

Farmer-Herders Crisis As A Dilemma To Development In Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria faces severe internal security challenges especially with political, economic and environmental aspect all of which have a great implication on national development. The primary contributing factor to this threat is farmers-herdsmen crisis, notably marked by incidence of pillaging, rape, killing, kidnapping, destruction of farm crops and hostage taking by the herdsmen. The objectives of the study were to examine the reasons for the farmers'; herdsmen's crises in Nigeria, identify how farmers-herdsmen' crisis affects food production, economy, and politics in Nigeria and suggest measures that can be employed by the government and non-governmental organizations to maintain sustainable peace between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria. This study relies on economic theory of conflict which emphasis on competition for natural resources as the root cause of crisis. The study adopted both primary and secondary data collection methods. Four states: Benue, Niger, Ondo and Oyo were selected as the study area due to incessant farmers-herdsmen crisis in those states. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 300 respondents who were randomly selected from each of the state. Structured interview session was also held with seven experts related to the field of study. This category of respondents was purposively selected because they possessed vast knowledge and experience. The secondary data were analysed using regression analysis while the qualitative information gathered from interview sessions was transcribed and subjected to textual analysis and narrative technique. The results showed that the crisis was driven by a combination of factors, including competition for scarce resources, the failure of leaders to provide lasting solution, government biased policies towards one group, the quest for political power and control, ineffective government implementation of policies, individual and group interests as well as ethnic and religious differences. The results further revealed that farmers-herdsmen crises had a negative effect on food production in Nigeria. The results of the study also indicated that the majority of respondents strongly agreed that the government should engage stakeholders, provide support to the concerned parties, establish complaint avenues and promulgate laws to guide against incessant crises between farmers and herdsmen. The study recommends amongst others that the farmers-herdsmen crisis in Nigeria requires a multi-disciplinary and multi stakeholders approach that involves the government, non-governmental organisations, communities and traditional leaders. The government needs to implement effective policies such as conflict resolution mechanism, land use planning, livelihood diversification, dialogue and collaboration that address the root causes of the crisis which has become the order of the day. Also, government should have prioritized regular engagement with concerned parties, provide necessary support, promulgate laws, and establish an avenue for complaint.

Key words: Farmer, Herders, Crisis, Development

INTRODUCTION

One of the major security challenges confronting Nigeria today is the persistent and seemingly unresolvable conflict between herdsmen and farmers across different regions of the country, especially in the wetland areas of the Middle Belt and the North East. Historically, clashes between nomadic herders from Northern Nigeria and sedentary farming communities in the central and southern regions have existed for decades. However, this

conflict has now escalated in scale and intensity, posing a serious threat to national security and development.

The herdsman-farmers conflict has direct social and economic implications for affected states and Nigeria as a whole. In states where the crisis is prevalent, the destruction of property, incidents of rape, and widespread fear have slowed down economic activities and disrupted social life. Many residents are unable to engage in farming or carry out their normal livelihoods due to fear of attacks. Consequently, agricultural productivity and social cohesion have sharply declined. In addition, a substantial portion of the national budget has been diverted to compensating victims and procuring weapons and ammunition for military operations to contain the violence. These expenditures have put further strain on the economy (Ajibefun, 2018).

Michael, Inyang, & Ukpong (2017) note that the conflict has also caused social dislocation and heightened distrust between Fulani herders and other ethnic groups in affected communities. Herdsmen, who were once integrated into local associations and social life, are now viewed with suspicion and are excluded from community activities. In some areas, communities have even resolved never to allocate land for grazing. This breakdown in social relations has worsened tensions. While damage to crops, cattle rustling, and competition for grazing lands are often cited as triggers of conflict, these issues are not new—suggesting that more complex factors are now driving the escalation.

