

HERDER-FARMER CRISES AND FOOD SECURITY IN AGATU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Herder-farmer crises have become frequent occurrences especially among rural communities in recent years. Farmers have decried their inability to undertake farming activities due to such crises. Thus, this incidence has brought about food scarcity and hike in food prices not only in the affected communities but across the globe. This study therefore assessed herder-farmer crises and food security in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. Specifically, the study investigated the causes of herder-farmer crises and the consequences on food security. The study adopted the frustration-aggression theory and utilized cross-sectional survey design. A sample of 394 respondents was drawn from a population of 166,900 using multistage sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was semi-structured interview. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics tool such as frequencies and simple percentages. Findings identified land encroachment, inadequacy of security personnel and absence of anti-open grazing law as causes of the crises. Findings indicated that herder-farmer crises affect food availability, accessibility and stability in the study area by denying farmers access to farmlands to cultivate crops. The study therefore recommends that the Benue State Government in collaboration with the Federal Government should as a matter of urgency deploy adequate security personnel to Agatu land. The Federal Government should also compensate victims of the crises as most of them lack shelter, adequate food and access to quality health care, amongst others.

Keywords: Herder-farmer crises; Food availability; Food security; Rural communities; Shelter.

Introduction

Conflict no doubt, is an inevitable phenomenon that has been with mankind since creation. Most of these conflicts are mainly struggle over scarce resources. This is why Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels opined that, “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles”. Abass (2019), noted that the tendency towards conflict is a basic element of human nature primarily on account of competition over scarce resources. Conflicts are all over the world in time past and present. Both developed and developing countries have had a share of conflicts that they have experienced. Globally, there has been a recent surge in both the number of armed conflicts and the number of countries involved, with the most consequential being the conflicts in Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine, leading to a sharp rise in fatalities (Mia, 2024).

Conflicts or crises differ across societies or nations. These crises include war, genocide, terrorism, banditry, communal, ethno-religious and herder-farmer crises. Herder-farmer crises are not recent occurrences. The crises are a series of disputes over arable land resources between nomadic Fulani herders and indigenous farmers. The extent of these crises cannot be exhausted in a hurry as both human and material resources are affected. The frequency and intensity of herder-farmer crises are enormous. In West and Central African regions where herder-farmer crises are known to occur most due to open grazing practices, Brottem (2021), noted that over 15,000 deaths were linked to herder-farmer conflicts since 2010 and half of those have occurred since 2018. According to Jones-Casey and Knox (2011), farmer-herder crisis in Mali is significant, with approximately 42% land use conflicts in the country involving herders and farmers. Adigun (2022), analyzed the trends and dynamics of Nigeria’s farmer-herder conflicts between 2014 and 2019, and found out that there was a steady increase in the incidents. In Benue State, Abah (2023), reported that a total of 5,138 people have been killed within 87 months.

Herder-farmer crises have manifold triggers and they are similar or dissimilar among countries that are affected by such crises. According to Adams et al. (2023), resource scarcity and insecurity due to climate change, coupled with ethno-religious and identity politics have strained peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders in West and Central Africa over the last few decades. A further review of herder-farmer confrontations in Ghana, Tanzania, Mali and Nigeria by Adams et al. (2023), identified climate induced-environmental factors, land tenure insecurity, resource competition and intergroup conflicts and prejudices as the drivers. Ifedayo (2023), isolated conflict over grazing right and farming, climate change

which obstructed grazing routes as well as changes in livestock and cropping systems as the major the causes of herder-farmer conflicts in Benue State. For Dauda and Davru (2024), the farmer-herder conflict in Benue State was primarily rooted in the struggle for land between pastoralists and farmers. Additionally, intolerance between these two warring groups significantly contribute to the escalation of tension and violence in the state.

Herder-farmer crises have significant implications on food security particularly in the developing countries of Africa. Nnaji et al. (2022), cited Okwulu et al. (2024), stated that conflict between farmers and herders arises when itinerant herders graze their livestock on farm lands, leading to low yield and income losses for farmers. They noted that the conflict directly threatens rural household food security by limiting their ability to cultivate land and access food through the market. The conflict impacts the four main pillars of food security; availability, accessibility, utilization, and stabilization and reduces food security by adversely affecting agricultural labour supply, production decisions, and outputs. Adama et al. (2017), observed that herder-farmer crises in Nigeria and other African nations have added a new twist to the countries' fragile socio-political system and pose a huge challenge to the food security of those countries. The country is a hotspot for herder-farmer conflict in West and Central Africa, with an estimated annual loss of 14 billion dollars and 3641 casualties between 2016 and 2018 (Amnesty International, 2018 cited in Uchenna et al., 2025).

