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## THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDERS IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the contradictions of herdsmen and farmers conflicts in the North Central Nigeria, and its challenges on cattle rearing, peasant farmers and rural-urban migration. North Central Nigeria consists of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Plateau and Nassarawa states. These states have many peasant farmers, few civil servants and petty traders. Herdsmen and farmers conflicts have historical conditions in the form of internal invasion, expansion fuelled by Jihad wars, colonialism and search for greener pastures for the Fulani cattle. Parts of the contradictions are that the Chad basin had dried up and peasant farmers are increasing in large numbers, but the land is not expanding. Government policy on agriculture without encouraging merchandised farming is a challenge. A cross sectional research design was used to analyse data collected from three hundred and twenty one (321) survey participants in North Central Nigeria, in order to analyse the survey data and draft the final findings, the study made use of descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse the data of the study, the survey responses are graphically and tabular presentations, frequency, Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were used for pretest, T-statistics and probit regression analysis was used as an inferential tools and results interpreted for finally drafting the research findings. The analysis finds that farmer-herdsmen has 279.749 Likelihood ratio of effect on the development of North central Nigeria with the corresponding significance value of 0.000 with this we conclude that farmer-herdsmen are consequential product of weak institutions of the government in Nigeria, civil societies and opposition parties which affects the development of the Nation. The probit analysis of 144.617 (0.000) and t-statistics also shows that poor policy of government has a significant negative effect on food security and business activities, and infrastructures which are all aspects of national development in North central Nigeria. We conclude that, the Fulani herdsmen and farmers' conflicts should be resolved especially as we prepared for another phase of administration. The conflicts have negative consequences on food security, rural-urban migration, production of goods, services and the peaceful co-existence. We recommend stronger institutions, merchandised farming and ranching.

**KEYWORDS:** Resources use, Conflict, Herdsmen, Farmers, and National development

## INTRODUCTION

Conflict is inherent in every human society as a direct result of wants, desires, resources, scarcity of materials and authoritative allocation of value system. Consequently, the conflicts between herders and farmers are deeply rooted in a complicated web of historical conditions, land and other factors which will be discussed in this paper as we progress in our narrative assertion. Significantly speaking therefore, land is crucial to the herders and farmers (Enojo, 2017). However, and unfortunately, both are united by one factor, which is frustration and denial either by nature or human factors (Egwu, 2018). This has made herders and farmers to suffer from relative deprivation of, and from the rising expectations of demands, pressure, and other non-human conditions (Tom, 2005). These no doubt, have made lives miserable, conditions which promote anger, frustration and destruction. Land is not expanding, but herders and peasant farmers are increasing every day, probably to escape from hunger, poverty, under-development or conditions placed on humans by nature. Propelled by desertification, insecurity and the loss of grazing land to expanding settlements, the Southward migration of Nigeria's herders is causing violent competition over land, especially in the North Central part of Nigeria with local the farmers (FAO, 1997, Castano, 2018, and Gleick, 2000).

Violent conflicts between nomadic herders from far Northern Nigeria and Peasant farmer otherwise referred to as sedentary agrarian communities in the north central Nigeria have escalated in recent years and are spreading southward, threatening our collective co – existence, security and stability. We fear, that this might increase, as we prepare for the 2019 General Elections because of our fragile and unpredicted political architecture. With an estimated death toll of approximately 25,000 people in 2016, 28000 in 2017 and 3050 in 2018, these clashes are becoming as potentially dangerous as the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, and some parts of Nigeria. Unfortunately, no positive resolution except theories and paper works by both the federal and state levels and these have been poor (Law, 1997, and Idrissa, 2012).

Historically speaking, Nigeria is a nation known for her Oil and gas production; however, before the discovery of crude in large quantity in 1957, agriculture was the main source of our economy. Those periods, Nigeria was referred as a mono-economy, and accounted for the over 70 percent of labour force in agricultural products.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

When people engaged themselves in some forms of political, economic and social activities, there is likely to be conflict, this is because, conflicts is an inherent variable in human society. Consequently, the Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflict in Nigeria is land and water resource-based conflict in the north central part of Nigeria. The Fulani people are a mass population widely dispersed and culturally diverse in all of Africa, but most predominate in West Africa. They are the fourth deadliest militant group in the world with a record of 12,675 people in 2014, 16,357 in 2015, 25,789 in 2016, 27,763 in 2017 and 28, 980 in 2018. The federal government has stated that inquiries have established that

most of the herdsmen involved in these clashes are not Nigerian citizens and due to the ECOWAS Trans-human Protocol, it cannot stop non-citizens of Nigeria from grazing their cattle. This conflict is unethical to democratization process and development. Nigeria had experienced two types of colonialisms, the first being the spread of Islam through Jihad war by Othman Dan Fodio and the British government. The incessant attacks have caused a loss of 17billion dollars in the last five years, and the economic impacts include impeding trade practices, reduction in crop yield, displacement of farmers, loss of lives and properties, loss of products in storage and destruction of public and private buildings.