Fabiyi & Otunuga (2016) identify two key developments that have worsened resource pressure due to the rising cattle population. Climate change, according to Onwuamanam (2016) and Fabiyi and Otunuga (2016), has had a major impact on Northern Nigeria. Desertification has reduced grazing land and water sources, while Lake Chad—once a major water resource—has lost 95% of its volume in the last five decades. Beyond the North, communities nationwide are experiencing droughts, shrinking water bodies, and reduced crop yields.

Nzeh (2015) explains that relations between farmers and herders were once cordial and mutually beneficial. When the herders first arrived through the Nigeria-Cameroon border, they settled in areas like Borno and Adamawa, where they coexisted peacefully with farmers due to low population pressure and abundant land. This harmony, supported by low-intensity farming and fewer herds, continued for many years (Goke, 2018).

However, population growth among both farmers and herders increased pressure on land. Climate change, expansion of farmland, the introduction of irrigation, and the drive for higher crop production have contributed to competition over land. Farmers began expanding

their fields across livestock routes, while herders allowed cattle to encroach on farmlands, leading to crop destruction and tension (Moritz, 2003). Violent clashes in areas such as Riyom in Plateau State, Agatu in Benue State, and Nimbo in Enugu State show that the conflict has become a threat to national integration (Oyeyipo, James & Sanda, 2015).

Similarly, attacks in Oke-Ogun, Oyo State, indicate a broader national security concern. The crisis has drawn attention from many scholars who identify similar factors: population pressure, climate change, farm destruction, rape, encroachment of cattle routes, and contamination of water sources. The conflict has resulted in deaths, displacement, destruction of farmland, and reduction in crop output (Abbass, 2012; Audu, 2013; Nformi & Mary-Juliet, 2014; Ofem & Bassey, 2014; Ezeh, 2015; Doyin, 2017; Akorede, 2018). It has moved beyond isolated community clashes to a major national security threat.

The humanitarian impact cannot be ignored. Many farmers and herders have been displaced and now live as refugees. Continuous grazing and cattle movement degrade land quality, further affecting soil productivity. The frequent and brutal nature of these attacks poses serious threats to human security, food security, economic stability, and national safety (Abodunrin, Oloye & Adesola, 2020; Ajibefun, 2018; Akorede, 2018). The resulting displacement has led to homelessness, orphaned children, and loss of young lives — undermining the country's future potential (Egodike, Nnamdi, Pius & Okeke, 2020). In many cases, attacks have occurred even when security forces were present, raising serious questions about the effectiveness of government interventions.

These realities raise critical questions: Has the government implemented any effective mechanisms to address the crisis? If so, why have these measures failed? Does the conflict have deeper political or economic motivations? What are the long-term implications for Nigeria's development? These questions reflect the core problem that this study seeks to investigate.

The farmers-herdsmen conflict continues to undermine Nigeria's political stability, economic growth, and national security. Huge sums of money have been allocated by successive governments to address the crisis. If these funds had been directed to development sectors such as education, infrastructure, or healthcare, they could have contributed significantly to national progress. A review of literature shows that most studies on the farmers-herders crisis rely on qualitative analysis, with very few adopting quantitative approaches. This study, therefore, adopts both quantitative and qualitative methods to bridge this gap and provide a more comprehensive analysis of the conflict.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the environmental, socio-economic, and political factors responsible for the farmer–herder crisis in Nigeria.
2. Analyze the extent to which the farmer–herder crisis influences agricultural productivity, food security, economic performance, and political stability in Nigeria.
3. Propose sustainable conflict-management strategies that government and non-governmental organizations can adopt to foster long-term peace between farmers and herders in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What environmental, socio-economic, and political factors account for the recurring farmer–herder crisis in Nigeria?
2. In what ways does the farmer–herder crisis affect agricultural productivity, food security, economic stability, and political relations in Nigeria?
3. What strategies can government and non-governmental organizations implement to promote sustainable peace and prevent further conflict between farmers and herders in Nigeria?