In Northern Nigeria, Benue State remains one of the most hard-hit areas where conflicts between Fulani armed herdsman and farmers over grazing land have led to the killing of people and razing down of houses as well as food storages facilities. Similarly, Onwunyi and Anekwe (2020), noted that herdsman and farmers conflicts have negatively affected food production in Benue State. The armed nomadic herders have continued to pose significant threat to the lives and property of the local communities in the state.

Due to the severity of herders-farmers crises, there have been various interventions aimed at resolving the crises to boost food security. The Federal Government of Nigeria enacted the grazing law between 1964 and 1965 to allocate lands for pastoralists where they can graze their cattle. In April 2014, the then President Goodluck Jonathan's government inaugurated an inter-ministerial technical committee on grazing reserves, tasked with proposing strategies for ending the conflict. The government set up a Committee on Grazing Reserves, chaired by then Benue State Governor, Gabriel Suswam (International Crisis Group, 2020). The committee recommended the recovery and improvement of all grazing

routes encroached upon by farmers and suggested that the Central Bank of Nigeria release a total of N100 billion (\$317 million) to the country's 36 state governments for ranch construction. In Benue, the state government introduced laws banning all open grazing (International Crisis Group, 2020).

However, it seems these interventions have done little or nothing in resolving or reducing herder-farmer crises as they have remained unabated. Thus, this study is undertaken to assess the impact of the herder-farmer crises on food security in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Investigate the causes of herder-farmer crises in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State; and
- ii. Determine the effects of the crises on food security in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the frustration-aggression theory to explain the herder-farmer crises vis-a-vis the implications on food security. Frustration-aggression theory also known as the 'frustration-aggression-displacement theory' is a theory of aggression proposed by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer and Robert Sears (1939) and further developed by Neal Miller (1941) and Leonard Berkowitz (1961). The theory argues that aggression is the result of blocking, or frustrating a person's efforts to attain a goal (Friedman, 2014).

The herdmen-farmer crises is a struggle over values and claims to scarce resources in which the former aims are to neutralize, injure or eliminate the host communities in a bid to fend for their animals. The violent activities of the herdsmen occur because of the accumulation of residual instigator effects of frustration. The activities of the herdsmen are traceable to the desertification that has caused depletion in grazing opportunities or scarcity of pasture for their animals which in the long-run, affects their economic wellbeing. If a herdsman loses his flock to drought and water scarcity, he may be frustrated because of the loss of means of livelihood. Consequently he may become aggressive and since, he cannot channel his frustration to natural causes, he may in the long-run vent it any person or group that obstructs his migration to a safe area. On the side of farmers and host communities in Nigeria, frustration also occurs whenever animals of the herdsmen trample on their farmlands

and destroy their crops. The resultant frustration may make them to become aggressive and channel their aggression to the herdsmen and their livestock, thereby leading to a circle of conflict and confrontation.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted cross-sectional survey design. The study was conducted in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. Agatu Local Government Area is one of the 23 local government areas of Benue State. The population of this study included adult males and females between the ages of 18 years and above who are inhabitants of Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State. According to the projected population of the area as at 21st March, 2022, the local government had a population of 166,900 people (National Population Commission, 2024). A sample of 400 respondents was drawn from the population of Agatu LGA using the Taro Yamane formula presented as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N}$$

Where;

n = the sample size required (?)
 N = the population size (166,900)
 e = level of confidence (0.05)

Substitutively;

$$n = \frac{166,900}{1 + 166,900}$$

$$n = \frac{166,900}{1 + 166,900 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{166,900}{1 + 417.25}$$

$$n = \frac{166,900}{418.25}$$

$$n = 400$$

Thus, the sample size for this study was 400 respondents.

