

# CONFLICTS BETWEEN PEASANT FARMERS AND HERDSMEN IN THE MIDDLE BELT OF NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR AGRICULTURAL AND BUSINESS EDUCATION.

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## Abstract

*Food availability or abundance makes a nation partly secured, especially when issues of social security are being discussed. But the lives and livelihoods of people come under threat when that privilege is absent, thus, the pride of peasant farmers in the middle Belt of Nigeria. This paper therefore discusses the conflicts and absence of environmental protection and peaceful co-existence among peasant farmers and cattle rearers in middle belt of Nigeria with implication for food security. The paper commences with identifying areas regarded as the middle belt of Nigeria. Meaning of communal conflict and environmental protection issues that hinder effective farming activities are also discussed. Peasant farming and its roles in Nigerian economy are also discussed. Fulani herdsmen crises and Boko Haram insurgency are noted to be the major factors militating against farming activities in the middle belts of Nigeria, culminating in food scarcity and high cost of living for Nigerians. The paper recommended demarcation of grazing reserves for Fulani herdsmen on their various grazing tracts and flash points of possible conflict should be identified and quickly addressed before they occur or break-out. That all parties involved should be satisfied with the trajectory of the peace talks for lasting solution to be achieved.*

## Introduction

Agriculture is the main stay of Nigeria and the Middle Belt economy in particular, as Benue State in the belt is popularly called, the food basket of the nation, though there are other mineral resources present there. The sustainability of agriculture in Middle Belt of Nigeria requires a strategic balance in the environmental and socio-economic activities as well as political stability. The incessant resource ownership conflicts witnessed in some parts of the country have resulted in loss of lives, properties and environmental degradation. According to Theband and Batterbury (2001), Fulani herdsmen bear a large proportion of the blame for most conflicts and environmental degradations in the Guinea savannah region of West African States.

These conflicts and environmental degradations have rendered farming activities stagnated causing food insecurity in the country. Food security according to FAO (2001) is a situation that exists when all people at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. For peasant farmers to meet food demand of their communities and the country and eradicate food insecurity and hunger, there is need for environmental protection against human and natural threats that militates against effective farming activities in the middle belt of the country.

## The Middle Belt of Nigeria

The Federal Republic of Nigeria in West Africa is a country bordering Benin Republic in the West, Chad and Cameroon to the East, and, Niger to the North. Its coast in the south lies on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. The country lies between latitudes 4° and 14° N, and longitude 2° and 15°E (Iloje, 2001). Nigeria is geopolitically divided into six zones, with the North central zone loosely known as the middle Belt. The rivers Niger and Benue Split Nigeria into three unequal parts forming an imperfect – Y on the Nigerian map. The area around the upper V-line of the Y comprising various ethnic groups called “the Middle Belt”. The name is taken from the V which seem to cut the country at the center. The area and states which are referred to as (belonging to) the Middle Belt are, Kwara, Kogi, Benue, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger,

Taraba, Adamawa as well as the Southern parts of Kaduna, Kebbi, Bauchi and Gombe States (Harnischfeger, 2008).

Geographically, according to Iloeje (2001) Middle Belt is located at an elevation of 115 meters above sea level. Its coordinates are 8°00' N and 8°00' E in degree minutes Seconds (DMS). According to Harnischfeger (2008) the Middle Belt is a human geographical term “designating the region of central Nigeria” populated largely by minority ethnic groups and stretching across the country longitudinally. Hackett (1988) observed that the Middle Belt contains the largest number of minority ethnic groups in Nigeria, who were found to be mostly Christians and members of traditional religions with a small proportion of Muslims (principally Islamic North and the mainly Christian South).