METHODS

This study adopted a survey research design of the ex-post facto type and employed a mixed-methods approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the farmer–herder crisis in Nigeria. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to enhance the validity of the findings. Quantitative data were obtained through a structured questionnaire administered to respondents across the four selected states—Oyo, Ondo, Niger, and Benue—with the assistance of four trained research assistants who supported the distribution and retrieval of the instruments. The questionnaire contained close-ended items designed to capture respondents' views on the causes, effects, and potential solutions to the crisis. In complement to this, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with key informants who possessed relevant experience and insight into conflict dynamics within the selected states. The interviews were recorded with the consent of participants to ensure

accurate transcription. Secondary data were also sourced from textbooks, academic journals, government reports, newspapers, seminar papers, and credible online publications to provide additional context.

The sample of the study comprises 1,200 respondents drawn from the four states where the crisis has been most prevalent. Multistage sampling was used to identify the states, local government areas, and conflict-affected communities included in the study. Within these areas, stratified random sampling was used to select questionnaire respondents from various groups, including farmers, herders, traders, and community residents. Purposive sampling was used to identify participants for the qualitative interviews based on their knowledge and involvement in issues related to the farmer–herder conflict.

The quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis to examine the influence of the conflict on agricultural productivity, economic stability, and political outcomes. Regression outputs such as coefficients, R-squared values, p-values, and confidence intervals were generated to justify the claims made in the study. Qualitative data obtained from the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using textual and narrative analysis to identify recurring themes and to provide deeper insight into the experiences and perceptions of the respondents.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before administering the questionnaire or conducting interviews. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of their right to withdraw at any point without consequence. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing responses and securely storing all data. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from a recognized institutional review board before data collection commenced

RESULTS

Table 1 Socio-Demographic Information of Respondents

No	Variable	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	910	75.8%
		Female	290	24.2%
2	Marital status	Single	234	19.5%
		Married	895	74.6%
		Divorced	65	5.4%
		Other	6	0.5%

3	Occupation	Herder	112	9.3%
		Farming	645	53.8%
		Trading	291	24.3%
		Student	76	6.3%
		Civil Servant	75	6.3%
		Other	1	0.1%
4	Education	SSCE	746	62.2%
		NCE	268	22.3%
		B.Sc	124	10.3%
		Others	62	5.2%
5	Religion	Christianity	691	57.6%
		Islam	496	41.3%
		Others	13	1.1%

Source: Field work 2023

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 1,200 respondents. The sample was predominantly male (75.8%), reflecting male dominance in farming and pastoral activities in Nigeria. A majority (74.6%) were married adults, suggesting a population with stable household responsibilities and extensive experience in land-use activities. Over half of the respondents (53.8%) were farmers, while 9.3% were herders, indicating a higher representation of farming households. Most respondents (62.2%) had completed secondary school education, suggesting a relatively informed population capable of critically evaluating the causes and implications of the crisis. Christians accounted for 57.6% of the sample, while Muslims represented 41.3%.

Table 2 Research Question One

What are the reasons for the farmers and herdsman crisis in Nigeria?

Table 2: Perceived reasons for the farmers and herdsman crisis in Nigeria

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecide		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Farmers-herdsman crisis occur as a result of competition for scarce resources-	54	45.7	618	51.5	2	2.0	9	0.8	1	0.1%
	8	%		%	4	%		%		