Cluster, purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting respondents for the study. Cluster sampling was used to group Agatu Local Government Area into three (3) existing zones such as Zone A (Icho), Zone B (Ahepa) and Zone C (Eche). Purposive sampling technique was used to select council wards within these clusters or zones selected. Council wards within the zones include: Zone A (Okokolo, Udugbeho and Egba), Zone B (Obagaji, Ogbaulu and Oshigbudu) and Zone C (Enungba, Usha, Ogwule-Ogbaulu and Ogwule-Kaduna). This technique was used to select wards which suffered more

from farmer-herder conflict. Purposive sampling was also used to select communities within these council wards. Finally, accidental sampling technique was used to select fifty (50) respondents from each of the eight (8) communities. This is because anyone whom the researcher met on ground and makes himself or herself available was included in the study. Semi-structured interview was the method used for data collection, while the data were quantitatively analysed using frequencies and percentages.

Results and Discussion

Results

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency (N=394)	Percentage (%=100)
Sex		
Male	218	55.3
Female	176	44.7
Age		
18-28yrs	81	20.6
29-39yrs	54	13.7
40-50yrs	126	32.0
51-61yrs	93	23.6
62yrs & above	40	10.1
Marital status		
Single	113	28.7
Married	202	51.3
Separated/divorced	28	7.1
Widow/widower	51	12.9
Educational attainment		
Non-formal education	40	10.2
Primary education	93	23.6
Secondary education	196	49.7
Tertiary education	65	16.5
Occupation		
Farming	164	41.6
Fishing	83	21.1
Teaching	31	7.9
Business/trade	60	15.2
Civil service	35	8.9
Others	21	5.3

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 presents data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Accordingly, the sex distribution of the respondents shows that, 55.3% (218) were male, while 44.7% (176) of the respondents were female. The data also indicate that respondents between the ages of 40-50 years were the majority, constituting 32.0% (126), followed by 23.6% (93) of the respondents who were within the age bracket of 51-61 years; 20.6% (81) of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 28 years. Under the age bracket of 29-39 years was 13.7% (54) of the respondents, while 10.1% (40) of the respondents were between ages 62 years and above. The data on marital status show that, 51.3% (202) of the respondents were married who also formed the majority, 28.7% (113) of the respondents were single, 12.9% (51) of the respondents were under the category that lost either their husbands or wives, while 7.1% (28) of the respondents were no longer in any conjugal relationship either because they had separated or divorced their partners.

With regards to educational attainment the data specify that majority of them attended secondary school. This data was represented by 49.7% (196) of the respondents. Those who had primary education were 23.6% (93); respondents who had tertiary education were 16.5% (65), while those with non-formal education were 10.2% (40). Lastly, data on occupation of the respondents reveal that majority of them were farmers as indicated by 41.6% (164); respondents who were fishermen accounted for 21.1% (83) of the responses, while businessmen or women and traders constituted 15.2% (60) of the respondents. Furthermore, 8.9% (35) of the respondents were within the civil service category, 7.9% (31) of whom were teachers, while those that fell under the 'others' category numbered 5.3% (21).

Causes of Herders-Farmers Crises in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State

Table 2: Causes of herders-farmers crises in Agatu LGA according to the respondents

Causes of herders-farmers crises	Frequency (N=394)	Percent (%=100)
Collaboration with insiders to attack members of the community	305	77.4
Inability to settle differences arising between community members and Fulani herdsman	239	60.7
Refusal of herdsman to pay compensation to farmers on damaged crops	296	75.1
Population explosion	290	73.6
Illegal land deals among community members with the pastoralists	352	89.3
Availability of grasses for the cattle to feed	301	76.4
Denial of access to grazing fields	217	55.1
False allegations by Fulani herdsman on theft of cows by	315	79.9

community members		
Encroaching on cultivated lands and damaging of crops	384	97.5
Ill-conception of the Fulani herdsmen to retaliate at anytime	291	73.9
Pollution of water sources by cattle	106	26.9
Enactment of open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law	347	88.1
Ethno-religious sentiments	272	69.0
Lack of adequate security personnel to protect lives and property	351	89.1
Political differences	183	46.4

Source: **Field Survey, 2024.**

Data in table 2 show that herder-farmer crises in the study area was caused by encroachment on cultivated farm lands and damage to crops by herders' cattle. This was identified by 97.5% (384) of the respondents, while 89.3% (352) of the respondents noted that illegal land deals among community members with pastoralists was the cause of clashes between herders-farmers in the study area. Another 89.1% (351) of the respondents stated that inadequacy of security personnel to protect lives and property of the indigenes was the reason adduced by herders to attack the people of Agatu, while 88.1% (347) of the respondents blamed the enactment of the open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law by the Benue State Government for the attacks or crises between herders and farmers in the study area.