## OBJECTIVE

- i. Examine how lack of stronger institutions, opposition parties and civil society are direct consequences on the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in North Central Nigeria.
- ii. Determine how the relative roles of government policies on agriculture and climate change promote the conflicts.
- iii. Suggest other alternatives approaches that will be adopted by leaders at all level of governance to make herdsmen and farmers co-habit without conflicts.

## Hypotheses

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Weak institutions are not direct consequences on the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers' in North Central Nigeria.

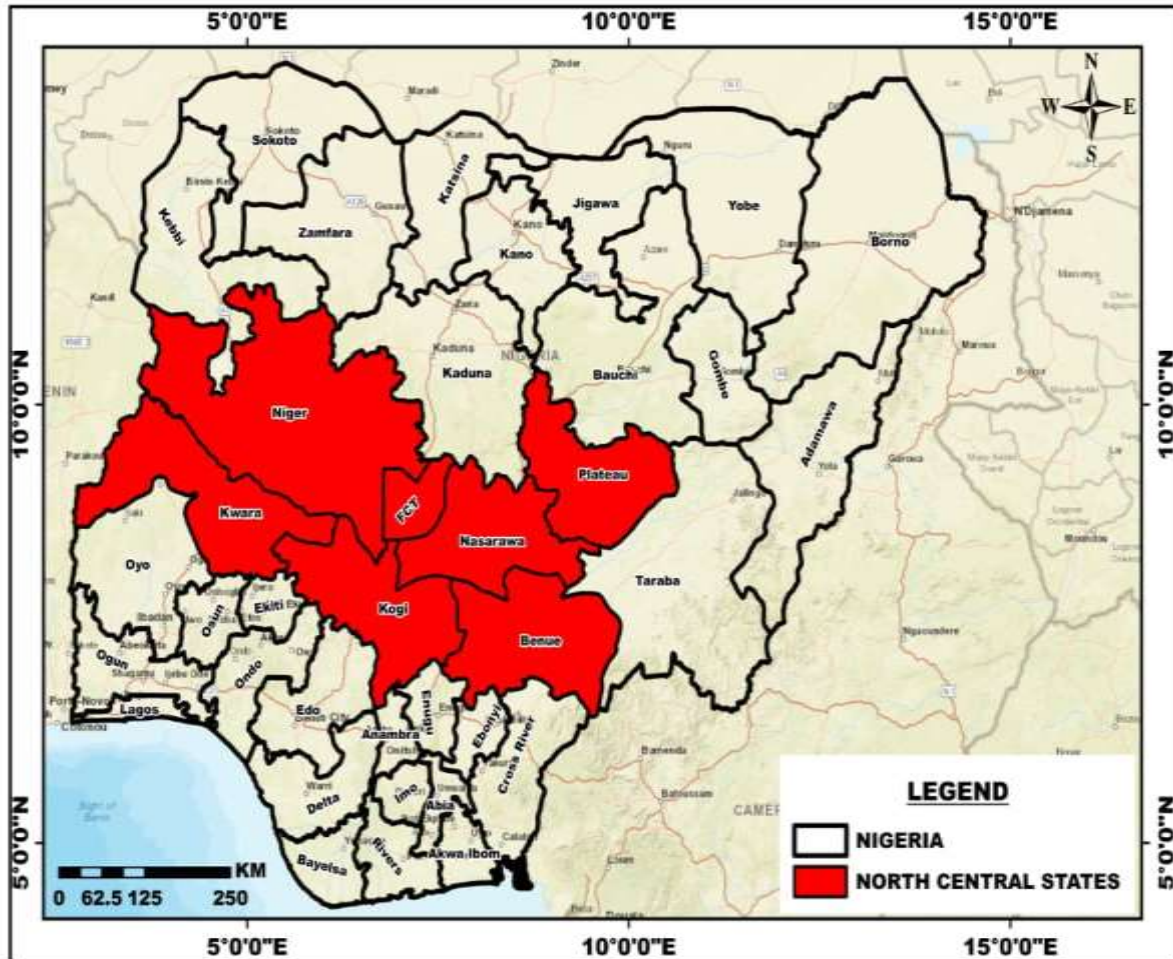
**H<sub>2</sub>:** Poor government policies on agriculture and climate change have no significant impact on herdsmen and farmers' conflict in North Central Nigeria.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Famers-herdsmen conflicts have no significant effect on the socio-economic development of host community

