Farmers-herders conflict remains the major issue in Nigeria and it has assumed very dangerous dimensions with unimaginable consequences for food security. States like Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Kogi, etc. are still experiencing the menace of farmers-herdsmen crises, and the implication of these crises in all these communities is that economic activities including the production of food are often threatened to result in widespread hunger and malnutrition (Okolie and Atelhe, 2013). Adisa (2012) again observed that Farmers-herders crisis remains the most preponderant resource-use conflict in Nigeria found in nearly every part of Nigeria. Today, these conflicts have constituted several threats to the means of survival and livelihood of both farmers and herdsmen and have demonstrated high potential increase in insecurity and food crisis particularly in the rural communities where most of the crises are localized, with reverberating consequences nationwide. Ikezue and Ezeah (2017) argue that the occurrence of farmers-herdsmen crises could impact the three main pillars of food security, as reported by the (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2006), including (1) food availability, (2) food accessibility, (3) food utilization and stabilization. The availability, accessibility,

utilization and stability are the three primary factors that determine food security (Chukwu et al., 2022):

Farmers-herders and Availability of Food

Food availability refers to the actual presence of food, which is based on both importation and domestic production. Food has become scarce per person as a result of population growth outpacing food supply over time. A nation's food supply must be sufficient, but it is insufficient to guarantee that its citizens have appropriate availability of food. Nigeria is under a severe internal and security threat as the threat has political, economic and environmental dimensions. Each of these dimensions has critically affected the stability of the nation and can be traced to many factors in which the Fulani-herdsmen appears to be major factor. Most worrisome in the present development is the pillaging, raping, killing and kidnapping by the so-called Fulani herdsmen. Stories are found in the national dailies on daily basis of how these shepherds strategically attack several communities and houses, with sophisticated assault guns-AK-47. According to Okereke (2012) and Bello (2013), the conflicts in most part of Nigeria especially between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash, are largely uncalled for. Farmers can no longer farm peacefully because of Fulani herdsmen. These Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash have pitched Christians and Muslims against each other. A study conducted by Kasarachi (2016) have shown that, serious conflict erupts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers leading to loss of lives, valuable properties and destruction of vast expanse of arable agricultural farmlands thereby posing serious threat to food security since farmers for fear of attack could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce. The latest attacks by Fulani herdsmen are on the upsurge, with the latest attacks in February 2018 happening in Benue State, Taraba State, Nasarawa State and few cases of attack in other states. In recent times, the killings recorded by Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash has rampaged most communities displacing them of their farmlands and loss of their major source of livelihood. This is becoming unbearable with the Fulani herdsmen always having their ways leaving the farmers at their mercy. Herdsmen attribute the roots of the crisis to religious differences resulting in the killing of their cows while the farmers see the herdsmen as a threat to their crops and agricultural produce since the herdsmen allow their cows to feed on the farmer crops. For the food availability dimension, Nnaji, Wanglin, Nazmun and Alan (2022) affirm that conflicts reduce food security through their adverse impacts on agricultural labour supply.

Farmers-herders and Accessibility of Food

Just having food accessible is insufficient; it also needs to be reasonably priced and appealing to consumers. Encouraging food access and producing safe, nutrient-dense food are made possible in large part by food processing and related activities. It is important to support the advancement of regional food safety, nutritional content, and indigenous technology. Conflicts affect the food accessibility dimension of food security through their harmful impacts on physical and economic access to food. For example, conflicts may lead to the destruction of infrastructure like roads, markets, and farms (Kah, 2017). This recent wave of violence in Nigeria as observed by Kasarachi (2016) has disrupted socio-economic, religious and educational activities, political instability and threatened the national unity in Nigeria. These extra judiciary killings have forced thousands of people to abandon their homes and farmlands for safety. The rate of insecurity occasioned by

