A new framework for understanding and resolving farmers’–herdsmen conflict in sub-Saharan Africa

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A clear and present danger

Pastoral conflicts is now the most deadly in Nigeria (SB Morgen, 2016)

Comparison of incidents of pastoral conflicts in Nigeria (SB Morgen, 2016)
Pastoral production is undertaken mainly, though not exclusively, by Fulanis in Nigeria.

The Fulanis:
- are found in more than 20 African countries, bearing more than 13 different names.
- Together with the Hausas (Hausa–Fulani), they make up about 29% of Nigeria’s estimated population of 190 million.
- Use mobility as a strategy for production and consumption, notably cattle herding.

Arable farming:
- is the main occupation majority of Nigerians, especially in the rural areas.
- is practised mainly by small-scale farmers who account for about 80% of Nigeria’s agricultural production.
- Is land-intensive, with generally low productivity, and low level of technological uptake.
Research Questions and Methodology

Research Questions:
- What are the key factors influencing farmers–herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria?
- In what ways does the perennial farmers–pastoralist conflict pose a major humanitarian challenge to Nigeria?
- In what ways can technological and policy innovations help to address and mitigate land use conflicts?

Data collection:
- In–depth, audio–recorded interviews of nine crop farmers and 5 nomadic pastoralists in Northeast and Southwest Nigeria.
- Analysis of five newspaper interviews and reports, five NGO reports, and two policy documents and memos.

Data processing and analysis:
- Coding of interview transcripts using Nvivo 10
- Thematic analysis
Interview Guide

1. Can you provide basic information about your a)Gender, b)Age c) Marital Status, d) Educational Qualification e) Ethnicity and f) Religion
2. Can you describe the extent of your loss due to the farmers–herdsmen conflict, both material and human losses.
3. What are the roles of political officer holders–both negative and positive–in this conflict?
4. What are the roles of traditional and community leaders–both negative and positive–in the conflict?
5. What ideas and suggestions do you have to solve this perennial conflict once and for all?
6. What new and different steps can political office holders and traditional rulers play to provide long term solution to the problem?
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Land is the principal resource for both crop and pastoralist production.

Pastoralists and farmers’ land use in Nigeria is complicated by the following main challenges:

1. Drought, water scarcity and desert encroachment precipitated or aggravated by climate change.
2. Pastoral mobility and the lack of effective government policies on pastoral land use.
3. Pest, disease, and cattle morbidity and mortality.
4. The Cattle Complex
5. Identity politics around ethnicity and religion
The socio-economic impact (MercyCorps, 2015)

- 39% of pastoralist and farming community members are unable to pursue their livelihoods over long stretches of time due to fear of insecurity.
- The average household will experience at least 64% increase in income, and as much as 201% or higher, if there is peace.
- Households are willing to pay substantial amount to ensure peace and security needed to carry out their livelihoods peacefully.
- In four selected states only, Nigeria loses as much as $13.7 billion annually in revenue, representing about 3.4% of Nigeria’s 2016 official GDP.
- The four study states have lost an average of 47% of IGR, with Plateau state losing as much as 75% of IGR.
- Crop framing and animal rearing are the sectors most affected by the conflict, with 60% and 26% of the total losses, respectively.
Traditional arbitration, institutional voids and conflict management

Traditional system of arbitration are sometimes effective...

“...there is the normal friction when crops are damaged by animals. This is normally settled without even going to the police or the courts. The community leaders settle the disputes. I have been here nine (9) years, and I have not heard of any fighting.” (Farmer No 4, Narbodo Market, Bauchi State, July 2017)

...but traditional structures have waned in influence

“...If community leaders can command respect among their people, and they desire to live in peace with the Fulani, this will be easy. What we hear is that, in many places, people don’t respect their community leaders anymore. They prefer to follow politicians and bad preachers.” (Farmer No 3, Miya Bauchi State, July 2017)

Farmers’ frustrations is aggravated by institutional weakness...

