



Impact of Farmer-Herder Conflict on Food Security in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas of Taraba State

BY

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of Farmer-Herder Conflict on Food Security in Karim-Lamido and Lau LGAs of Taraba State. The paper therefore dwells on the causes farmer-herder conflict in Karim-Lamido and Lau LGAs, and the extent to which the conflict affects food production/security in these two LGAs. Mixed-method of data collection was utilized, through which questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data, and qualitative data were sourced through KII and secondary data. From data presentation and analysis, findings revealed that several factors are responsible for farmer-herder conflict in Karim-Lamido and Lau LGAs. The major factors are confrontation over land for farming and grazing of cattle, and lack of grazing routes for the herders. Findings also revealed that the conflict between farmers and herdsmen has affected food production in Karim-Lamido and Lau LGAs. However, based on the findings derived from the analysis, the paper concludes that the conflict between farmers and herdsmen has affected food security in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas. One of the recommendations made by the paper is that, Taraba State government should fully implement the signed anti-open grazing law, as well as make provision for grazing routes for the herders.

Key Words: Security, Food Security, Conflict, Farmer-Herder Conflict, Taraba State



1. INTRODUCTION

The development of human society in historical contest has been characterised by conflict. Interaction between and among social groups in organized social setting have often been conflictual and competitive. Conflicts occur frequently everywhere, from Europe to America, and from Asia to Africa (Jeony, 2008:56). Globally, conflict has been a key impediment to global economic and social growth. One of the most common and long-lasting social conflicts in rural communities has been that between farmers and herders. Farmer-herder inter-dependence on each other for survival. It is probably unarguable that resource ownership and utilization have directly and indirectly defined the dimensions of most conflicts involving man since time immemorial. Farmer-herder conflicts was mainly because of the increased need of herders to access grazing land and farmers who tried to prevent the herders from destroying their crops (Bukari, Sow & Scheffran, 2018).

Farmers and cattle farmers have a history of coexisting peacefully and enjoying mutually beneficial relationships that have been extremely advantageous to both groups. After harvest or in exchange for cow milk or other dairy products, cattle rearers frequently paid to graze on farmlands and the cow droppings frequently provided the farmlands with manure. However, the lack of farmland and pasture land is a result of increased human and animal activities. Due to the rising rivalry for land, farmlands are now encroaching into grazing areas and cattle paths (Cabot, 2017).

Food is one of the basic necessities for human existence, which means we all need food to survive. That is to say, the issue of food security is of paramount importance to every



society. With food security, everyone has access to the daily nutrient requirements and can therefore live a healthy and productive life. With good health comes increase in productivity which subsequently causes the growth of the economy of a nation. If there is shortage of food in a nation, there is bound to be food insecurity. In that case, a nation becomes vulnerable and overly dependent on other countries for its food requirement. Any nation that cannot feed its people is at the mercy of whoever can (Farmcenta, 2020).

Abbas (2012) and Adisa (2012) noted that in many regions of Nigeria, conflicts caused by resource competition between the two agricultural land user groups frequently escalated into major overt and covert hostilities and societal tension. These issues are quite concerning, especially since Taraba State, which shares a greater part of the 52%, was self-sufficient in food production and was indeed the food basket of the nation, as foods were obtained from this state to other states, especially the South-South and South East (Lezuya, Jimoh & Msheliza, 2021). Following farmer-herder confrontations, circumstances drastically deteriorated. Conflicts between farmers and herdsmen fueled by resource competitiveness are now common in several regions of Nigeria.

The dominant cause of farmer-herder conflict in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas of Taraba State is confrontation over land. The dispute has affected food production in Karim-Lamido and Lau through the drastic drop in food production, as well as declining in farming and grazing activities. Herder-farmer conflicts do not only have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved, but also disrupt and threaten the sustainability of agricultural and pastoral production in these two local governments and invariably the sustainability of livelihoods of the farming households. The frequent occurrence of herdsmen and farmers conflict appears to have left adverse



effects on livelihood of the farming households in the areas. However, there are limited publications on the linkage between farmer-herder conflict and food security in Taraba State; particularly in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas. This has created gaps in the body of knowledge. It is on this note that this study examines how farmer-herder conflict has affected food security in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas of Taraba State.

1.1 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Traditionally, food security is defined in terms of either food self-sufficiency or food self-reliance. The former requires production of various food items in the quantities consumed domestically while the latter requires domestic availability. Based on this distinction, self-sufficiency rules out imports as a source of supply while self-reliance admits them. In modern times, given much larger worldwide capacity to produce food than consume it, few restrictions on the exports of food items in countries with the excess capacity, and the availability of the means of transportation that allow their rapid movement internationally, self-sufficiency makes little economic sense. Instead, what countries need is sufficient capacity to generate foreign exchange by specializing in goods of their comparative advantage and import the excess of quantities consumed over those produced (Panagariya, 2002).

