

Insecurity and Food Crisis in Nigeria: Examining the Implications of Herdsmen's Impunity on Agricultural Stability in Ekiti State

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ABSTRACT

The study examines security challenges and food crisis in the Nigerian state in recent time. The study seeks to investigate the extent to which the incessant attack in farmers adversely impacted on the production of food. The study adopts the Democratic Peace theory and Relative Deprivation theory as framework of analysis. Secondary data was mostly used in the study due to the nature of research problems. While interview was employed in the study for primary data. The interviews were conducted in the mostly affected Local Government Areas in Ekiti State, such as Ikole, Oye, Ise-Orun, Ilejemeje, Ikere and Emure LGAs. Five (5) interviewees were selected from each of the six (5) LGAs to elicit information from them. The paper argues that the abysmal failure of government to address challenges, such as unemployment, poverty and clear distinction between indigenship and settlers among ethnic nationalities, ultimately resulted to indiscriminate grazing of animals on farmland and violent crimes against the peasant farmers all over the country. The study further reveals that unwholesome activities of militia groups resulted to total discouragement on the part of peasants who would have invested to much on their crops and plantation only to find it destroyed by another group of selfish individuals. To avoid acute shortage of food in circulation and hungers, the study recommends the formulation and effective implementation of policies and programmes capable of addressing the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria, especially farmers.

KEYWORDS: Security, Insecurity, Food Crisis, Herdsmen, Food Production

INTRODUCTION

After independence in Nigeria, successive Nigeria government have planned various agricultural programmes. The successes of such programmes would be measured in term of meeting the objectives of satisfying the needs of the majority of Nigeria population. Obviously, the successes will ensure that political peace and stability can be measure in terms of food sufficiency or insufficiency. Basically, there is a fundamental synergy between food and security. For where people are well fed, there is bound to be peace (Oni 1936). In this study, one would critically examine the issue of food crisis and its practical implication on political climate and economic instability of Nigeria nascent democracy. This is because the socio-political and economic stability of Nigeria intended good governance vis-à-vis the nature of state policies as well as nature of politicking imported upon food which is of greate signifance for this study or the rationality of food crisis in relation to insecurity in Nigeria based on same theoretical explanation, that (i) food is life

and hence, food is an instrument of national power (ii) food is used to achieve political ends, because if people are well fed, they would be ready to contribute to the effective implementation of governmental policies. The summary of this goes with adage that “a hungry man is an angry man”. Hence government may use food resources in international diplomacy for two purposes, viz to influence international economic and political relationship going beyond food markets. The use of food resources therefore is influence once international relationship has serious consequences on state political transformation or deformation (Bamisaye, 1987). For example, field investigation such as Idachabo, (1982), Okoire (1985), Falola and Inhovbere (1985) etc have shown that dependence on imported food from advanced countries to developing ones fail to help the latter because it is necessity based on one fundamental theoretical fallacy that such flow of food weakened the ability of the recipient countries to produce.

Bamisaye (1982) opines that the peripheral status of Nigeria combines with the inefficiency and corruption of the custodians of state power and policy makers, the deepening dependence on oil rents as well as inability or unwillingness (or both) to mobilize rural and urban food producers gives a picture of state fragility. The fragility coupled with generalized tendency to down-play the linkage between food dependence and state insecurity generates a crisis situation in Nigeria.

Historically, Nigeria like most developing countries of Africa, has faced in the past decade the problem of steady decline in the level of local food supply. The situation is serious enough when reviewed within the context of corresponding changes in the demographic patterns that hitherto characterised there societies. Readily available and relatively cheap medical facilities have drastically reduced, ante-natal and infant mortality rates, while the life span of the average Nigerian has further extended. It is within this context of steady rise of population that Nigeria experienced corresponding drift from the traditional tedious peasant Agriculture practiced by well over eighty-five percent of the population. Agriculture that had been the mainstay of Nigerian economy over the years suffered serious neglect and set-back, to the point where a country like Nigeria that had been self-sufficient in internal food supply and exporter of same and cash crops, become net importer of same and cash crops, become net importer of these commodities.