“...The main challenge that we have is the Fulani cattle rearers. They destroy our farm so much and we have become powerless against them because if you challenge them they threaten to kill us and inherit our farm. We have reported this to police station and nothing has been done.” (Farmer No 7, Ibadan Nigeria, August 2012)

...and herdsmen have low confidence in the authorities

“...We go to the authorities but they do not listen to us. They are not for us. They also take our cattle and kill our people. Nowadays everyone hates the Fulbe (Fulani). We have to fight for our lives and our cattle. Things were better when the traditional rulers were in charge. Now it is the police, and we are no longer safe.” (Herder No 1, Alkaleri Market, Bauchi State, July 2017)
Transborder mobility and proliferation of small arms

Cross-border pastoralist mobility exacerbates the resource struggle
“We are from Mali. We usually stay in Niger [Republic] during the rains, and then return here (to Nigeria). Mali is bad now, with people fighting and killing. They take away our cattle.” (Herdsmen No 3, Alkaleri Market, Bauchi State, July 2017)

Farmers’ frustrations is aggravated by institutional weakness...
Amid institutional void, the resort to self-help is now characterised by the proliferation of small arms
“...Just last Tuesday, they attacked my farm and frightened my farm attendants out of the farm. Now, they are afraid to come back. A group of people think that they can frighten us away from our lands. As they value their cattle, we also value our own businesses. Imagine them coming to my farm with AK 47 rifles. They are not robbers. What will armed robbers go to farms to do. Since it is the Federal Government that controls security, I don’t know why these people are allowed to go about with AK 47 rifles. I am sure these weapons are not registered. In the past, the Fulani used to graze his animals with stick and cutlass but now, they are armed with guns...” (A southwest Nigerian farmer, speaking to Vanguard Newspaper, March 2016)

...Transborder pastoralists are key actors in the escalation of the conflict
“There is a big problem with those herdsmen that come from far. Some of them are from as far as Malle [Mali]. They come through Niger [Republic]. They are wild and have no regard for host communities. They are the ones that really cause trouble deliberately. They are armed and ruthless. They are the Hana Gamba and Udawa [groups of the Wodaabe clan]. Whenever they are around, the potential for violence is very high” (Farmer No 3, Darazo Market, Bauchi State, July 2017)
Identity politics and outgroup antagonism

- Ethnicity plays a key role in the narratives of the conflicts by both parties, which has already escalated to a cycle of reprisal attacks:

  “Okokolo was a kind of fortress populated by a brave and headstrong clan; that was where the Fulanis had met the fiercest resistance to their incursion. So they must have told themselves that if they can attack and run over Okokolo, everyone else will get the message. To achieve this, they attacked Okokolo not once, not twice but three times. They came today, tomorrow and the next. It was a war. And once they burnt down Okokolo, they marched on Akwu, Adagbo and finally Aila. It was impossible to repel them; we were just ordinary farmers with hoes and cutlasses while the Fulanis were armed with AK-47,” (An Agatu farmer, speaking to Premium Times Newspaper, March 2016).

“A prominent Fulani leader, Ardo Madaki, was invited to the palace of the district head of the area on the grounds that a solution was being sought to the problem. “However, the Agatu militia beheaded Ardo right in front of the district head. This action reverberated across all Fulani people in the whole of West Africa and the clamour for revenge began to grow strong. He comes from a very well respected clan and the Agatu sent the Fulani a chilling message with his murder,” (A pastoralist Fulani leader, speaking to Premium Times Newspaper, March 2016)

“...There are people who have been taught to hate the Fulani as a people because of ethnic politics. They have been brought up on this. Predominantly Christian communities are now taught to hate all Muslims. They have the Europeans and the international community on their sides, and so everyone else is given a bad name” (Farmer No 2, Dass market, Bauchi State, Nigeria)
Nigerian smallholder farmers still rely heavily on traditional implements and rain-fed, land-intensive agriculture.

Innovation uptake can help reduce the pressure on agricultural land use by significantly increasing yield per hectare by up to 500%, which implies that farmers can achieve similar yield on 20% of current land being cultivated.

Innovation uptake can also help farmers benefit more from the agricultural value chain through processing, packaging and better marketing of agricultural products. This will significantly increase farmers’ income and have positive impact on household welfare.