Based on the 1996 World Food Summit, food security is seen as when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Food security can also be referred as the availability of food in a country (or geography) and the ability of



individuals within that country (geography) to access, afford, and source adequate foodstuffs (The World Bank, 2023).

On the other hand, farmer-herder conflict refers to disagreements and violent clashes between agricultural communities and pastoralists (herders) over shared resources, primarily land and water, often leading to significant loss of life, displacement, and destruction of property, particularly in regions like Nigeria.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper adopted the Human Needs Theory. Abraham Maslow propounded the theory of human needs which is popularly known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs in human environment in the society. Onah (2015) remarks that in 1943, Brandeis University Professor of psychology, Abraham Maslow as a renowned researcher in the study of human needs and motivation came up with his hierarchy of needs theory with a proposal that people are motivated by five levels of needs namely: (1) Physiological needs, (2) safety needs, (3) belonging needs, (4) esteem needs and (5) self-actualization needs. Understandably, two additional levels of needs of understanding needs and aesthetic needs were later included in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs now focuses on motivation of people by seven (7) levels of needs namely:

1. Physiological needs,
2. Safety needs or security needs,
3. Love and belonging needs or social needs,
4. Esteem and prestige needs or ego needs,



5. Self-actualization needs or self – realization needs,
6. Understanding needs,
7. Aesthetic needs (Aruma & Hanachor, 2017).

The central focus of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is an exploration of how people's attitude is stimulated by human desire to meet certain human needs in various communities in the society. Mulwa (2008) states that Abraham Maslow's theory of needs is specifically built on the idea that human behaviour is really motivated by the simple desire to meet specific human needs in the society.

The hierarchy of needs which was developed by Abraham Maslow can, however, be used as a method of assessing needs in community development in various communities in the contemporary society. This method of hierarchy of needs which Abraham Maslow developed emphasizes that there are certain basic needs which must be met before other needs can be considered in various communities. Anyanwu, Omolewa, Adeyeri, Okanlawon and Siddiqui (1985) clearly assert that in assessment of human needs that there are certain basic needs and requirements that must really be met before other needs can, however, be considered in the society.

According to Yamanaka (2019), the basic assumptions of the theory are:

1. Humans are motivated to satisfy their needs,
2. When the most fundamental needs (e.g. food) are met, other needs become salient,
3. Human behavior can be motivated by a set of needs,
4. A sequence of meeting the needs varies across circumstances and individual differences.



Narrowing the human needs to conflict situations, Yamanaka (2019) states that, basic human needs are unnegotiable elements in the pursuit of conflict by parties, and that pursuit of the satisfaction of basic human needs by parties are reflected in contexts of a conflict.

The farmer-herder conflict has caused a lot of havoc to Nigeria, especially the people residing in places like Taraba, Nasarawa, Plateau, Benue States and other parts of the country. In affected areas like Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas, both farmers and herders are affected especially in terms of farming and grazing. One of the major consequences the crisis is the decline in food production. The basic need of every man is food; in other words food security is very important. It is therefore based on how the crisis has affected food security in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas that the human needs theory fits into this study.

1.3 METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The paper relies on both primary and secondary data for sourcing vital information for the study. Primary data were sourced from questionnaire, while the secondary data were generated from existing literature. 400 copies of questionnaire were distributed and 382 were retrieved and used in the analysis.



1.4 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Socio-Demographic Distribution of Questionnaire Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

S/No.	Variable	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
		K-Lamido	Lau	K-Lamido	Lau
1	Male	178	89	46.6	23.3
2	Female	80	35	20.9	9.2
	Total	382		100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 reveals that, 267(69.9%) of the respondents are male, while 115(30.1%) are female. The result shows that most of the respondents are male. Most of the respondents are male because most of the farmers and herders are male. Also, in every crisis, men are the ones that take the lead. Therefore, sampling them more will give us more credible data.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

S/No.	Variable	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
		K-Lamido	Lau	K-Lamido	Lau
1	18-25	31	13	8.1	3.4
2	26-30	49	22	12.8	5.8
3	31-35	27	17	7.1	4.4
4	36-40	70	31	18.3	8.2
5	41 and above	81	41	21.2	10.7
	Total	382		100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025



Table 2 shows that 44(11.5%) of the respondents are between the ages of 18-25, 71(18.6%) are between the ages of 26-30, 44(11.5%) are between the ages of 31-35, 101(26.5%) are between the ages of 36-40, and 122(31.9%) are between the age of 41 and above. From the foregoing, it means most of the respondents are between the ages of 41 and above, follow by those that fall within 36-40. The reason for sampling most respondents from these categories is that, within the age bracket of 36 and above is assumed to be still very active and at the same time because of their age, they have more knowledge of the issue at hand.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Ethnic Group