Other causes of herder-farmer crises in Agatu Local Government Area were the false accusation of cattle theft among community members, collaboration with insiders to attack members of the community, availability of grass for the cattle to feed, refusal of herdsmen to pay compensation to farmers on damaged crops, and ill-conception of the Fulani herdsmen to retaliate at point in anytime. These causes were indicated by 79.9% (315), 77.4% (305), 76.4% (301), 75.1% (298) and 73.9% (291) of the respondents, respectively.

Furthermore, 73.6% (290) of the respondents attributed the cause of herder-farmer crises to population increase, 69.0% (272) of the respondents attributed it to ethnic and cultural sentiments, 60.7% (239) of the respondents indicated that the inability to settle differences arising between community members and Fulani herdsmen was the cause of the crisis in Agatu Local Government Area. Denial of access to grazing fields as constituted by 55.1% (217) of the respondents was one of the triggers of herders-farmers crises in the study area. Finally, political differences and pollution of water sources by cattle were indicated by 46.4% (183) and 26.9% (106) of the respondents as the enablers of crises in the study area.

Effects of Herders-Farmers Crises on Food Security in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State

Table 3: Respondents' opinion on effects of herders-farmers crises on food availability in Agatu LGA

Effects on food availability	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Fear to cultivate crops on farm lands	145	36.8
High cost of herbicides and fertilizers	51	12.9
Insufficient labour force	102	25.9
Farms with overgrown weeds	42	10.7
Crops with stunted growth	15	3.8
Presence of insect-pest on crops	20	5.1
No response	19	4.8
Total	394	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The data in table 3 under the effects of herder-farmer crises on food availability as indicated by the respondents shows the effects to include fear to cultivate crops on farm lands, insufficient labour force, high cost of herbicides and fertilizers, farms with overgrown weeds, presence of pest on crops and crops with stunted growth. This data was therefore represented by 36.8% (145), 25.9% (102), 12.9% (51), 10.7% (42), 5.1% (20) and 3.8% (15) of the respondents respectively.

Table 4: Respondents' opinion on effects of herder-farmer crises on food accessibility in Agatu LGA

Effects on food accessibility	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Non-functional periodic markets	72	18.3
Absence of buyers	38	9.6
Fear of accessing farms	41	10.4
Unable to harvest farm crops	116	29.4
Destruction of crops by herdsmen and herds	106	26.9
No response	21	5.3
Total	394	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Data in table 4 show that herder-farmer crises also affected food accessibility, as. 29.4% (116) of the respondents indicated that because of the crises they were unable to harvest farm crops, 26.9% (106) of the respondents identified destruction of crops by herdsmen and their herds as effect of herders-farmers crises on food accessibility and 18.3% (72) of the respondents said that nonfunctional periodic markets is the reason food was not accessible in Agatu Local Government Area. Fear of accessing farmlands and absence of buyers, represented by 10.4% (41) and 9.6% (38) of the respondents were other side effects of herder-farmer crises on food accessibility in the study area.

Table 5: Respondents' opinion on effects of herders-farmers crises on food stability in Agatu LGA

Effects on food stability	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
High cost of food	219	55.6
Incessant herdsmen attack on farmers	95	24.1
No response	80	20.3
Total	394	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 5 presents data on the effects of herders-farmer crises on food stability in Agatu LGA. The effects were identified as high cost of food as a result of the incessant herdsmen's attacks on farm lands. Thus, 55.6% (219) and 24.1% (95) responses represented the two views by the respondents.