Farmers-Herder's crisis in the north-central, middle-belt and southern parts of Nigeria has reduced the rate of food production and accessibility in the country, thereby making farmers not to produce food in surplus as a result of fear of being killed in their various farmlands. As such, it reduces the chances of food availability and accessibility in the country (Osumah, 2018). Ibrahim, Ismaila and Umar (2015) further observe that the farmers-herdsmen crises have caused a sharp and substantial increase in prices for crucial northern agricultural crop exports such as cowpeas, maize, millet, rice and sorghum, and to the rest of Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. The rise in prices is mainly due to a decrease in agricultural output, uncertainties in markets and an increase in transportation. This therefore becomes a widespread and formidable challenge to food accessibility in Nigeria as urgent and sincere steps are needed to be effectively taken by the Nigerian government to end these crises.

Farmers-herders and Stability of Food

Underweight is one measure of food utilization because it improves more quickly than stunting and wasting, which can take a while to show improvements. Progress in the availability of food is frequently not accompanied by advancements in the use of food. It is noteworthy that while the rate of less than five stunting and underweight has decreased in developing nations, some still report prevalence rates above 30%, which the World Health Organization considers statistically substantial (Pangaribowo & Gerber, 2016). For the food utilization dimension, the adverse impacts of conflicts are usually captured through anthropometric outcomes (Martin-Shields & Stojetz, 2019) and for the food stabilization dimension, the adverse effects of conflicts appear to be captured through its impact on variability of food prices and the value of food imports (George, Adelaja & Weatherspoon, 2020). Since most Nigerian farmers are smallholders who primarily farm for subsistence, it is challenging for them to adapt to changes in input prices and it also weakens their ability to adopt new technologies, which lowers overall production. The food supply has been impacted by short-term risk exposure such as changes in weather patterns, droughts, erosion, and fluctuations in the cost of food inputs. For instance, Nigeria has suffered significant losses in output and revenue as a result of its experiences with floods and droughts in the country's northern and southern regions, respectively. Furthermore, crop productivity now farewells the needs of the populace. Thus, the issue of food distribution persists when it comes to addressing food security in Nigeria. Nonetheless, whether a person, household, state, or nation experiences food insecurity or security depends on how frequently the aforementioned variables intersect (Chukwu et al., 2022). Farmers-herders crisis has threatened Nigeria's peace and development. This crisis is widespread and a formidable challenge to food security in Nigeria. Herder-Farmer crises have not only directly impacted on the lives or livelihoods of those involved, but have also disrupted and threatened the sustainability of agricultural and pastoral production and invariably the sustainability of livelihoods of rural communities (Moritz, 2010). Again, the crisis has reinforced circles of extreme poverty and hunger, destroys social status, food security and affects mostly the most marginalized groups which include women and children (Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017). The livelihood structure, food security and wellbeing of farmers are threatened and compromised as it further contributes to poverty, food and nutrition insecurity and poor health of farming in communities, with further escalation of conflicts (Moritz, 2010). The instability caused by the incessant conflict between farmers

and herdsmen, will likely lead to food shortages, utilization and stability for the communities that depend on subsistence farming.