Generally, the soil in the Middle Belt is relatively sandy-loam type of soil while some parts are reddish in colour and sticky. Since the average population of the region are predominantly farmers, the concentration basically is on subsistence farming. Relatively some of these people produced agricultural products on commercial basis. They grow tuber crops such as yam, cassava, cocoa – yam, potatoes, cereals such as millet and maize, beniseeds, fruits crops such as citrus, guava, and economic trees and some other related crops growing for commercial purposes. The Middle-Belt is generally referred to as the food basket of the country. This implies that the major food for local consumption and exportation in the country are produced in the Middle Belt of the country.

The word environment is seen as the sum total of all surroundings of a living organism, including natural forces and other living things, which provide conditions for growth and development as well as means of avoiding of danger and damage. They include surrounding factors or influences on a particular item of interest to humans and animals. Platt (1971), in the Encyclopedia of Environmental sciences defined environment as the aggregate of all external conditions and influences affecting life and development of an organization. The environment is a system consisting of natural and artificial elements that are interrelated and which are modified by human action. It is the environment that affects the way of life of the society, including natural, social and cultural values that exist in a place and time.

To Ivbijaro, Akintola & Okechuwu (2016) the word environment means surroundings, circumstances, or influences. They added that most people understand the term to mean the physical conditions of the landscape, including the topography, drainage, climatic conditions, and the vegetation of a given area or territory. This is the physical environment or natural surroundings made up of the land, water and air, along with all the resources including the soil, plants, animals, and minerals found in them. The second type of tangible environment which is basically the natural environment that has been modified or transformed by human activities. In addition to these two types, there is a third type, namely the socio-economic environment which encompasses the political environment. Often, it is this intangible environment that plays a major role in determining what proportion of the natural resources of a territory is used for the economic development of the territory and for the material benefit of the inhabitants. According to the Mifflin (2013) environment is seen as the totality of the natural world. It is the conditions and circumstances that surround someone.

For humans, animals and plants to survive and perform effectively in the environment, the environment must to be kept fit, thus environmental protection is inevitable. Environmental protection is a practice of protecting the natural environment on individual levels, for the benefits of both the environment and humans. Solomon (2010) noted that environmental protection is influenced by three interwoven factors; environmental legislation, ethics and education. Each of these factors play their part in influencing national-level environmental decisions and personal-level environmental values and behaviour. For environmental protection to become a reality, it is important for societies to develop each of these areas that, together, will inform and drive environmental decisions.

For effective agricultural production and food security to be achieved, environmental protection is necessary. Though modernization and development is essential for the wellbeing of the citizenry, but physical operation involved in the exploitation and utilization of both renewable and non-renewable resources go a long way in affecting the environment negatively against food production. This leads to some irreversible transformation of the natural environment. According to Okafor (1988), in an attempt by

the different physical development agencies to modernize the rural environment through provision of beneficial infrastructural facilities to the rural people of the Middle Belt and to earn life-saving income through the extraction of natural resources, a huge price of environmental degradation may be paid.

Throughout the developing humid tropics of Africa and particularly in Nigeria, the rural areas are known as the authentic sources of important environmental resources which are routinely extracted, processed and utilized for different domestic and public purposes. These include vegetal, geomorphic, hydrological, atmospheric, and human resources. The list of the environmental resources include the forests, grasses, fertile soils, hills, slopes, stones, different water bodies, renewable and non-renewable minerals, etc. These essential rural environmental resources serve different functions. The fertile soils provide food and cash crops for domestic and national consumption. The fresh grasses serve as nutritious pastures for animals being raised on the environment. Other natural resources that are useful in agriculture are exploited in the process and relationships.

Akinbode (2005) observed, poor environmental planning, non-engagement of the services of experts, inadequate knowledge of continuous environmental processes and interactions and establishment of socio-economic facilities, youths' drift to cities, and uncontrolled extraction of environmental resources lead to environmental degradations and the current challenges of rural development in Nigeria and food insecurity. Therefore the environment needs to be protected from degradations in order to promote agricultural productivity.