Discussion

The data on causes of farmers-herders' crises in Agatu LGA show that herders are easily drawn to an area due to the presence of some natural features such as water and pasture. There is also provision in the Nigerian Constitution that make reservation for grazing routes but due to the influx of herders from other neighbouring African countries and increasing herds, the grazing areas earmarked are not sufficient for the herds to graze on, thus leading to encroachment of other green areas which the farmers already have taken possession of. The encroachment therefore results to crises between the herders and farmers and caused massive destruction of food crops and death of livestock. This has been one of the reasons for the continuous escalation of the crises in Agatu and other places where such features are prominent. According to Ikyur (2022), suspected Fulani herdsmen have sent threat messages to residents in some communities in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State to vacate their ancestral homes or face serious attack. In the report, it was further revealed that the gunmen sent mercenaries and issued threat to people living in Torkula village in the same local government area to vacate the community or face the consequence. This statement by the author confirm fears of impending invasion of host communities by herdsmen to permanently takeover their ancestral lands

Another cause of herders-farmers crises in Agatu LGA was encroachment on cultivated farm lands and damaging of crops. The data agrees with Brottem (2021), who noted that the most common trigger of farmer-herder conflict is crop damage caused by grazing livestock. As the region's rural population has grown dramatically, many herders have seen their grazing lands put into cultivation thus making their livelihoods more challenging.

Illegal land deals among community members with the pastoralists also resulted to crises between herders-farmers in the local government. Unfortunately, such deals were leaked as the herdsmen refused to pay any additional amount of money for the coming years to graze their cattle. Therefore, the persuasion from the indigenous people for the herdsmen to vacate the lands often degenerates into crises. Inadequacy of security personnel to protect the lives and property of people of Agatu was indicated by the respondents as the reason for continuous attacks by herders on their communities and people.

The data show that the enactment as well as enforcement of open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law was a serious cause of concern and worry to the herders, and therefore they resisted the institution of the law. The enactment and enforcement of the law witnessed massive arrest of herdsmen's cattle, which they were expected to claim back by paying prescribed fees. According to Ojemire (2023), ranching is viewed suspiciously by many seminomadic pastoralists as it requires dramatic changes in lifestyle. That the initiative is strongly supported by anti-Fulani media voices makes its implementation even more polarizing.

The data indicate that false allegations by Fulani herdsmen on theft of cows by community members led to crises between herders and farmers in Agatu LGA. The data is in consonance with the view of Brottem (2021), who identified theft as another cause of herder-farmer crises. According to the author, livestock is the most valuable resource across many rural communities and is a common target of thieves. Increased frequency and magnitude of livestock theft is a cause of violent conflict. Armed groups use stolen cattle to fund their activities. The risk of theft causes herders to arm themselves to protect their animals. The increased demand for arms enriches criminal syndicates involved in arms trafficking. All these factors raise the risk of violent altercation. Meanwhile, aggrieved groups may perceive stealing livestock from communities with which they have been in conflict as a form of justice. This has led to a rapid expansion in the number of community-based armed groups to ostensibly guard against livestock theft, though such groups can also be engaged in reprisal violence.

One of the other predominant causes of herders-farmers crises in Agatu Local Government Area is denial of herders access to grazing fields by the farmers. This shows that grazing lands are grossly insufficient, which is largely as a result of population expansion. The lands which were not cultivated by the farmers are being under utilized. These lands

were used as grazing areas for the herders, but as the population increases, the lands become scarce and the need for tussle over ownership and usage arise. Denial of access to land most times has led to conflicts. The study by Accord (2018), a human rights forum confirmed this position. According to the forum, struggle over grazing land and scarce resources has over the years, resulted in perennial and growing violent conflicts in terms of frequency and intensity and geographic scope. Underpinning the escalation in frequency of conflicts in Nigeria is a confluence of environmental and demographic forces, especially desertification caused by climate change and population explosion.

The data on effects of farmers-herders' crises on food security specifically food availability indicate that due to crises between herders and farmers in Agatu LGA, there is likelihood that farmers will be afraid to cultivate crops on farm lands, especially those that are far away from their permanent or temporal residence of the farmers. Thus, this affects the quantity of food that would have been produced in that area. Due to continuous crises between herders and farmers, the labour force expected to have been working on the farms to make food available for the populace relocate to other peaceful environments where they can easily get hired labour, hence insufficient labour force also affects food availability. The quantity of food produced during crises cannot be the same as without crises. The data also show that because of crises between herdsman and farmers, herbicides and fertilizers are purchased at high cost, therefore most farmers who already are faced with crises or attacks by herdsman cannot afford such high cost of herbicides and fertilizers to apply on their farms. Moreover, the farms are small in size since most of them due to fear of being attack on their way to distant farms by herders lose interest. Also, there is virtually no market available for agrochemicals in crisis zones.