Empirical Review

Akerjiir (2018) assessed increasing farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria: an assessment of the clashes between the Fulani herdsmen and indigenous farmers in ukpabi-nimbo community Enugu State increasing farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria using a qualitative research approach, the study engaged 20 participants from the farmers' community and neighboring community using interview guides, Participant observation and Focus Group Discussion (FGDs). Data acquired was analyzed by describing the situations. The findings reveal that fingers cannot be pointed to one factor causing the increase in the clash between the farmers and the herdsmen. The various factors responsible for the escalation of the clash are soil-erosion caused by change in climate, destruction of farmlands caused by cattle grazing done by the Fulani herdsmen. More so, cattle rustle and cattle theft done by gangs and groups called "Malaysian Boys" who are also raping and using the situation in the community to terrorize the people. It was also found that the government responses to the conflict is slow, and security forces are deployed to the community after an attack has been carried out by the said Fulani herdsmen even though there was an earlier warning prior to the attack that took place in 2016. The study concludes that the investigation into the increasing farmers-herder's in Ukpabi-Nimbo community is far beyond what the eyes can see, looking at the various factors involve for the escalations and the un-clarity as to who is behind the sequences of events. Adetunji and Ukhurebor, (2020) looked at the effects of Fulani herdsmen and farmer clashes on food security on Nigeria. The research adopts qualitative research approach, the study noted that some of the advantages of livestock pastoralism includes, source of incomes, production of raw material for the industries, mass production of organic fertilizer most especially for the farmers in the developing areas who cannot afford the costly synthetic fertilizers which has been reported to constitute environmental and health challenges. Moreover, the study found that the surveillance of Fulani herdsmen has constituted several challenges on the issue of food production, environmental consequences, and destruction of natural resources, massive displacement of farmers and dilapidation of agricultural soil. The study recommended amongst others that improved and modern ways of livestock management should be employed by the government as an agricultural policy for the entire country to encourage new ways of farming. Mnguashima and Olushola (2020) evaluated Climate induced conflicts and livelihoods of farming households in Nigeria: lessons from farmers' herdsmen conflict ridden communities in Benue State. Data were collected from 110 farming households in Guma and Logo Local Government Areas (LGA) using interview schedule and focus group discussion. The majority experienced high degree of exposure to conflict incidences such as destruction of properties, homelessness and poor access to market. The respondents indicated a high effect of land use conflict on farming households' livelihoods and land availability/use following conflict regime induced by climate change. All respondents perceived the anti-open grazing prohibition law as a right step to reducing conflict occurrence. There was no significant difference in the effects of farmers herdsmen land use conflict on livelihood of farming households in Guma and Logo LGA. Farming households were highly vulnerable to the effects of farmers' herdsmen' conflict and are supportive of the current local authority's prohibition of open grazing. A concerted effort involving religious

institutions, government and non-governmental organizations including persuasion of herders to consider other options of livestock production such as ranching or settlement scheme would add impetus to the on-going efforts to resolve the conflict.

Chukwu et al. (2022) investigated the effects of Fulani and herdsman farmers clashes on agricultural development in Nigeria. The study employed survey design via descriptive method and Taro Yameni formula was used to determine the sample size of 399 respondents of Ukpabi-Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani Local Government of Enugu State. Data collected were analyzed using simple table and percentage analysis while the hypotheses formulated were tested using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 23. The study found that there is significant difference between farmers and Fulani perception of the causes of Fulani-herdsmen and farmers clashes in Ukpabi-Nimbo, Enugu State. Also, the study revealed that Fulani-herdsmen menace had significant social effect on farmers in Ukpabi-Nimbo, Enugu State and Fulani-herdsmen threat had significant economic effect on farmers in Ukpabi-Nimbo, Enugu State. The study therefore recommended that Both Federal and state governments should engage peace and conflict resolution experts in dealing with issues concerning herdsman-farmer clashes. This will enable effective dialogues, negotiations and of course a win-win resolution, while encouraging early warning mechanism. Nnaji et al. (2022) investigated farmers-herders' conflicts and food insecurity in rural Nigeria. The study examined the differential impacts of the incidence and severity of farmers-herders resource use conflicts on food insecurity of rural households in Nigeria. The study employs a two-stage predictor substitution model to estimate survey data collected from 401 rural households in Nigeria. The results of the study showed that both the incidence and the severity of farmers-herders' conflicts significantly increase food insecurity, and the severity of these conflicts has a larger impact than their incidence. The study also revealed that the incidence and severity of farmers-herders' conflicts positively and significantly affect food insecurity, measured by the number of days with limited varieties of food eaten. The study highlighted the importance of policy interventions that would address ongoing farmers-herders' conflicts in affected countries like Nigeria to enhance food security from a sustainable development perspective.