The food problem in Nigeria is further compounded by the fact that staggering losses are incurred by local farmers as a result of poor and in most cases, total absence of effective storage facilities for crops produced. Aside, the major problem of farmer in Nigeria contemporary time is the regular attacks on farmers by the herdsmen that are grazing the cows on farm-lands. In this ugly scenario, many crops were destroyed by cows and many farmers were killed. This is a result of ethnic problem in Nigeria, is indeed the national question around which a great deal of all our national life revolves, and in the nature of which all sorts of crimes have been perpetrated against the nation. It is the issue which has produced food crisis in Nigeria to the extent that farmers can no longer work on their farms peacefully because of fear of their crops no being destroyed, if not being killed by herdsmen who forcefully want to feed their cows on the farm plantations.

Huntington (2004) observed that when people claim the indigeneship of an area, they mean to convey a sense of ownership of the geographical space as the original inhabitants (son of the soil, autochthones, fatherland or motherland) in a place where they line origin and whom they are. Once this claim based on communal linkages are actuated, those who are not so connected to the earliest inhabitants become excluded from rights of citizenship. This insecurity tension and conflicts are sown and nurtured in the process. Nigeria experience of conflict among tribes/ethnic group started

in 1930's when some Yoruba entered kolanut trade competition with the Hausa who virtually had monopoly over the trade. Also when the Yoruba made an unsuccessful attempt to displace the Hausa as cattle landlords around the same period, the latter apprehended for support not as cattle landlords but as Hausa. From then, ethnic chauvinism started in the cattle market. Ake (1981) submits that conflicts that have taken place in multiethnic states in the country such as Plateau, Kaduna, Taraba and others have followed the ethnic trajectory, but the main causal factors include competition for economic space. The immediate cause of the 1992 Zango-Kataf dispute was the decision by Kataf Local Government Area which for the first time was headed by a Kataf man to transfer their market to a new site.

The implementation of various policies that are related to food production in Nigeria has not shown that peasant's interest is fully taken care of (Bamisaye & Bankole 1985). Poor peasants as they get cheated often confronted the government to demand for their rights. Such confrontation according to Nkenna Nzinoro (1985) led to a government that its legitimacy would be badly eroded. This he claimed to have contributed to numerous contradictions and crises which afflicted the Nigerian society, such as hunger in particular, inflation, disease, prostitution, crime, insecurity, rural-urban migration, nepotism, worker unrest, increase demand for salary, increase bureaucratic inefficiency. The light of this met impact of these was that the country moved towards disintegration rather than peace and stability.

The replication of incidents of insecurity in Plateau State where settlers want to take over the land of 'native' indigenes has transcended to Benue State in recent time where farmers can no longer go to farm because of fear of being killed by herdsmen. It is unfortunate the state whose slogan is "food basket of the nation" can no longer feed themselves talkless of providing for others. The spill-over effect of these regular attack on the farmers and farmland is all over the country, because the peasants in Benue State are all over the places in the South-West begging for farmland. Be as it may, the ugly incidence has been extended to Ekiti State in recent time.

However, security is an essential concept is commonly associated with the alleviation of threats to cherish values especially the survival of individuals, groups or objects in the near future. Therefore, security is survival-plus and the herd 'plus' could be understood from standpoint of being able to enjoy freedom from life-determining threats and some life choices (Both, 2007). In May 1999, Nigeria's return to civil rule was accompanied with fresh hope and went optimism. This optimism is predicated on the fact that democracy would guarantee freedom, liberty and equity and enhances security of lives and property, which would induced repositions development trajectories and sustainability.