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Settings

The North Central (often spelled North-Central) is one of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, representing the majority of the country's Middle Belt. It is made up of six states: Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau, as well as the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria. The North Central region spans the entire length of the country, from the border with Cameroon to the border with Benin. The Guinean forest-savanna mosaic dominates the landscape, with the western portion falling into the West Sudanian savanna ecoregion. Plateau State is also named for the Jos Plateau, which is located in the zone's east-central region. The region has a population of over 20 million people, accounting for approximately 11% of the entire population of the country. The Federal Capital Territory's capital, Abuja, as well as Ilorin and Jos, are the most populated cities in the North Central, as well as the sixth, seventh, and eighth most populous cities in Nigeria, (see fig.1).



Sources: Coordinate Research Map Using ARC Map (2023)

Quantitative data from survey participants was analyzed using a cross-sectional design. This research examined herdsmen and farmers' conflicts in North Central Nigeria and their effects on food production and services, using a two-stage sampling method to survey residents in the sampled areas. WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and in-person recruitment were used for the study. Participants are 18-year-old male and female host community inhabitants. The researcher contacted participants before distributing questionnaires to ensure they returned them quickly. 350 people received questionnaires. 321 people completed the survey questionnaire. Thus, the research examined 321 participant responses. To analyze and write up survey results, the study made use of descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse the data of the study, the survey responses were graphically and tabularly presented using frequency, Variance Inflation Factors (VIF), T-statistics and probit regression analysis was used as an inferential tools and results interpreted for finally drafting the research findings.

## RESULT AND FINDINGS

### Demographic Features

Findings shows that 11.5% of the total respondents are of age between 15 and 18, 21.8% are between age 19 and 22, 25.9% are between age 23 and 26, 20.6% are between age 27 and 30, while the remaining 20.2% of the total respondents are above 30 years of age. This implies that the respondents are adult hence will understand the impact of their input on the subject of research. The result of the gender socio-demographic characteristics as presented in Table 2, shows that majority of the respondents interviewed were male (79.1%), however a low proportion of the respondents were females (20.9%), never the less female were still represented in the analysis. Findings in table 3 revealed that 61.1% (196) of the total respondents were students in an affected institution, 20.6% (66) were staff, 14.0% (45) of the total respondents were farmers/herders/Artisan/business operators in the study areas, while the remaining 4.4% (14) of the total respondents were victims in the affected communities. This implies that the respondent has experience on the subject matter. Low level of education no doubt affects the level of technology adoption and skill acquisition. It may also constitute a challenge to the effective security of a community, this research has taken proper steps in accessing respondents to make sure the respondents are educated enough to answer the questions pose by this research. All the respondents have an educational qualification with most of the respondents having or undergoing a degree programme, (see table 4).

Farmer's Herdsmen Crisis lowered life expectancy, increased crime, death, and basic utilities. According to Adebayo and Olaniyi (2008), conflict frequently leads to disunity, violence, disagreement, and bloodshed because parties struggle to attain their goal. Actors compete for scarce resources by weakening or eliminating others. As in the Balkans, resource conflicts in the tropics have caused deaths, property damage, and environmental degradation (Tenuche and Ifetimehin 2009). Farmers-pastoralist rivalry disrupts business and slows progress. Discourages foreign investment and economic activity. As in the Balkans, resource conflicts in the tropics have caused deaths, property damage, and environmental degradation (Tenuche and Ifetimehin 2009). Junaidu (2009) noted that population displacement due to land conflicts has impacted northeast Nigerian customs and habits. Low agricultural productivity caused starvation and sickness, and economic loss may weaken national purpose and alter the usual balance of economic and political authority amongst ethnic groups in the area by pushing people to flee. Fulani herders and farmers confrontations, including ethnic tension, may lead to a state of emergency, increased calls for session, and regionalization and tribalization of national politics.