Modupe et al. (2023) examined farmers-herders crisis and food security in Nigeria: A case of Benue State. The focus of this study is to identify and interrogate the triggers of herder's farmer's crisis in Benue state, and how it has impacted on the quality and quantity of food in the state. The sample comprised 1600 farmers who were selected through a multi-stage cluster technique. The analysis for the study was done using simple percentage and mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) were used to describe demographic and other salient information in the data. The multiple standard regression analysis was performed to determine the impact of herder's farmer's crisis on food security in Benue state. Results revealed among others that the location of the state within the tropical rain forest which has provided it with arable lands was a motivational factor for herdsman incursion to provide food for their herds. Findings also showed that the incursion of the herders into Benue state came with negative implications such as limited agricultural output that as resulted in food scarcity and shortage. Moreso, the study found out that the brazen attacks on local indigenes on their farmlands had severely discouraged them from going to their farms, while some had found alternative in other unproductive vices. These findings are wakeup call for political leaders to come up with holistic and honest strategies such as

confinement of the herds in one location, instead of open method that is in practice. The study recommended that Kinetic approach should be applied to curb the expansionist tendency of the herders for the sake of peace, and to make the state and the country food secured and sufficient.

Theoretical Framework

Theories help us to arrive at a better understanding of the phenomena that we study theoretically or empirically. Theory is of fundamental importance in research as it ties the current study to the pertinent body literature. This study, adopts an eclectic approach anchored on resource access theory (RAT). The RAT, which originated in 1970s, was propounded by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik. They believe that man is dependent on resources as access and control over it, defines man's basis of power and success. Hence, needing these resources they opined, means that strategies must be considered and adopted in order to maintain open access to resources. Jeffrey and Gerald (1978), however, observed that conflict has ever been a recurring decimal in the history of humanity as it is more often than not a result of competition for scarce resources in human society. Sikor and Lund (2009) make a vital observation that access to natural resources is often contested and rife with conflicts at many levels. As such, the need for people to legitimize their rights and access to natural resources has remained central in competition and contestation for national resources. Access to authority is an important juncture in the web of powers that enables people to benefit from things. In effect, authorities are nodes of direct or indirect forms of access control where multiple access mechanisms or strands are bundled together in one person or institution. People and groups gain and maintain access to other factors of production and exchange through them. Access is often mediated by social identity or membership in a community or group, including groupings by age, gender, ethnicity, religion, status, profession, place of birth, common education, or other attributes that constitute social identity (Sikor & Lund, 2009). According to the theory, resource ownership and utilization have directly and indirectly defined the dimensions of most conflicts involving man since time immemorial. Of all resources, however, the land has remained an overwhelming source of conflicts among various user groups as well as individuals at varying threshold or degrees. This theory helps in giving a better understanding of the prevalent herders and farmers crisis in Nigeria. The inability of the Fulani herdsmen to have unhindered access to grazing areas/reserves is to a significant extent responsible for why they often go into conflict with host communities and farmers in Nigeria. The theory sees access to a resource as the main cause of conflict and violence (Ikezue & Ezeah, 2017). Sikor and Lund (2009) launched an important series of articles on the relation between access and the production of authority. They argue that access and authority are mutually constitutive. Controlling access to a resource by physically enforcing it or adjudicating conflicts over it can produce legitimacy, and, when it does, produces recognition as authority. This recognition, in turn, reinforces their powers to control (allocate, enforce, and adjudicate) access. Sikor and Lund focus primarily on property relations, the enforcement of claims as rights, and on a more or less dyadic relationship or multiple dyadic relations in the case of competing authorities. While recognizing this important contribution by Sikor and Lund, we continue to see access relationships as creating more complex hierarchies of authority, with property rights representing only one means by which to gain access (Ribot & Peluso, 2003).