One of the major setbacks to agricultural development, which will translate to adequate food production in Nigeria is insecurity until very recently, plethora of explanations on the crawling pace of food production in Nigeria tends to pay infinitesimal attention to the centrality of security to food crises. It is no surprise therefore that since 1999 when Nigeria returned to civil rule, insecurity tends to have hampered food production. Security is evidently the pillar upon which every meaningful development could be achieved and sustained.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF EKITI STATE

Ekiti was an independent Yoruba ethnic-group prior to the British conquest. It is one of the many Yoruba States in what is today Nigeria. The Ekiti people as a nation and districts of Yoruba race had her progeny in Oduduwa, the father and progenitor of Yoruba race. Just like every major sub-ethnic division in Yorubaland. Ekiti has her origin from Ile-Ife (the cradle land of Yorubaland). The olofin, one of the Oduduwa has sixteen (16) children (male) while fourteen out of these children left ile-Ife and later settled in the present Ekitiland. They discovered that there were many hills in the place and they said in their mother's language that this is "ile olokiti" the land of hills. Therefore, the Okiti later blended to Ekiti derived her name through hills (<http://www.ekitinigeria.net>-2016).

The state is mainly on upland zone, rising over 250 metres above sea level. It lies on an area underlain by metamorphic rock. It is generally undulating location within a characteristic landscape that consists of old plains broken by step-sided out-crops that may occur singularly or groups or ridges. Such rocks out-crops exist mainly at Aramoko, Efon-Alaaye, Ikere, Igbara-Odo and Okemesi-Ekiti. The state is dotted with rigged hills, notably ones being Ikere-Ekiti in the South, Efon-Alaaye on the Western boundary and Ado-Ekiti hills in the centre. The state enjoys tropical climate with two seasons. These are the rainy season (April- October) and the dry season (November-March). Temperature between 21°C and 28°C with high humidity (Bamidele, 2017). The south westernly wind and the northeast trade winds blow in the rainy and dry (Harmattan) seasons respectively. Tropical forest exist in the south, while savannah occupies the northern peripheries. The indigenous population are mainly peasant farmers who live in rural communities and speak the same language with minor dialectical real differences. For this reason, Ekiti State has been described as very unique in composition as it is the only state in Nigeria with homogenous ethnic group (Adesina, 2008).

Food Insecurity and Agricultural Sector

Nigeria's agricultural sector remains the backbone of the nation's economy, not only as a major contributor to the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) but also a vital source of employment and livelihood for a majority of Nigerians, particularly in rural areas. According to the World Bank (2020), agriculture contributes about 24% of Nigeria's GDP, providing jobs for over 70% of the labour force either directly or indirectly. Beyond its economic rules, agriculture is central to food production and rural development and national stability. Crops such as yam, cassava, maize, rice and millet are staple foods cultivated across the country, while livestock rearing and fisheries further enhance the sector's diversity and importance.

Despite this potential, Nigeria's agricultural sector is confronted with a range of challenges that threaten food security. Climate change has altered rainfall patterns, causing flooding in some areas and prolonged droughts in others, reducing crop yield (FAO, 2021). Similarly, infrastructural deficits, such as poor road networks, inadequate storage facilities and insufficient irrigation systems, limit both production and distribution efficiency (World Bank, 2020). These structural problems such as rural insecurity, land tenure disputes, and weak policy implementation. The food insecurity in Nigeria, therefore is not just an agricultural challenge but a national development concern with social, economic and political implications.

Food crisis/insecurity is a situation where there is a severe shortage of food, resulting to hunger, malnutrition and in extreme cases, when any of the four key dimensions of food security- Availability, access, utilization or stability- is compromised. These dimensions provide a framework for understanding the different ways in which food insecurity manifests.

- a) Availability crisis occurs where there is insufficient food production, often caused by natural disasters, conflicts, or low agricultural productivity. This leads to a direct shortage of staple crops and other essential food items (FAO, 2021).
- b) Access crisis/crises when households cannot afford or physically reach food, even when it is available. High levels of poverty, unemployment and inflation often exacerbate this form of crisis (World Bank, 2020).
- c) Utilization crisis happens when food quality and nutrition are inadequate to meet dietary needs. Poor food diversity, micronutrient deficiencies, and unhealthy consumption pattern contribute to malnutrition, particularly among children and vulnerable groups (UNICEF, 2023).
- d) Stability crisis relates to disruptions of food supply over time, where short-term shocks- such as economic downturns, political instability, or climate-induced undermine long-term food security (FAO, 2021).