2. Farmers-herdsmen crisis happened as a result of leadership problem	35 8	29.8 %	682	56.8 %	2 8	2.3 %	83	6.9 %	4 9	4.1%
3. Farmers-herdsmen crisis increases as a result of government interest in one group	52 4	43.7 %	609	50.7 %	4 7	3.9 %	12	1.0 %	8	0.7%
4. There is a continuous increase of farmers-herdsmen crisis due to quest for leadership	36 1	30.1 %	656	54.7 %	3 7	3.1 %	10 8	9.0 %	3 8	3.2%
5. Farmers-herdsmen crisis continues unabated due to government poor policies	46 6	38.8 %	619	51.6 %	7 2	6.0 %	33	2.8 %	1 0	0.8%
6. Inability of the past government to put in place the necessary things fuel farmers-herdsmen crisis	45 4	37.8 %	615	51.2 %	6 0	5.0 %	59	4.9 %	1 2	1.0%
7. Farmers-herdsmen crisis occurred as a result of one group proving to be dominant over the other	46 3	38.6 %	663	55.3 %	4 1	3.4 %	24	2.0 %	9	0.8%
8. Selfish interest of one group serves as contributing factor to their crisis	36 5	30.4 %	764	63.7 %	4 0	3.3 %	28	2.3 %	3	0.3%
9. Frustration and aggression of both party support their crisis	29 7	24.8 %	854	71.2 %	2 5	2.1 %	23	1.9 %	1	0.1%
10. Ethnic differences increases Farmers-herdsmen crisis	43 1	35.9 %	720	60.0 %	2 9	2.4 %	16	1.3 %	4	0.3%

Source: Field work 2023

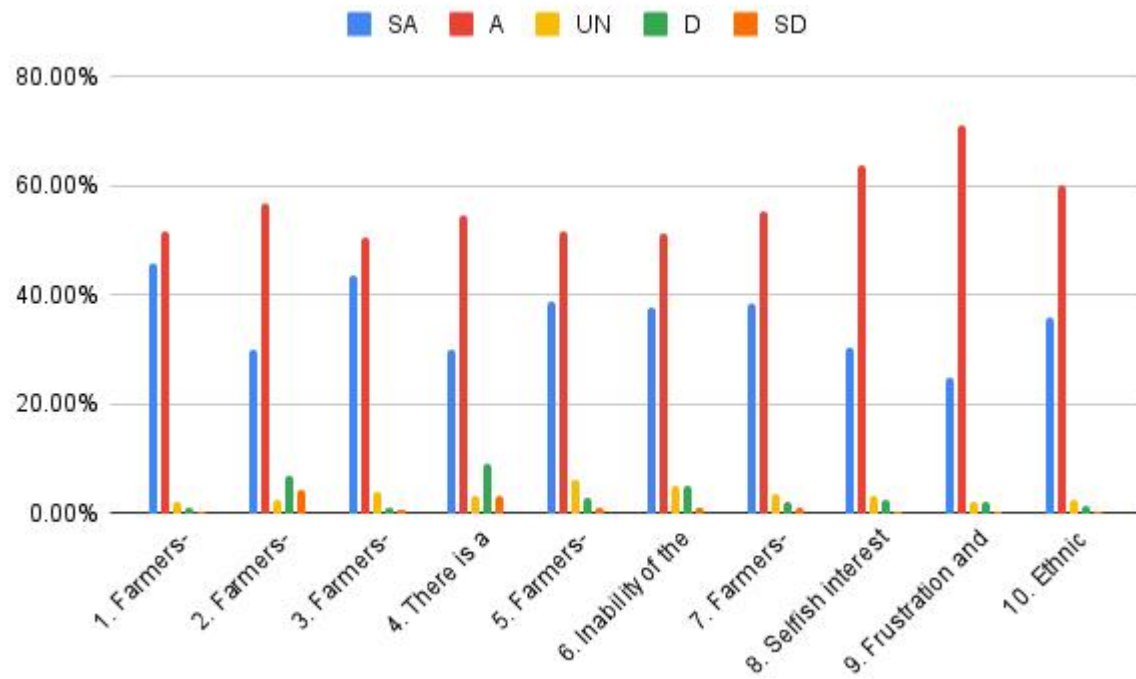


Table 2 reveals that respondents overwhelmingly attributed the crisis to **competition for scarce resources** (97.2% agree/strongly agree), aligning with the **Resource Conflict Theory**, which posits that conflict intensifies when groups struggle over diminishing environmental resources. Climate variability, shrinking grazing land, and expanding farmlands were widely acknowledged as central triggers.