This theory allows farmers converted their livestock farms to game farming. Game farming allowed these land holders to claim they were protecting nature because “game” is also considered “wildlife” and “biodiversity”. Other narrative moves included claims that transformed their identities from “just” farmers or ranchers to environmental preservationists or sustainable livestock producers. They moved from ranching methane-producing animals to the protectors of Africa’s heritage and into the domain of the “eco”. They changed from allying with free laborers to joining forces with the more powerful environmentalists. Black South Africans have lost work while colonial apartheid relations on the land are being reinstated (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). However, due to restricted access, the herdsmen have resorted to taking laws into their hands by forcing their animals into people’s farmlands thereby destroying farm produce in the process. The herdsmen believe that they should have unhindered access to grazing routes which they see as their God-given right and any attempt to deny them this right will be challenged. On the other hand, farmers seem unwilling to allow the herdsmen access to their farmlands and this has always made them resort to violence to challenge the excesses of the herdsmen (Bello, 2013).

There are many promising applications and extensions of access theory, in large part because understanding access is a critical component of any political economic or political ecological analysis of resource or environmental use, crisis, or conflict. Resource access theory aims at description and explanation of the origins of environmental and resource problems and conflicts, in part to identify prescriptions that may increase justice and security. Resource access theory’s initial premise is that every case has its own historical and place-based dynamics related to social difference. The framework’s intent is to guide analysis and identify potential points of intervention to resolve conflict or ameliorate political and ecological conditions (Ribot, 2014).

To find the origins of an environmental problem, as Agyeman (1990) presciently stated, we need to understand access: who is able to benefit from things, under what conditions, mobilizing what relations of power, and through what set of mechanisms. With that we can outline cause, identify response, indicate responsibility and promote positive change. Access theory and analysis have continually proven to be a versatile way to understand some of the most elusive obstacles to effective natural resources governance such as elite control over resources, exploitative market relations, and policies that eschew rights (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). In relation to this study, farmers-herdsmen crisis in the use of agricultural land is becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria, largely due to ‘intensification and extensification’ of production activities that are necessitated by increasing human population. Therefore, the farmers need the land for cultivation while the herdsmen need the land for grazing and rearing of cattle. The ultimate cause of the conflicts between farmers and herders lies in the general degradation of resources and the increased competition for access and resources capture. This theory is found useful in explaining herdsmen-farmers crisis in Nigeria.

Method of Study

This study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. The total projected population for this study was 16 communities in Uwheru kingdom of Delta state including Orhoro, Urede, Erovie, Agadama, Owarovwo, Egbo, Oreba, Avwon, Ogode, Iwhodja, Iwhouvbe, Oguname, Ode, Iwhegbo, Owarie and Iwherhe. As of 2023, the total number of registered voters in Uwheru kingdom of Delta state was 20,000 (INEC, 2023). The

determination of the sample size of 400 was attained using the sample size determination of Yamane’s formula. In this study, purposeful sampling was used. Purposive sampling, according to Obasi (2000), is a technique where the researcher specifically chooses participants for the study based on their capacity to provide relevant data to satisfy the interrogation's requirements. Therefore, in order to choose respondents from the Uwheru kingdom in Delta State, the purposive sampling method was used. In order to accomplish the goals of this study, respondents with particular characteristics were involved in this study. This study applied quantitative method of data collection. This guarantee the study an opportunity to achieve a balanced data generation that was more encompassing and detailed. Data was sourced through primary means; primary data was obtained from the respondents through the administration of questionnaire. Thus, questionnaire was given to respondents to fill, retrieved and collated and sourced for useful information about the effects of farmers-herders crisis on food insecurity in Uwheru communities in Delta State. Data collected from the questionnaire was collated, coded and imputed into the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS version 23.0, 2020) for data analysis. Pearson’s coefficient of correlation and linear regression was employed to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. These are found suitable for the nature of this study.

Results

The bivariate analysis involves the test for the bivariate relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The decision rule which applies for all bivariate test outcomes is stated as follows: where $P < 0.05$, reject hypothesis on the basis or evidence of no insignificant relationship and where $P > 0.05$, accept hypothesis on the basis of significant relationship between the variables.