In Nigeria context, food crises have become increasingly evident in recent years through rising food prices, wide spread hunger, and heavy depending on food import (World Bank, 2020). The situation is worsened by conflicts particularly in the middle belt region- ones considered Nigerian's food basket- where persistent farmer-herders clashes have led to the destruction of farmland, reduced crop yields and displacement of farming communities (Adisa & Adekunle, 2010; International crises Group, 2018). This is not only undermines agricultural production but also triggers food inflation, further hunting access for poor households.

Overview of Fulani Herdsmen

The Fulani also known as the Fulbe or Penl, are of the largest and most widely spread ethnic groups in West Africa, with an estimated population of over 20 million spread across countries such as Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Cameroun, Guinea and Niger (International crises Group, 2018). In Nigeria, they are permanently in the Northern region but have historically maintained a transnational presence due to their nomadic lifestyle.

Traditionally, the Fulani are known for their pastoralist heritage, with cattle rearing serving as their main occupation and cultural identity marker. This form of pastoralist not only provides milk, meat and hides but also represents wealthy and social status within Fulani communities (Okoli and Helle, 2014). Their nomadic way of life is sustained by seasonal migration patterns, as they move along established routes in search of water grazing land for their livestock. Such mobility has historically allowed them to adapt to the ecological condition of the Sahel and Savannah zones of West Africa.

In Nigeria, Fulani herdsmen are prominently located in the North, particularly in states such as Sokoto, Katsina and Kano. However, due to climate change, desertification and shrinking pastures in the North, many herders have migrated southward into the middle belt and southern states where grazing resources are relatively more abundant (FAO, 2021). This Southward migration has

increasingly brought them into conflict with sedentary farming communities, as the competition over land and water resources intensifies.

Beyond their economic role, the Fulani maintain a rich cultural heritage marked by distinctive dress styles, language (fulfude), and social practices. Their identity as pastoralist continues to shape both their livelihoods and their interactions with host communities. But as it may, in recent decades, pressure from population growth, land degradation and insecurity have disrupted traditional migration pattern, leading to violent clashes between Fulani and local farmers (International crises Group, 2018).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A hungry and unenlightened nation is a weak one while any region subject to famine or starvation is an unsecured one no matter how vast and populated it is. Such region will continue to be constantly under threats and exposed to external penetration either by ways of aids, relief materials or other forms of assistance presumably put together to alleviate the sufferings of the people. It is perhaps in realising all the above mentioned facts account for every country to place great emphasis on self-sufficiency in food production.

Nigeria in 1976 started to realise that everything was not well with us as a nation in food production. General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1976 tried to stem the decline of the agricultural sector in our national economy; and more importantly, stop the perennial problem of short supply in staple food items in our local markets through the "Operation Feed the Nation [OFN]) the programme sought to emphasise the need to generate interest in farming amongst Nigerians. Further to redeem oldest human vocation from the contempt it undeservedly received. It also sought to disseminate modern inputs and techniques to agriculture to our farmers and generally increase the local food production. The civilian administration led by president Alhaji Shehu Shagari came in boldly with capital intensive projects and a whole range of 5 strategies, to return agriculture to its pre-eminent position through Green Revolution. Successful governments after this introduce River Basins targeted towards increase production of foods through Nigeria local farmers. Thereafter succeeding governments have been introducing different kinds of policies and huge budget allocation towards food production in Nigeria.

Most of these programmes and policies failed because all these resulted to massive exploitation of public funds by ways of making the funds and materials intended to encourage local farmers ended up in the hands of politicians that are not farmers. Aside using public funds for political patronage, the peasants that are ready to invest all what they have boost their agriculture are regularly attack by Fulani herdsmen and destroy their farmland without canter. It is against this backdrop that the study seeks to examine the impact of impunity of Fulani herdsmen on food crisis in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of the study is to evaluate the level of impunity of Fulani herdsmen and how to adversely affect food production in Nigeria, especially in Ekiti State. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the impact of insecurity caused by herdsmen on food crisis in Nigeria, especially in Ekiti State;
- ii. Investigate the extent to which the impunity of Fulani herdsmen on local farmers had negatively affected courage to invest in agriculture in Nigeria; and
- iii. Evaluate the impact of security agencies on curbing the unpleasant activities of herdsmen in Nigeria against farmers.