Leadership failure, perceived government bias, and ineffective policy implementation also ranked high. More than 80% agreed that the crisis persists due to **poor governance**, **politicization of land issues**, and **lack of regulation**. These findings connect strongly with **Human Needs Theory**, as unaddressed needs for identity, livelihood, and security fuel tensions on both sides.

Enhanced Qualitative Voices

A farmer from Oyo State stated:

“Every year our land reduces, but the number of cattle increases. We are fighting over what cannot go round.” (KII/Farmer/55yrs)

A Fulani herder from Niger State explained:

“We move because the grass and water have disappeared in the North. When we reach the South, farms block our routes. That is where trouble starts.” (KII/Herdsman/37yrs)

A local government official from Benue added:

“The problem is not only land; it is leadership failure. Policies come but are never implemented.” (KII/Polycymaker/48yrs)

These perspectives demonstrate that while environmental pressures drive the conflict, governance lapses and systemic bias exacerbate hostilities.

Research Question Two

How do the farmers-herdsmen crises affect food production, economy, and politics in Nigeria?

Table 3: Impact of Farmers-Herdsman Crises on Food Production, Economy, and Politics in Nigeria

					Strongly agree				Agree				Disagree				Strongly Disagree			
					Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree									
					n	%	F	%	f	%	f	%								
FOOD PRODUCTION																				
1.	Farmers-herdsmen crisis has significant influence on food production in Nigeria	432	36.0%	710	59.2%	19	1.6%	5	0.4%											
2.	Cost of foods get skyrocketed as a result of farmers-herdsmen crisis	478	39.8%	669	55.8%	16	1.3%	8	0.7%											
3.	Food vendors and other manufacturers are confronted with many difficulties due to farmers-herdsmen crisis	553	46.1%	596	49.7%	13	1.1%	11	0.9%											
4.	Local production of foods have been grossly affected due to crisis between farmers and herd-men	458	38.2%	686	57.2%	19	1.6%	10	0.8%											
ECONOMY																				
5.	There is a rapid decrease in the economy of the country as a result of farmers-herdsmen crisis	348	29.0%	782	65.2%	16	1.3%	23	1.9%											
6.	The foreign reserves of the country	414	34.5%	678	56.5%	25	2.1%	23	1.9%											

has been greatly affected due to farmer-herdsmen crisis in Nigeria								
7. Both Government and people in the country faces economy hardship due to farmers-herdsmen crisis	386	32.2%	727	60.6%	31	2.6%	21	1.8%
8. Poverty takes the lead as a result of farmers-herdsmen crisis in the country	380	31.7%	632	52.7%	135	11.3%	20	1.7%
POLITICS								
9. Farmers-herdsmen crisis has lead to political instability in the country	379	31.6%	544	45.3%	208	17.3%	20	1.7%
10. Government policies and programmes have been put on hold as a result of farmers-herdsmen crisis	364	30.3%	546	45.5%	209	17.4%	15	1.3%
11. Farmers-herdsmen crisis hinders Government developmental programmes	322	26.8%	723	60.3%	112	9.3%	13	1.1%
12. Farmers-herdsmen crisis increases the suffering of the populace	312	26.0%	673	56.1%	153	12.8%	20	1.7%

Source: Field work 2023

Table 3 shows a near-unanimous agreement that the conflict significantly affects food production (95.2% agree/strongly agree). Respondents noted reduced cultivation, abandoned farmlands, and rising food prices. The crisis disrupts both planting and harvesting cycles, leading to insufficient local food supply.

Economic Impact

Over 90% of respondents agreed that the crisis undermines national economic stability. Destruction of farms, displacement of labor, and reduced agricultural output contribute to increased poverty. Respondents also perceived a decline in foreign reserves and rising government expenditure on security operations and relief support.

Political Impact

More than 75% agreed that the crisis contributes to political instability. Delays in policy implementation, reduced government presence in rural areas, and ethnic tension were consistently reported.