Hypothesis one: There is no significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food availability in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

Table 1: Correlation of Farmers-Herders Crisis and Food Availability

	Variables		Farmers-Herders Crisis	Food Availability
Spearman's rho	Farmers-Herders Crisis	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 317	-.784* .000 317
	Food Availability	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.784* .000 317	1 317

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 1 showed the relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food availability in Uwheru communities in Delta State using Spearman’s Rank-order correlation coefficients techniques. From the analysis the result showed that farmers-herders crisis has a very strong negative and significant relationship with food availability at ($\rho = - 0.784$, and $P = 0.000 < 0.05\%$). The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. That is there is no significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food availability in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food access in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

Table 2: Correlation of Farmers-Herders Crisis and Food Access

	Variables		Farmers-Herders Crisis	Food Access
Spearman's rho	Farmers-Herders Crisis	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 317	-.779* .000 317
	Food Access	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.779* .000 317	1 317

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 2 showed the relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food access in Uwheru communities in Delta State using Spearman’s Rank-order correlation coefficients techniques. From the analysis the result revealed that farmers-herders crisis has a very strong negative and significant relationship with food availability at (rho = - 0.779, and P = 0.000 <0.05%). The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. That is, there is no significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food access in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

Hypothesis three: There is no significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

Table 3: Correlation of Farmers-Herders Crisis and Food Utilization and Stability

	Variables		Farmers-Herders Crisis	Food Utilization and Stability
Spearman's rho	Farmers-Herders Crisis	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 317	-.761* .000 317
	Food Utilization and Stability	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	-.761* .000 317	1 317

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 3 showed the relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State using Spearman’s Rank-order correlation coefficients techniques. From the analysis the result showed that farmers-herders crisis has a strong negative and significant relationship with food utilization and stability at (rho = - 0.761, and P = 0.000 <0.05%). The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. That is there is no significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

Influence of farmers-herders crisis on food insecurity in Uwheru communities in Delta State

Since correlation does not imply causation, a multiple regressions analysis was done to verify the influence of farmers-herders crisis on food insecurity in Uwheru communities in Delta State. The multiple regression analysis which was conducted at 5% level of significance was used to further test hypotheses formulated for this study. Summary result of test is presented in Tables 4.6.

Table 4: Summary of Hypothesized Direct Effects

Direct effects	Coefficients	S.E	T-stat	P	Conclusion
Farmers-herders crisis --> Food availability	-.602	.135	-8.614	.000	Supported
Farmers-herders crisis --> Food access	-.531	.140	-5.590	.105	Supported
Farmers-herders crisis --> Food utilization and stability	-.554	.119	-7.439	.012	Supported

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Table 4 analyzed the coefficients and p-values of each regression line between components. The three anticipated direct effects of farmers-herders crisis on food availability, food access and food utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State was significant. The influenced of farmers-herders crisis on food availability in Uwheru communities in Delta State was negatively and statistically significant. Also, the impact of farmers-herders crisis on food access in Uwheru communities in Delta State was negatively and statistically significant and the effect of farmers-herders crisis on food utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State was negatively and statistically significant.

Discussion of Findings

There were three hypotheses formulated for the study and the result of hypothesis one shows that is there is no significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food availability in Uwheru communities in Delta State. That is, the higher farmers-herders crisis, the lower food availability in Uwheru communities in Delta State. Similarly, the t-statistics of -8.614 at p-value (sig) of 0.000 obtained in the table 4 for food availability which is less than 5% level of significant also indicated that there is negative significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food availability in Uwheru communities in Delta State. The coefficient of -0.602 indicated that one percent increase in farmers-herders crisis will lead to 6.02(%) percent decrease in food availability in Uwheru communities in Delta State. The result of hypothesis one was supported by the findings of Nnaji et al. (2022) and Modupe et al. (2020) which revealed that the incidence and severity of farmers-herders' conflicts positively and significantly affect food insecurity. To them improving policy interventions that address ongoing farmers-herders' conflicts in affected countries like Nigeria will enhance food security. With this thriving crisis and violence of Farmers and Herders in Africa without proper steps by the African Government to tackle it to a standstill, food unavailability will continue to be a major challenge in West Africa (Moritz, 2010). Usman (2019) collaborating with this finding opined that farmers-herders' crises in the country which has led to the wanton destruction of human lives and properties including livestock and farmland assets has been the major cause of the low agricultural production in the country and the displacement of farmers was due to the high level of insecurity of the farmlands due to the activities of the warring parties to the conflicts which made those places unsafe for habitation.