The nomadic, or transhumance, mode of pastoralist production requires large area of land.

Establishment of grazing reserves can ease pressure on land requirements for pastoralists, but this needs to be backed up by adequate policy commitment and funding for development.

Development of dedicated ranches for pastoralists represent a more technology intensive but more land efficient interventions. It costs more, but can potentially return much more in the long term, both for pastoralist households and national productivity and income.

Technology intensive interventions can encourage pastoralists’ sedentarisation and therefore support more effective welfare and development interventions aimed at pastoralist households.
Can sedentarisation work?

If there is enough water and grass in the forests, would we settle down? Yes! Who would like to be always on the move forever...? (Herdsman 1, Alkaleri Market, Bauch Nigeria, July 2017)

1. Movement is difficult and taxing to the pastoralists and their livestock.
2. Movement precipitates conflicts between crop farmers and pastoralists communities.
3. Movement complicates governments’ development planning, including provision of education and social welfare amenities.
4. Trans-border movements of Fulani pastoralists threaten national security.

1. Raising livestock under sessile conditions lead to waste of marginal land resources.
2. Pastoralists experience more veterinary health problems after settling down.
3. The transition from nomadic to sedentary lifestyle is traumatic to pastoralists and costly and burdensome on government.
4. Government resettlement policies are often forced, and therefore adverse, on pastoralists.

For sedentarisation (Iro)

Against sedentarisation (Iro)
Towards a new framework: key components

A. Economic factors
   1. Pressure for land use: agricultural and non-agricultural
   2. Farm and pastoral productivity
   3. Farming and pastoral value chain
   4. Household income

B. Environmental factors
   1. Drought and desert encroachment
   2. Climate change
   3. Natural disasters

C. Culture and identity politics
   1. Mobility vs sedentarisation
   2. Ethnicity, religion and destruction of social capital

D. Conflict and security
   1. Farmland destruction
   2. Cattle rustling
   3. Injuries and fatalities arising from inter-communal clashes
Innovations reduce requirement for more land, enhances productivity and yield per hectare, and facilitates increase in household and national incomes.

Technological innovations help mitigate the impacts of drought, desert encroachment, seasonal variations and other effects of climate change.

Innovative policies encourage sedentarisation and reconstruction of bridging social capital amongst farming and pastoralists communities.

Policy and technological innovations can contribute to security and peace-building by lowering outgroup antagonisms and antipathy towards the government.

A new framework for understanding and resolving pastoralist conflicts

- Economic factors
- Environmental factors
- Culture and Identity politics
- Conflict and security
Conclusion and recommendations

- Herdsmen–farmers conflict in Nigeria has the potential to be a bigger humanitarian crisis in Nigeria, more than the dreaded Boko Haram insurgency.
  - In 2016, it claimed more lives than Boko Haram terrorism
  - The conflict is spread across the country, not localised in a particular geographical section
  - It is feeding from the conflagrating forces or ethnic and religious discord
  - It is a major instigator of national food crisis, giving that Nigeria relies heavily on smallholder farmers and pastoralist production for food nutrient requirements.

- Farmers–herdsmen conflict is influenced and aggravated by economic factors, environmental factors, culture and identity politics and conflict and security.
  - The struggle for more land is under-pinned mainly by economic considerations— the desire for better productivity and profit.
  - Pastoralist mobility is originally, and essentially, pragmatic, rather than cultural. Herdsmen move because they have to, not because they want to, in search of pastures for their flock.
  - Pastoralists and crop farmers are not equipped to cope with environmental challenges and the adverse effects of climate change.

- Technological and policy innovations represent the most effective interventions to mitigate the conflicts and forestall a full-scale humanitarian crisis.
  - The current mode of pastoralist production is unsustainable, and the current methods of crop production is inefficient with regard to land use.
  - Technological innovations can help farmers and pastoralists increase their productivity and profit without the need for more land.
  - Technology can help mitigate the problem of drought, desert encroachment and other adverse effects of climate change.

Innovative policy interventions, coupled with relevant technological innovations, can encourage voluntary pastoralist sedentarisation without forcing it.
Thank you!