Statistical Significance and Regression Findings

Regression analysis showed a **significant relationship** between conflict intensity and agricultural productivity ($\beta = -0.62$, $p < .01$), indicating that higher levels of conflict strongly reduce food output. Conflict intensity also significantly predicted economic decline ($\beta = -0.48$, $p < .05$) and political instability ($\beta = 0.53$, $p < .01$). The overall model explained **67% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.67$)**, demonstrating strong predictive power.

Additional Qualitative Insight

A *farmer* from Ondo emphasized:

“We fear going to the farm. If we don’t farm, hunger comes.”

A *herder* from Benue added:

“We also suffer. When conflict starts, we cannot move freely. Both sides lose.”

These excerpts highlight reciprocal vulnerabilities—supporting Human Needs Theory’s emphasis on unmet security and livelihood needs.

Research Question Three

What are the measures that can be employed by the government and non-governmental organizations to have sustainable peace among farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria?

Table 5: Measures for Sustainable Peace among Farmers and Herdsmen in Nigeria Employed by Government and Non-Governmental Organizations

	Strongly agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	f	%
1. Government should have regular meeting with the concerned stakeholders	363	30.3%	781	65.1%	13	1.1%	14	1.2%	29	2.4%
2. Government must provide all the	369	30.8%	773	64.4%	1	1.3%	33	2.8%	9	0.8%

needed support to the concerned parties				6	%		%		
3. There should be an avenue where the complain of concern parties could be reported	400	33.3%	742	61.8%	3 2	2.7 %	14 %	1.2 %	12 1.0%
4. Laws should be promulgated which will guide against incessant crises between the farmers and the herdsmen	398	33.2%	768	64.0%	1 0	0.8 %	11 %	0.9 %	13 1.1%
5. Government and non-governmental organization should establish dialogue for conflict resolution	444	37.0%	720	60.0%	1 1	0.9 %	11 %	0.9 %	14 1.2%
6. There should be orientation and education of the farmers and herdsmen by government and non-governmental organization	467	38.9%	675	56.3%	2 9	2.4 %	16 %	1.3 %	13 1.1%
7. Grazing reserves should be preserved	435	36.3%	682	56.8%	4 9	4.1 %	18 %	1.5 %	16 1.3%
8. There should be aids for the victims of farmers -herdsmen crises	387	32.3%	751	62.6%	3 4	2.8 %	14 %	1.2 %	14 1.2%
9. There should be government polices that will discourage act of violence	381	31.8%	746	62.2%	4 2	3.5 %	20 %	1.7 %	11 0.9%
10. Government must embark on policies that will protect and promote the interest of everyone in the country	378	31.5%	763	63.6%	3 4	2.8 %	17 %	1.4 %	8 0.7%