In support of this finding, Udosen (2021) posits that the Fulani herders and farmers issues result in low food production in the country, according to the research questions. This conclusion was founded on the belief that conflicts in various sections of the country killed and maimed both herders and farmers. As a result, many people have been displaced; most of them are farmers who no longer have access to agricultural settlements to cultivate their land. Farmers and herders have always had issues in Nigeria, but it increased as the population grew, leading to more cultivation of grassland and livestock paths. As a result of the paucity of pasture area in the north, the herders migrate south. Conflicts impair food security, putting participants and the country at risk (Moritz, 2010). With respect to hypothesis two, the study revealed that there is no significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food access in Uwheru communities in Delta State. That is, the higher farmers-herders crisis, the lower food access in Uwheru communities in Delta State. Moreover, the t-statistics of -5.590 at p-value (sig) of 0.105 obtained in the table 4 for food access which is less than 5% level of significant further revealed that there is negative significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food access in Uwheru communities in Delta State. The coefficient of -0.531 indicated that one percent increase in farmers-herders crisis will lead to 5.31(%) percent decrease in food access in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

Oghuvbu (2021) collaborating with this finding opined that putting an end to farmers-herders crisis is vital for agricultural productivity and improve food security and by extension the realization of food access in Nigeria. Ikenyei (2020) demonstrated that in Nigeria, the destruction of crops and other properties situated in the farm are the major reason why farmers barricade herders and their cattle. The burning of rangelands and blockage of stock routes and water points to avoid encroachment on farm lands and destruction of crops herald attacks against farmers by herders who force their way to graze their animals. Generally, insecurity and stagnation deepened as reprisal attacks threatened lives and social order including food insecurity. The study by Oghuvbu (2021) revealed that destruction of crops, stealing of farm produce and killing of herders are among the most predominant causes of farmers-herders crisis in Agadama which led to reduction in farm output, displacement of farmers/herders and reduction in farmers' income.

The above assertion was corroborated by Ogbette et al. (2018) who submitted that the major aim of food security is to ensure individual access to adequate food always needed and utilization of such food to meet body growth and development. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations identified four components of food security to be: availability, access, utilization and stability and these components must be simultaneously satisfied to meet it objectives. The major problem confronting food security in Nigeria is the Farmers-herders conflict. For example, there is shortage of food supply that has resulted in non- availability, hence increases prices of available one by the reason of such crises (Ogbette, *et al*, 2018). The conflict seems to have become a source of discouragement to local farmers in embarking on farming activities because most of them are pessimistic of low turnout, or zero return on their labour and investment.

Thus, Modupe et al. (2023) argue that the most prevailing issue in human developmental process in Nigeria is inadequate food supply that has resulted to malnutrition, hence reducing the quality of life of the people. Food security addresses the risks of people not having access to needed food. Household food security exists when every person within

the family has unhindered access to food items in terms of quality or quantity, for an appropriate and beneficial meals and sustainable lifestyle for a good standard of living. Food security is a condition when there is access of all people at all times to a nutritious staple food for a healthy living. However, Kah (2017) study revealed that farmers-herders crisis affects food access in host communities. With respect to hypothesis three, the study showed that there is no significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State. That is, the higher farmers-herders crisis, the lower food utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State. More so, the t-statistics of -7.439 at p-value (sig) of 0.012 obtained in the table 4 for food utilization and stability which is less than 5% level of significant further revealed that there is negative significant relationship between farmers-herders crisis and food utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State. The coefficient of -0.554 indicated that one percent increase in farmers-herders crisis will lead to 5.54(%) percent decrease in food utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