The data further indicate that cultivated farmlands of farmers were overgrown with weeds because they were afraid to work on their farms as attacks by herders were incessant, and also that the Fulani herdsman were always in possession of raffle, at least AK47 to strike at any time. Weeds usually compete with crops when they are not properly tackled. It affects the growth of the crops and by implication brings about scarcity or non-availability of food particularly in the area where there is crisis. Untreated weeds breed insects as well as pests that feed directly on the crop. That affects the nutritional composition and size of the crops. All these leads to stunted growth of crops and therefore affects the availability of food.

Existing literature indicates that conflicts reduce food security through their adverse effects on agricultural labour supply thereby cause drastic effect of food availability (Verwimp et al., 2015), production decisions (Arias et al., 2019), and outputs (George et al., 2021). The herder-farmer crisis is a health and human crisis threatening the food security and nutrition of millions of people in Nigeria as hundreds of millions of people suffer from hunger and malnutrition (WHO, 2016).

The data on effects of farmer-farmer crises on food accessibility suggest that due to the ravaging conflicts, it is challenging to harvest produce on farmlands within the crises area as those who dare to risk their lives may lose them. Thus accessing food becomes difficult because most crops planted are not easily harvested except with special arrangement involving security personnel for escort. These farm produces are not equally accessed because of the destruction by herdsmen. Periodic markets are originally meant to serve the interest of rural farmers and buyers from far and near, however crises disrupt such market activities. These are places selling and buying takes place, and such access is denied when shutdown. Most markets have been closed down due to crises, which affect access to food.

The data conform to Simmons' (2013), findings that crisis reduces physical security, even for people not directly engaged as combatants or victims of violence. Insecurity disrupts normal commerce, directly reducing flows of food through market channels, as marketing agents face high risks of losses through theft and high costs if they try to protect their stocks. Apenda (2016), stated that a total of 664.4 hectares (56.4%) of farmland were destroyed in Benue State between 2010 and 2015 in three local governments of Agatu, Guma and Logo as a result of farmers and herdsmen crises. This development poses a great danger to food production in Nigeria since the state is the hub of the nation's food security.

The data on farmers-farmers' crises and food stability indicate that high cost of food and incessant herdsmen attacks on farmers affects food stability. Similarly, Okoli and Handerior (2018) noted that inspite of the tremendous amounts of resources budgeted to maintain internal security, including food security in Nigeria by the government, it appears that the Fulani herder-farmer crises in Benue State is intractable leading to food shortage.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion of findings, the study concluded that the causes of herder-farmer crises in Agatu LGA revolved on encroaching on cultivated lands and damaging of crops, inadequacy of security personnel to protect lives and property, enactment of open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law and alleged cattle rustling. Others were, collaboration with insiders to attack members of the community, availability of grass for the cattle to feed, refusal of herdsman to pay compensation to farmers on damaged crops, ill-conception of the Fulani herdsman to retaliate at any time, population explosion, ethno-religious sentiments, etc.

The study further established that herder-farmer crises affect food security in Agatu LGA in three dimensions, namely availability, accessibility and stability. Under food availability, the study concluded that due to fear to cultivate crops on farm lands, insufficient labour force, high cost of herbicides and fertilizers, farms with overgrown weeds, presence of pest on crops and crops with stunted growth food caused by herders-farmers crises, food in the area was rarely available. For food accessibility, the study concluded that due to herder-farmer crises, farmers were unable to harvest farm crops, destruction of crops by herdsman and herds, non-functional periodic markets, fear of accessing farms and absence of buyers, food was not easily accessible. The study established that herder-farmer crises also affected food instability in Agatu Local Government Area due to high cost of food and incessant herdsman attack on farmers.

Recommendations

- (i) The Benue State Government, in collaboration with the Federal Government, should as a matter of urgency, deploy more security personnel to affected communities in Agatu. This will rekindle confidence in the farmers to return and cultivate their farmlands to boost food security in the study area.
- (ii) The Federal Government should provide adequate compensation to victims of herder-farmer crises in Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State
- (iii) The Benue State Government should empower farmers in Agatu Local government area with farm inputs.
- (iv) The National Assembly should amend the Constitution to accommodate the open grazing prohibition and ranches establishment law.
- (v) The two factions (farmers and herders) should always learn to reconcile when there is an infringement over the right of the other for peaceful coexistence.

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