Herder attacks have alerted Nigerians to the threat they pose to national progress and togetherness. Nigeria is a fragile union of culturally different ethnic groups due to its ethnic consciousness and ethno-religious divisions (Ovuakporie and Agbakwuru, 2016). Other factors included loss of livestock, displacement of victims, collapse of social activities like buying and selling, underdevelopment, death and property loss, poverty, and host community tension. Most respondents said farmers-pastoralist conflict threatens national security.

The inefficiency of the security forces (82%), lapses in the policies introduced (96%), delay by the law court in passing judgment (96%), distrust among the group (96%), corrupt nature of the leaders of both groups (91%) and corrupt nature of community leaders (82%) were all identified as the reasons why the government has not been successful in taming the conflict between herdsmen and farmer.

### **Variance inflation factor (VIF) Analysis for multi-collinearity Test**

We investigated the validity of poor institutions as direct effects on herdsmen-farmer conflicts in North Central Nigeria, which affect food security (food production) in accordance with accepted principles (Barki, et al., 2007). We calculated each indicator's variance inflation factor (VIF) to test multi-collinearity. As indicated in Table 5, all VIFs varied from 1.074 for variables under consideration, both factors were below the 3.33 criterion, showing no multi-collinearity. Second, we assessed the significance of the indicators (see Table 6) and found that almost all paths (i.e., the relative contribution) that weak institutions, opposition parties, civil society, poor governmental policies on agriculture and climate change negatively affected national development activities. Low farm and animal yield due to the effects/fear of conflict, rural-urban migration, schools were shut down due to the effects/fear of farmers-herdsmen conflict, farmers-herdsmen conflict destroys the school properties, farmers-herdsmen conflict reduces population in the host community, and farmers-herdsmen conflict reduces business activities in the host community. All these factors show to be significantly affecting development in north central negatively and has a very low tolerance from national development indices, it further pose a low collinearity tolerance as it had an important absolute contribution to farmers-herdsmen conflict effects. Since we wanted to explore the effect of herdsmen and farmers' conflicts in North Central Nigeria and their contradictions and implications especially on food production and services in north central Nigeria potential relationship between the likelihood of farmers-herdsmen conflict and the development in North central Nigeria, we decided to keep the indicators in our study.

### **Test of Hypothesis**

The wald chi-square statistics were used to test these hypotheses. We compare the value of the chi-square that was seen with the value that was found to be significant. In a two-tailed test, the number shows the critical area. If Sig. is less than 0.05, we don't accept H<sub>0</sub> and say the number is significant. And if Sig is greater than 0.05, we accept H<sub>0</sub> and say the value is not statistically significant.

### **H<sub>1</sub>: Weak institutions are not direct consequences on the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in North Central Nigeria.**

From the analysis result in table 7 the calculated chi-square for the variable, lack of political will of the government, compromised security architecture, opposition parties and civil society is 279.749 while the corresponding significance value of 0.000 from this, we concluded that sig < 0.05 and reject the null hypothesis thereby concluding that Weak institutions are direct consequences on the conflicts between herdsmen and farmers' in North Central Nigeria and thus affecting national development.

This agreed with the findings of Sanchi, et al. (2022) who found that Nigeria's widespread herdsman-farmer conflict and criminal activity threaten national security, food production, peace, education, and the economy. Many stakeholders' plague-fighting efforts failed.

### **H<sub>2</sub>: Poor government policies on agriculture and climate change have no significant impact on herdsman and farmers' conflict in North Central Nigeria**

From the analysis result in table 8, the calculated chi-square for the variable impact of governmental policies on cattle colony, cattle ranching, ruga amongst others is 144.617 while the corresponding significance value is 0.000 from this, we concluded that  $\text{sig} < 0.05$  and reject the null hypothesis thereby concluding that poor government policies on agriculture and climate change have a significant impact on herdsman and farmers' conflict in North Central Nigeria. This coincides with the findings of (Igwe, 2021; Isenyo, 2021; Maishanu, 2020) which state that the poor policy rule of government untoward development of insecurity (farmers/herdsman, banditry and kidnapping) has undermined developmental strides. This situation has become highly alarming and worrisome to the society.