Conceptual Clarification

Security like any other concepts does not tend itself to easy definition. However, from the conventional usage of the word, security means safety or freedom from danger and protection from, militarist point of view, but even at that, security involves but does not just means defence (Nwolise, 2006). However, it is because securing life. Barry Buzan regards the concept as under developed, and needing to be rehabilitated, instituting that the word 'security' has never been in proper working order (Buzan, 1983). Be as it may, security is not alien and has been even in the primitive societies. The need for security necessitate the social contact in which people willing surrender their rights to a constituted authority (government) who oversees the survival of all. For decades, issue relating to security tend to occupy the centre stage in the development discourse. Garvet (1972) asserts that security is a very ambiguous concept. Garuba opines that the cold war era gave the highest currency to the conventional security doctrine to the effect that security:

... rest on the assumption that only a (strong) military system can effectively deter (attacks) and threats of forces... the cold war elevated security and its independence to the level of another ideology, indeed a religion (Garuba, 1977).

For decades, issues related to security tended to centre stage in the development discourse, with the end of the cold war, there have been attempts to shift conceptualization of security from a state-centred perspective to a broader view that places premium on individuals. In this perspective, security embodies elements of national security, human rights and national development as major barometers for explaining the concept. At the heart of this debate there have been attempts to deepen and widen the concept from the level of the states to societies and individuals and from military to non-military issues.

Mainly, two contending perspectives tend to provide the basis for the conceptualization of human security. One is a neo-realist theoretical framework, which is predicated on the primacy and centrality of state in conceptualizing security. Within this context, Buzan (1981) argued that the 'straitjacket' militaristic approach to security that demanded the discourse during the cold war was simple minded and subsequently led to the underdevelopment of the concept of human security includes political, economic, social and environmental threats including those that are militaristic. Thus, Buzan (1981) illustrated a tripartite concept analysis of security based on international system, state level and individual level but submitted that sovereign states should remain the most effective security provider.

The second approach is a post-modernist or pluralist view that seek to displace the state as a major provider of security but rather places greater emphasis on non-state actors. Advocates of this approach tend to argue that concept of security goes beyond a military determination of threats.

According to Booth (1994) states and implicitly government must no longer be the primary referents of security because governments which are supposed to be 'gronnon' of their people's security have instead become the primary source of insecurity for the many people who live under their sovereignty. As a result Booth (1994) further argued that human security is ultimately more important than state security while concurring with Booth, Nwabueze (1989) posited that economic security of the individual is or should be the greater concern to the government and society than the security of the state.

The contemporary thinking about security is all-encompassing. As aptly captured by Ogunbanwo cited in Akindiji (2014) writing on the developing world.

Security is more than military security or security from external attacks. For many of the four billion inhabitants in the developing countries, security is conceived as the basic level of struggle for survival. Therefore, in order to provide an integrated African security assessment, the non-military dimensions of security should be added. Henceforth, African security as concept should be applied in its broadest sense to include economic security, social security, environment security, food security, the equality of life security and redmological security.

Having different perspectives of security from above submission, there is a deviation from general knowledge about the concept of security. Here, attention is more concentrated on the African perspective of security which is less of military but more centred on means of livelihood.

This contemporary school of thought echoes Mc Namara (1983) who has long warned that any society seeks to achieve military security against the background of acute food shortage, population explosion, low technological development, inadequate and efficient public utilities, and chronic problem of unemployment, has a false sense of security. He further warns against the perpetration of poverty in a country as it is harbinger of unrest, internal upheavals, violence and escalation of extremism.