S/No.	Variable	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
		K-Lamido	Lau	K-Lamido	Lau
1	Bikwin	55	8	14.4	2.1
2	Karimjo	26	10	6.8	2.6
3	Bandawa	14	26	3.7	6.8
4	Wurkun	61	11	16.0	2.8
5	Fulani	27	19	7.1	5.0
6	Jenjo	39	13	10.2	3.4
7	Yandang	18	26	4.7	6.8
8	Others	18	11	4.7	2.9
	Total	382		100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 shows that 63(16.5%) of the respondents are Bikwin, 36(9.4%) are Karimjo, 40(10.5%) are Bandawa, 72(18.8%) are Wurkun, 46(12.1%) are Fulani, 52(13%) are Jenjo, 44(11.5%) are Yandang, and 29(7.6%) are from other ethnic groups. From the



foregoing, majority of the respondents are Wurkun. The most important thing from this result is that, almost every ethnic group in these local governments is represented. In other words, our concern is not on which tribe constitute the majority, but the representation of different ethnic group is what matter most.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

S/No.	Variable	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
		K-Lamido	Lau	K-Lamido	Lau
1	Civil Servant	73	35	19.1	9.2
2	Trading	45	20	11.8	5.2
3	Farming	57	25	14.9	6.6
4	Herder	31	14	8.1	3.7
5	Student	50	23	13.1	6.0
6	Others	2	7	0.5	1.8
	Total	382		100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5.8 indicates that 108(28.3%) of the respondents are civil servants, 65(17.0%) are traders, 82(21.5%) are farmers, 45(11.8%) are herders, 73(19.1%) are students, and 9(2.3%) are into other occupations. However, from the foregoing, majority of the respondents are civil servants.

The Causes of Farmer-Herder Conflict in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas



Table 5: Causes of farmer-herder conflict in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas

S/No.	Variable	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
		K-Lamido	Lau	K-Lamido	Lau
1	Confrontation over land	102	45	26.7	11.8
2	Political reasons	66	36	17.3	9.4
3	Climate change	32	23	8.4	6.0
4	Bad leadership	58	20	15.2	5.2
5	Others	0	0	0.0	0.0
	Total	382		100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5 shows that 147(38.5%) of the respondents are of the opinion that, confrontation over land is the cause of farmer-herder conflict in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas. 102(26.7%) said it is political reasons, 55(14.4%) said it is climate change, and 78(20.4%) said it is bad leadership.

However, to buttress on the primary data; particularly on the issue of land scarcity and confrontation over land possession, Alli (2017) opined that, contention for arable land as means of livelihood, and for occupational practice, pitches the herdsmen and farmers in long-drawn conflicts, especially as herdsmen cling to traditional open grazing practice. For instance, in reference to the bloody crisis between the Mambilla community and Fulani herdsmen in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba state in June 2017, in which about 200 people were reportedly killed. Similarly, Lezuya, Jimoh and Msheliza (2021), submitted that over a period of four days, 17th–20th June, 2017, several farming areas on the Mambilla Plateau of Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State came



under attack by armed herders and 732 people were killed. On January 30,2018, herders living in the Leme Community, a village in the Mambilla Plateau in Taraba State were killed in a vengeance attack.

Alli (2017), added that Governor Ishaku attributed the crisis to land dispute when he noted that: “The recent crisis in the Mambilla was all about land. It was not ethnic or religious. The 3 percent population of the Fulani in the Mambilla owned practically all the land. While this is not their fault, the 90 percent of the Mambilla are left scrounging for land.”

Based on the above, it can be deduce that there are several causes of farmer-herder conflict in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas. The major causes are confrontation over land for farming and grazing of cattle, and lack of grazing routes for the herders.

The extent to which Farmer-Herder Conflict affects Food Production in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas of Taraba State

Table 6: Whether there is any link between farmers-herder conflict and food production in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas

S/No.	Variable	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
		K-Lamido	Lau	K-Lamido	Lau
1	Yes	242	116	63.3	30.4
2	No	16	8	4.2	2.1
	Total	382		100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 6 reveals that 358(93.7%) of the respondents agreed that there is a link between farmers-herder conflict and food production in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas. On the contrary, 24(6.3%) said, there is no any link between farmers-herder



conflict and food production in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas.

In line with the majority of questionnaire respondents, all the interviewed key informants affirmed that there is a link between farmers-herder conflict and food production in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas. Therefore views are presented under the next table.

Table 7: Extent to which the dispute between farmers and herdsmen affects food production in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas

S/No.	Variable	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
		K-Lamido	Lau	K-Lamido	Lau
1	Decline in farming and grazing activities	88	32	23.0	8.4
2	Drastic drop in food production	107	62	28.0	16.2
3	Loss of crops' seedlings during the conflicts	55	26	14.4	6.8
4	Others	8	4	2.1	1.1
	Total	382		100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 7 shows that 120(31.4%) of the respondents stated that, the dispute between farmers and herdsmen affects food production in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas through declining in farming and grazing activities. 169(44.2%) said is through drastic drop in food production, 81(21.2%) said is through loss of crops' seedlings during the conflicts, and 12(3.2%) are of other opinions.