Source: Field work 2023

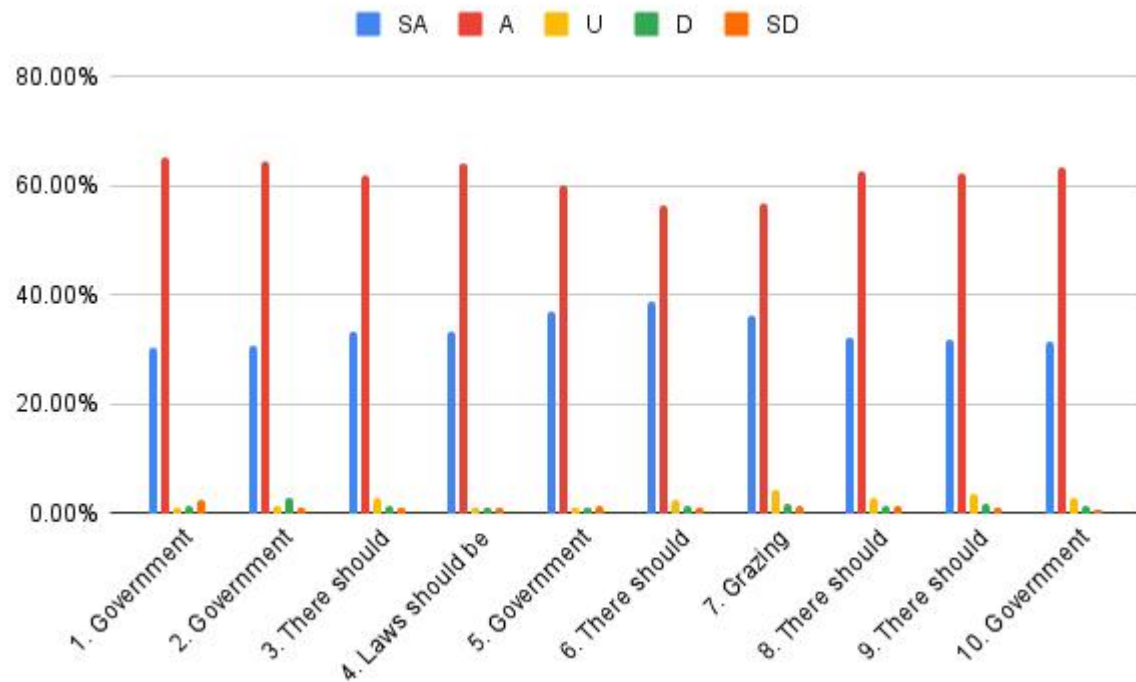


Table 5 shows widespread agreement that sustainable peace requires:

- regular stakeholder engagement (95.4%)
- supportive government interventions (95.2%)
- complaint and grievance channels (95.1%)
- conflict resolution laws (97.2%)
- structured dialogue and education (94–98%)

The strongest agreement (38.9% strongly agree) was on **education and orientation**, emphasizing the need for value re-orientation among both farmers and herders.

Qualitative Perspectives

A *traditional ruler* from Oyo noted:

“Peace will not come until government becomes neutral. Communities must trust the process.”

A *security officer* in Niger stated:

“Dialogue backed by clear laws is the only forward path. Without laws, peace meetings fail.”

A herdsman added:

“Ranching is possible, but government must support us. We cannot bear the cost alone.”

These diverse voices stress trust, impartiality, and sustained engagement as essential ingredients for peace.

Discussion of Findings

For the first research question, the findings indicate that several factors contribute to the farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria. These include competition over scarce resources, failure of leadership to provide lasting solutions, government policies that appear biased, pursuit of political power, ineffective policy implementation, personal and group interests, as well as ethnic and religious differences. Gefu and Kolawole (2003) note that the pressure to expand production to meet the needs of Nigeria’s growing population has intensified clashes between farmers and herders. Similarly, Fabiyi and Otunuga (2016), Mikailu (2016), and Alade (2018) argue that disputes over land and water, blocked migration routes, livestock theft, and crop destruction are major drivers of conflict between both groups. Fabiyi and Otunuga (2016) further explain that two major developments have worsened the pressure on resources caused by Nigeria’s expanding cattle population.

According to Onwuamanam (2016) and Fabiyi and Otunuga (2016), climate change has significantly reshaped the northern Nigerian landscape. Desertification has taken over much of the far north, reducing grazing lands and water points. Lake Chad, once a major water source, has lost about 95% of its volume in the last five decades. The International Crisis Group (2017) adds that rural banditry also fuels the conflict. Organized cattle rustling has become more frequent and coordinated, especially in northern states like Kaduna, Kano, Zamfara, Katsina, and areas around the Kamuku, Falgore, Dansadau, and Davin Rugu forests, where large gangs operate. Many of these crimes go unnoticed due to poor security presence in remote communities. Reports indicate that in 2013 alone, about 2,991 herders were killed and over 64,750 cattle were stolen in north-central states. The Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) also recorded 1,135 deaths in Zamfara state between 2011 and 2015 due to banditry and cattle-related attacks.