Conceptualizing food crisis could be seen as situation of acute shortage of basic food items for people to eat, that is when 'common' population cannot access the basic food items considered should be at disposal of poor and vulnerable in the markets. Considering the need hierarchy theory postulated by Maslow 1983 categories needs into five. But the most important category is survival needs (hunger and thirst). His theory has political, economic and social connotations. The social implication of Maslow's theory in relation to issue of food means that, as long as the most important motivation is absent in human life, that is safety of hunger, therefore, the fundamental motivational needs are satisfied that human being can be motivated to aspire to higher needs. This is line with the available food items not adequate in the markets, and as well not affordable for the poor because of high cost. So 'common' can no longer three times a day, common adage that "a hungry man". Given this key note that food plays in the growth and stability of human existence, it is therefore truism to say that permanent scarcity of food is a source of permanent weakness in the political transformation. In other words, the importance of food as it was years ago is still important than other motivations highlighted by Maslow's theory, is that no hungry person will think of economic activities or aspiring for political position because adequate food health. Aside, the political transformation of a state cannot be divorced from its level of self reliance in food production and relatively equitable. Of the fact national development atimes measured at its

maximum when it has at its disposal a sufficient quantity and quality of food to feed the growing population.

Analysing from similar perspective, Ake (1996) contended that in Nigeria, politics underdeveloped the state. He posited that, over the years, Nigerians rulers have been expanding the economic role of the state. Behind the cover of the requirements of national interest the actual reason for this trend is that as the economic role of the state expands also. Thus, if the state sets up a company, the political leaders who will decide who manage the company, or gets its business has a new source of power and income.

Emanating from above is that in spite of the huge expenditure in agriculture in Nigeria, the small groups which make the critical decisions and deploy our national resource are quite alienated from productive activities which the productive elements have absolutely no say anything. Ake concluded that:

One of the causes of the decline of agricultural output and of hunger in Nigeria and the rest of Africa is the fact that peasant producers have been subjected to politics at odd with the realities of their experience and have been harassed by the state apparatus to yield their surplus.

Unfortunately, Nigeria, rich in agricultural potential continues to import food to feed itself. Rural areas and producers are constantly neglected, over exploited and expose to incessant attacks of herdsmen. Food hawking transnational corporations in alliance with indigenous elites have initiated dependent food policy, which has mortgage political stupidity and peaceful co-existence of Nigerians.

Besides, the effect of deforestation on vegetation coupled with the effect of free and overgrazing, man had been cutting down forest trees for timber, firewood and agricu in ltur e. Deforestation expose the soil to erosion by water and wind. Vegetation removal in the tropics may also cause laterization (dieselisation), climate change increased erosion, change in vegetation climax, decrease in water quality all of which exacerbate desertification process. Rain washed the exposed soil from hills causing flood and gauging deep gullies in the bare lowlands when drought came in extreme periods, wind removed the anchorless top soil that had taken thousands of years to farm (Schiller, 1978). As a result of this environmental hazard led to migration from the Northern part of the Southwest where atmosphere is more favourable. Oyewole (1998) posits that a large number of women became head of household overnight which led to the feminisation of agriculture. While Oygard et al (1999) opines that the tension that had existed between farmers and nomadic herdsmen worsened as the later were made to abandon centuries transhumance tradition and settle down. Poverty and malnutrition also worsen, while habit changed because the population in general depend on food aid. As a result, there is population pressure in that, there is more intense completion and frequent conflict over land and national resources.

Analysis of Reports of Interviews

The focus of the interviews conducted with some notable stakeholders in Ekiti centered on the causes of conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers. Basically, the crisis between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria generally is rooted in a combination of environmental, social and political factors. These causes have intensified in recent decades, making the conflict more frequent and violent.

Alatise, a Local Government administrator and head of agriculture department, remarks that climate change and desertification. This is in view of shrinking pastures in Northern Nigeria, caused by desertification and climate change have forced herders to migrate southwest in search of fertile land and water. This is in line with FAO, (2021) that this movement brings them into direct conflict with sedentary farming communities, who already face limited land resources.

Aluko, a farmer from Ekiti North senatorial district, based his analysis on land degradation and competition for resources, further that rapid population growth, overuse of agricultural land, and urban expansion have intensified pressure on available land. This comments corroborates the remarks of Okoli and Atethe (2014) that farmers require fertile land for crops, while herders need grazing fields for their cattle. The competition creates constant tension and mistrust between the two groups.