To shed more light on the above, Food and Agricultural Organisation (2015), reported



that, agricultural production provides the means of livelihood and economic sustenance for the majority of Nigerians population. Farmers and herders make significant contributions in meeting the nutritional needs of the country and thus contributing to food security of households. Suleiman (2015), stated that in recent years, Nigeria have witnessed series of violent communal clashes arising from the activities of the herders who move about on a daily basis with their cattle in search of water and green pastures. Consequently, many farmers and herders have lost their lives, while others have experienced declining production in their crops and herds (Yakubu, et al., 2021).

Junaidu (2009), observes that persistent conflict over land resources between farmers and herders have caused population displacement, which, as a result, changed the fabric of custom and habitual behaviour in the northeast Nigeria. This led to low agricultural output, which resulted in malnutrition and disease; and by inducing people to leave, economic decline may erode confidence in the national purpose and also upset the traditional balance of economic and political authority between ethnic groups in the area. Moreover, farmers' displacement and low-yield of crops are also of the effects of resource use conflict between the farmers and cattle herders.

In the case of Taraba State, Rukwe et al. (2019), maintained that conflict in Taraba State threatens the livelihood resources of people particularly farming communities due to high dependent on natural resources for survival. Herder-farmer conflicts do not only have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved, they also disrupt and threaten the sustainability of agricultural and pastoral production in the area and invariably the sustainability of livelihoods of the farming households. The frequent occurrence of herdsman and farmers conflict appears to have left adverse effects on livelihood of the



farming households in the area. Farmers and herdsmen conflict no doubt have negative impact on social and economic development in Taraba State and Nigeria at large.

From the foregoing, it can be established that the conflict between farmers and herdsmen has affected food production in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas. This owed to the fact that the conflict has led to reduction in farming and grazing activities, drastic drop in food production, loss of lives and destruction of farms, among others. Other effects are loss crops' seedlings during the conflicts, and imposing fear on both farmers and herders in carrying out their usual farming and grazing activities.

Table 8: The level of drop in food production and price increase in food purchase due to farmer-herder conflict in Karim-Lamido and Lau LGAs

S/No.	Variable	Frequency		Percentage (%)	
		K-Lamido	Lau	K-Lamido	Lau
1	Very high	258	124	67.5	32.5
2	Very low	0	0	0.0	0.0
3	Stagnant	0	0	0.0	0.0
	Total	382		100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 8 indicates that 382(100.0%) of the respondents which represents the entire number of the respondents, agreed that are of the opinion that, there is a very high level of drop in food production and price increase in food purchase due to farmer-herder conflict in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas. In the same manner with the questionnaire respondents, all the interviewed key informants also affirmed to that.



1.5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Food is one of the basic necessities for human existence, which means we all need food to survive. That is to say, the issue of food security is of paramount importance to every society. With food security, everyone has access to the daily nutrient requirements and can therefore live a healthy and productive life.

Following farmers-herdsmen confrontations, circumstances drastically deteriorated. Conflicts between farmers and herdsmen fueled by resource competitiveness are now common in several regions of Nigeria. Paper examines how the conflict affected the food security of Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas of Taraba State. However, based on the findings derived from the analysis, the study concludes that the conflict between farmers and herdsmen has affected food security in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas. This owed to the fact that the conflict has led to reduction in farming and grazing activities, drastic drop in food production, loss of lives and destruction of farms, among others.

In order to address the conflict between farmers and herders as well as to enhance food security in Karim-Lamido and Lau Local Government Areas of Taraba State, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Taraba State government should fully implement the signed anti-open grazing law, as well as make provision for grazing routes. This will go a long way in minimizing the confrontation over land for farming and grazing of cattle which is resulting to farmer-herder conflict.



- ii. Government should ensuring adequate security in the rural areas. This will encourage both farmers and herders to go on with their farming and grazing activities without fear of being attacked or kidnapped. Through this, there will be increase in food production.
- iii. Dialogue, seminars and town hall meetings between farmers and herders should be regularly organised so to enlightened them on the needs for living together in peace. On this, the traditional institution should be fully involved.
- iv. Government should provide some incentives and loans to the farmers to empower them to bounce back from whatever they might have lost. This will help the state to quickly tackle the problem of food insecurity instead of allowing the poor farmers to bounce back by themselves.
- v. The Nigerian borders should be strengthening by deploying more personnel to borders and providing them with all the necessary equipments for effective operations, in order to be able to control the influx foreigners as well as proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

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