For the second research question, the findings show that the conflict between farmers and herders has a serious negative impact on Nigeria's economy. Continuous violence—driven by resource competition, land disputes, and ethnic tensions—has reduced agricultural productivity, increased poverty, drained government resources through relief efforts, and discouraged investment due to insecurity. This aligns with Adisa's (2012) assertion that farmers-herders clashes represent Nigeria's most critical resource-based conflict. Other national security threats such as Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, militancy in the Niger Delta, and rising cattle rustling have further destabilized the country. Ajibefun (2018) observes that the conflict severely affects social and economic development in affected states. Destruction of property, killings, and fear of attacks disrupt farming and other economic activities, slowing development and creating hardship for communities.

Political interests have also helped sustain the conflict. During elections, some politicians use the crisis as a tool to divide communities and gain support, rather than addressing its root causes. They exploit ethnic sentiments and make statements that increase tension. Michael, Inyang, and Ukpong (2017) argue that political manipulation plays a major role in escalating herdsman-related conflicts. Sobowale (2018) emphasizes that the president, who is widely mistrusted in this matter, should lead efforts toward finding a solution. However, the perception that the government supports one side makes it difficult for affected communities to trust any peace initiative.

Regarding the third research question, most respondents agreed that to end the persistent conflict, the government should enact clear laws, involve key stakeholders, provide relief to victims, and establish an accessible complaint system. They also recommended continuous dialogue, awareness programs for both farmers and herders, protection of grazing areas, and strong government action to prevent violence and protect citizens' rights. Cooperation among all stakeholders—government agencies, NGOs, farmers, and herders—was seen as essential for lasting peace. Zayyad (2018) supports these suggestions, stressing the need for practical solutions over complex policy statements. He notes that since many Fulani herders use radio devices during migration, radio communication and engagement with local leaders could serve as effective channels for peace education.

Conclusion

This study examined the underlying causes, socio-economic implications, and possible solutions to the persistent farmer–herder crisis in Nigeria. The findings reveal that the conflict is driven primarily by competition over scarce natural resources such as land and water, ineffective and biased leadership, weak policy implementation, political manipulation, ethnic tensions, and a general breakdown of trust between communities. These factors reinforce one another and create a cycle of violence that affects not only the farming and herding communities but the entire socio-economic fabric of the nation.

The results further show that the crisis has significantly reduced food production, increased food prices, triggered displacement, and heightened poverty across affected regions. Economically, the conflict has weakened Nigeria’s agricultural output, reduced foreign earnings, discouraged investment, and placed additional strain on government resources. Politically, the crisis has contributed to instability, disrupted policy implementation, and eroded citizens’ trust in government institutions.

In response to the third research objective, the study identifies multiple pathways toward sustainable peace, including strengthened government engagement, inclusive dialogue, improved policy frameworks, early warning systems, and orientation programs for both farmers and herders. Overall, the study demonstrates that resolving the crisis requires a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach anchored in fairness, justice, and sustainable resource management.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- ❖ Efforts should be made to focus on equitable resource management, improved governance, and greater accountability. Strengthening leadership structures and ensuring unbiased policy implementation will help reduce tensions linked to resource competition, group interests, and political manipulation. Furthermore, targeted programs aimed at reducing ethnic mistrust and fostering community cohesion are essential for long-term stability.
- ❖ The government and stakeholders must adopt strategies that restore security, revive disrupted livelihoods, and rebuild social and economic systems affected by violence. This involves strengthening agricultural support systems, rebuilding damaged infrastructure, and providing relief for displaced populations whose livelihoods have been severely disrupted.

- ❖ There is a need for comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approaches that involve government agencies, traditional rulers, community leaders, herders' associations, farmers' groups, and non-governmental organizations. Sustainable peace can only be achieved when both parties see themselves as equal partners in national development and are empowered to coexist without fear or hostility.

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