Viewed different Barr. Ogunyemi from Oye L.G.A blamed government for not proactive on the security of the farmers against incessant attacks from Fulani herdsmen. He remarked that Ekiti farmers enjoyed peaceful operation during the tenure of Governor Ayo Fayose, when the Governor made effective use of 'Amotekun' security agent to monitor the activities of herdsmen on Ekiti farmland. Then many of the Fulanis were in possession of guns and small arms of which they could not produce license of own such dangerous weapons. This is line with submission of International Crisis Group (2018), that lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms contributed a lot to unending attacks on farmers in Nigeria, in that weak legal framework, poor governance, and inadequate security responses have allowed disputes to escalate into violence confrontations. The absence of effective conflict management institutions has created a cycle of attacks and reprisals, further destabilizing rural communities.

Among other causes, Adisa and Adekunle (2010) opines that other socio-economic and political factors, that the crisis is further complicated by broader issues such as ethno-religion divisions, the proliferation of small arms and weak governance structures. These factors not only fuel violence but also make peaceful resolution more difficult. Chief Ogunlade from Ekit West L.G.A. Aligned with above submission. He claimed that resolution becomes more difficult because most of the Cattles in the custody of Fulanis in Ekiti State are owned by Obas, Senators, and past political leaders. Without making provision for grazing land for this animals, also the herdsmen are rest assured that if attack or arrest is made on them, they are there to make way for their release. Lastly, he remarked that, there is no way Ekiti people can release their lands for grazing. Simply, because of the fear of what happened in plateau State where the Fulani settlers eventually claimed the land from the rightful owners.

Consequences of Food Crisis in Nigeria

The persistence clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria have far-reaching consequences that go beyond immediate violence. The effects directly undermine food security economic growth, and national stability.

- a) **Malnutrition and health impacts:** The destruction of farmland and reduced food availability contribute to hunger malnutrition and widespread malnutrition. Children are the most vulnerable, often suffering from stunted growth, weakened immunity, and nutrition-related diseases, which in term effect human capital development (FAD, 2021).

- b) **Economic losses and instability:** Agricultural productivity declines as farmers abandon their fields due to insecurity. This not only reduces household income but also drive up food prices, making basic staples unaffordable for many Nigerians. At the national level, the crisis negatively affects GDP contributions from agriculture and deepens rural poverty (World Bank, 2020).
- c) **Social and political tensions:** The farmer-herder conflicts heighten ethno-religious hostilities and displacements of rural populations. These tensions further fuel insecurity, weaken social cohesion and pose a serious threat to Nigeria's internal peace and unity (International Crisis Group, 2018).

Besides, country that imports food to feed her population is a weak one. The analysis above reveals that importation of food will definitely be last resort for country that cannot feed her population optimally. Nigeria is a typical importer. The Nigeria's mode of importation of food from developed countries provides little or no relief. It only accelerate the existing crisis of food insufficiency. The political implication of such action, Nelso (1983) is that moving food to hungry nation will not in itself do much to curb starvation and not just food availability, or it may be rightly said that the dependence on imported food from advanced countries to Nigeria would not help the latter because, it is of necessity based on one fundamental fallacy.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of food shortages has been a controversial one among intellectuals and political class in order to find solution to this problem. People are quite aware now that food crisis has an organic linkage with political crisis. But the social, political and economic condition of the country characterized by ethnicity, tribal influence, nepotism, sectionalism, ethno-religious interest.

The Fulani herdsmen crisis, has exacerbated Nigeria's food crisis by significantly reducing agricultural productivity, displacing farmers from their lands, and undermining national food security. The situation not only threatens livelihood but also worsens hunger, poverty and instability across the country. To checkmate these challenges, Nigeria must adopt sustainable land use practices such as ranching and grazing reserves, strengthen institutional mechanisms for conflicts resolution, and provide alternative agencies, local communities, and civil society must work collaboratively to promote peace-building and grassroots dialogue. A holistic and inclusive approach is essential to addressing the root causes of the conflict ensuring lasting peace and restoring Nigeria's agricultural strength.

Lastly, for effective policy implementation towards achieving self-sufficiency in food production therefore, requires the ability to identify potential problem areas in our food supply system and with our economic and human resource, we should be able to act to solve such difficulty before they degenerate to total collapse of national unity.

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