### **H<sub>3</sub>: Farmers-herdsman conflicts have no significant effect on the socio-economic development of host community**

From the analysis result in table 9 the calculated chi-square for the variable effect of farmers-herdsman conflict on business activities in the host community is 685.276 while the corresponding significance value is 0.000 from this, we concluded that  $\text{sig} < 0.05$  and reject the null hypothesis thereby concluding that farmers-herdsman conflict has a significant effect on the socio-economic development of host community.

### **Key Findings**

1. Weak institutions contributed significantly to farmers-herdsman crisis in North central Nigeria, and lack of political will of the government in implementing long lasting policies for farmers-herdsman conflict resolution.
2. The study revealed that the farmer-herder in the study area affect agricultural productivity via crop damage by cattle, blockage of cattle routes, watering point and encroachment of cattle route by farmers. The study found that, loss of crop, loss of animal, displacement of people and sometimes loss of lives as a result of the conflict as the major effect of the conflict decline in social activities, business, rural-urban migration destruction of health care centers, markets schools which are aspect of rural development and industrialization to a great extent affects rural development.
3. Health care services were severely affected in the rural areas under study and farmer within the locality suffers from this lack of poor health care services
4. Educational sector also suffers immensely as schools in these rural areas were shut down due to this crisis thereby undermining rural educational development which advances literacy level which is core indices of rural development.

5. The findings of study clearly shows that the intensification of Farmer-herder conflict were attributed to some factors such as high level of poverty, illiteracy, weak security personnel at the border, politicking of policies to combat the conflict and Farmer-herder conflicts has had severe attack on agricultural productivity, health social, economic, environment and educational development in the study area. For example, the environmental impact of farmer-herder conflict includes; destruction of Soil for Agricultural production, and health development.
6. On the impact on educational development, Farmer-herder conflict has affected educational development in the study area negatively resulting to mass exodus of intellectual's closure of secondary schools and has aggravated the illiteracy level in the area. For example, many nurseries and primary school and secondary schools were close down due to the mass exodus of tutors and students from the institution as a result of incessant attack of Farmer-herder conflict, and same applies to many primary and secondary schools.
7. Furthermore, Farmer-herder conflict has increase poverty in the region, increase unemployment rate, affect access to food/food security, affect access to basic life necessities like health care delivery, infrastructural development in the study area and has resulted in mass relocation of people from the study area to saver places.
8. The above findings are in agreement with Dauda (2014), position that the social impact is so devastating that it has dented the northern region as the bedrock of terrorism.
9. Fights between farmers and herders are bad and will hurt Nigeria's national unity if they aren't stopped soon. Without a question, these fights waste resources and can put different tribes on the verge of war with each other. It means that the leaders of the country need to act quickly. Having this information should encourage all parties, especially herders and farmers, to work for cultural, economic, social, religious, and political development.
10. Most fights in rural areas are about how people make a living. The results show that, in addition to some structural factors, disputes are caused by pressure on farmers' and herders' ways of making a living and competition between them. In particular, the study found that the main causes are breaking agreements or rules, interfering with sources of income, and cultural differences. As a result, these things have an effect on agricultural output, the education and health of farmers, and their whole way of life, including their physical, natural, human, financial, and social assets.
11. Farmers' ways of making a living, their food security, and their health and safety are threatened and harmed, which leads to poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, bad health, and more conflicts. So, solving conflicts in farming communities in a way that is good for the economy, agriculture, and people's lives in the long run is very important.

### **Discussion/Implication of the Research findings**

The study looked at how farmers and herders in north central Nigeria affect the development of the country as a whole. The FGD reports came to the conclusion that the farmers/herders are becoming more of a problem because of the high number of IDPs, people who have been forced to leave their



homes, unemployment, a weak security system, poverty, the porous nature of Nigeria's borders, the spread of weapons, and the lack of control over some areas that the herders use as hiding places. So, the study shows that there have been a lot of attacks by herders on cities, which have led to deaths, property damage, cattle theft, and the destruction of farm produce, as well as security problems in the area. The paper concludes that there has been a lot of tension and instability in the north center of Nigeria because of the high number of farmers and herders fighting with each other. This has led to a lot of theft and death, which has put the whole area in a state of danger. In terms of relocation, separating a person from his or her family by force not only traumatizes the person, but it also upsets the lives of the victim, his or her family, and the whole community. Families of victims often talk about how they couldn't settle down because their loved one was somewhere else and how they were always sad and sick. Some of the victim's family members become addicted to pills and booze, feel suicidal, can't do their jobs right, feel helpless, and feel like they've lost their loved one forever.