This result is consistent with earlier studies by Moritz (2010); Martin-Shields et al. (2019) and George et al. (2020) who found that farmers-herders crisis negatively affects the utilization and stability in the host communities. Chukwu et al (2022) argue that the crisis over land, and desire to occupy the land by the herders has destabilized most of the local farmers, which has affected food security negatively in terms of quantity and quality. This study is in line with Ahynet al (2018) who concluded that farmers-herders crisis has far-reaching implications on Nigerian national integration. The study also found that each region affected by the crisis suffers food crises in terms of availability, access and utilization and stability of food. This study was significant since it confirmed that disputes between the two groups impacted food production, availability, distribution, and utilization and stability.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the effects of farmers-herders crisis on food insecurity in Uwheru communities in Delta State. The study found that farmers-herders crisis negatively influenced food availability, access and utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State. The causes of farmers-herders clash in recent times were identified to be a function of several factors not only limited to climate change resulting in drought and desertification soil degradation; growing population size, global terrorism, crime (rural banditry and cattle rustling) amongst others. Previous and present government responses to this crisis have been most disappointing with no clear cut and sustainable policy both by the federal and state government. In conclusion, farmers-herders crisis has resulted in displacement of people from their communities, women and girls' vulnerability to sexual and economic predation, huge economic burden on the government leading to loss of revenues, dwindling food supply and rising cost, increasing division among the Federating states and threat to National Security amongst others. In the past, there was little confrontation between herders and farmers because land was abundant and colonial authorities could designate free land as grazing reserves and grazing routes. Contacts between herders and farmers were too brief and uncompetitive. This sustained the fabled hospitality between them. Today, farmers and herders have always had issues in Nigeria, but it increased as the population grew, leading to more cultivation of grassland and livestock paths. As a result of the paucity of pasture area in the north, the herdsmen migrate

south. Conflicts impair food security, putting participants and the country at risk. Conflicts disrupt and imperil Nigeria's ethnic harmony and agricultural output.

The Nigerian government's approach to the conflict tends to swing between military deployment and mediation by people with a good reputation. Using military soldiers to quiet individual outbreaks of violence has become a major political and security concern. Extrajudicial executions and other human rights abuses cannot be underlined. Despite the Nigerian government efforts, farmers-herders conflicts persist in the country. Between 2002 and 2010, the federal government organized four committees to investigate violent conflict (primarily between herders and farmers) in Plateau, Nasarawa, and Benue States. Commissions of Inquiry into community conflicts in Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba States headed by Justice Okpene in 2002 and 2004 respectively there has not been much political will to implement the multiple commissions' findings.

Observation of the various events surrounding the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen has revealed that criminal elements have come to hide under the label of 'bandits' to perpetrate all sorts of heinous activities like attacking farmers, rustling cattle, and kidnapping for ransom. Based on the findings, this study concluded that farmers-herders crisis has cause wanton devastation of human lives and property, including livestock, farmland assets and food insecurity in Uwheru communities in Delta State. In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Urgent upgrade response procedures to farmers-herders crisis, especially in the most vulnerable communities like Uwheru communities in Delta State. But this should be done within a larger framework that emphasizes proactive rather than reactive response to crisis. This will go a long way to enhance food availability, access and utilization and stability in Uwheru communities in Delta State.

In order to avoid or reduce farmers-herders crisis in Nigeria, it is proper for all states in the federation to come together and have a common policy on land use to reduce the likelihood of food insecurity in vulnerable communities in Nigeria, especially Uwheru communities in Delta State. The herders should embrace modern day style of animal husbandry in Uwheru communities in Delta State and also work with government research institutions to produce cattle species that can withstand current situations which will help reduce land, water conflict and food insecurity. This can be achieved by vigorously promoting the advantages of ranching over open grazing.

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