In the North Center of Nigeria, there have been a lot of farmers vs. herders fights, banditry, kidnappings, and kidnappings of students with ransom demands in the last few years. This has confused parents, security officials, and both the federal and state governments. In fact, it has become such an existential danger that national dailies break even by writing interesting, but unfortunately styled, stories about it. The common way of talking about this threat comes from a desire to make money.

So, according to Akinkuolie Rasheed (2018), the fights between herders and farmers in some states in Nigeria, such as Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau, Kwara, Taraba, and Kogi, shouldn't be made worse by inciting violence or saying things that aren't appropriate. Even though the federal, state, and local governments are all trying to solve these problems, it seems that a lack of political will on the part of all of them has made the results pointless and without a long-term answer. There is proof that either all law enforcement agencies or all leaders were in on it, making peaceful remedies impossible. There is evidence that people did not handle the issues well.

The government set up a committee to find a solution to the problem of herdsmen encroaching on farmland. The committee has to come up with a solution that will deal with both the problem of herdsmen encroaching on farmland and the problem of incitement. It also has to come up with realistic plans to fully integrate the herdsmen into Nigerian society. In the 21st century, letting animals graze on cow trails is, at the very least, an old idea. So, the focus should be on modernizing cattle farming, which will bring the most benefits in terms of job creation, food security, and ending farmer's milk and dairy products in the long run. This will help fight hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, and support social harmony.

Also, Sanogo (2018) says, "India is a good example. Every year, it makes 163 million tons of milk, which is 10% of the world's production." In India, cattle are raised in villages and farmer's groups. Most of the time, they are raised for milk, and only rarely for meat. In India, people feel so close to

cows that they call them "mother." In a way, this is true, since the cow feeds and cares for the country's huge population.

The European model for a dairy farm also has small paddocks, most of which aren't much bigger than a football field. The food for the animals is either grown on site or on farms that only grow hay, grains, and other food for animals. The milk from these farms is collected, pasteurized, and packed in local dairy plants. It is then used to make baby food, cheese, yogurt, butter, and other dairy goods that are sold locally and around the world. The usual milk production of a cow in Europe is between 40 and 50 liters per day, while the milk production of a Nigerian cow is only 1 to 2 liters per day. This is because Nigerian cows are poorly fed, have bad health, and are stressed out on the grazing trails.

Cows give milk for about 3–7 years, after which they are killed for their meat. Most of the money made in the business comes from dairy products, which are used more than 15,000 times per milking cow per year, according to some estimates. In Nigeria, cattle are mostly raised for their meat and only a little bit for their milk. This means that most of the money made in the business comes from the meat. So, the attention should be on milk production, which could make a big difference in the economy of the country and stop the constant fights between herders and farmers.

Primitive or crude methods of production, preservation, and final consumption of these products should be discouraged. We feared that, there might be some initial challenges, such as adaptation, required funds for infrastructural development of areas mapped out for ranching, dams and provision of constant power. If politics is removed from all these envisaged challenges, we might get closer to reducing the conflicts between the Fulani herders and the local farmers. We there conclude that the herdsman and farmers' conflicts in the north central Nigeria is a reality, and have its roots in non-availability of land space, water, poor policies on agriculture over the years. Aside these are other factors related to acquisition of power either by the colonialists or Jihadists. Finally, some of these conflicts have historical, political and economic origins.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study therefore recommends the following solution to combating banditry and kidnapping activities;

- i. Institutions of government should be made stronger, our political parties should have sophisticated ideology, the media should be objective, and civil society must be vibrant and robust to be able to address issues-based conflicts which have direct consequences on our collective co-existence and that could impede infrastructural development and national interest without hiding under the ideological cover of elitism, religion and ethnicity.
- ii. Alternatives solutions should include ranching and mechanized farming system, as this approach will not only reduce incessant conflicts, but provide employment for youths, promote our IGR, GDP foods, wealth generation and the purchasing power parity of naira.
- iii. The various other ECOWAS countries like Mali, Chad, Niger, and those with connected history

with the river Niger such as Sudan, Guinea, and Egypt assist by establishing or rehabilitate dams for irrigation and other purposes for the benefits of mankind.

- iv. The Minister of Interior should discuss the rising number of irregular migrants transiting Niger, Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Chade, and Cameroon with the neighboring Nigerian government. Thus, the ECOWAS treaty must be reviewed as it restricts free movement into Nigeria.

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