A lot needs to be done by the government and individuals to keep the environment suitable. Ogbodo (2009) observed that the discovery of toxic waste dumped in Koko, at remote part of southern Nigeria, in June 1988, and the attendant media and public outcry prompted the government to react swiftly. Through diplomatic channels, Nigerian government succeeded in getting the Italian government and the Italian company that was the culprit to lift the toxic waste out of the country. The Nigerian government followed up this action by organizing an international workshop on the environment. The result was the formulation of a national policy on the environment. Consequently, the Federal Environment Protection Agency 1988 (FEPA) was created and charged with the administration and enforcement of the environmental law. In addition, the government enacted the Harmful waste (special criminal provisions) Act, 1988, to deal specifically with illegal dumping of harmful waste.

The state of the environment is the result of many pressures on the environment, which are mostly linked to human activities. These activities are usually manifested in emissions of substances and energy into the environment (water, air, soil and wastes). According to OECD (2003), environmental protection refers to any activity to maintain or restore the quality of environmental media through preventing the emission of pollutants or reducing the presence of polluting substances in environmental media.

Environmental protection includes all available practices used to protect the environment, whether on individual, organizational or global (international) level. This basically means that each and every one can do something to protect the environment and as such collective interest are needed to protect the environment. The general opinion is that the environment is in the constant state of degradation due to so many different environmental problems (climate change, all forms of pollution, deforestation, biodiversity loss, etc).

Human population is constantly growing and man still cannot find the right balance between the increase in human population and environmental needs. Nigeria has come to a point where she needs to protect her environment against all negative human activities or practices. Without the environmental protection, the environment would be worse than it looks today, and we certainly must look for better ways to protect our environment.

### **Concept of Food Security and Business Sustainability**

Food security has become an increasingly important topic in agricultural policy as decision makers attempt to reduce poverty and malnutrition while augmenting adaptive capacity to climate change. Beddington (2011) observed that the commission on sustainable Agriculture and climate change listed high-priority policy actions to address food security, including integrating food security and sustainable agriculture into global and national policies, significantly raising the level of global investment in food systems, and

developing specific programs and policies to support the most vulnerable populations (namely, those that are already subject to food insecurity). Climate change and environmental insecurity presents additional threats to food security, affecting crop yields and hindering farming activities and small businesses' survival in most parts of the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

In 1986, the highly influential World Bank report "Poverty and Hunger" focused on the temporal dynamics of food insecurity. It introduced the widely accepted distinction between chronic food insecurity, associated with problems of continuing or structural poverty and low incomes, and transitory food insecurity, which involved periods of intensified pressure caused by natural disasters, economic collapse or conflict. Dreze and Sen (1989) noted that wider investigation into the role of public action into combating hunger and deprivation, found no separate place for food security as an organizing framework for action. Instead, it focused on a wider construct of social security which has many distinct components including, health and nutrition.

According to FAO (1996) food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels is achieved when all people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and healthy life. This definition is again redefined in the state of food insecurity by FAO (2001), as a situation that exist when all people at all times do not have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. FAO (2008) added that qualifications that must be met for a food secured system include physical availability, economic and physical access, appropriate utilization, and stability of the prior three elements over time. Food insecurity exists when people do not have adequate physical, social or economic access to food. A lot of factors such as climate change, adverse environmental conditions, drought, flood and storms, activities of insurgency, herdsmen and farmers clashes and other factors militating against effective operations of farms by the peasant farmers in the Middle Belt of Nigeria.

### **The Peasant Farmers**

A peasant farmer is a member of a traditional class of farmers, either labourers or owners of small farms especially in the Middle Ages under feudalism or more generally in any pre-industrial society. According to Little (2008), a peasant is a smallholding farmer, producing crops and animals for family consumption and for market exchange, using family labour throughout the farming cycle. The peasants live in villages; they engage in face-to-face relations with neighbouring farmers; they possess a diverse range of cultural and religious beliefs and practices; they fall within a diverse range of social networks and local organizations (Kinship Organizations and labour-sharing networks).

The peasant farmers are food producers for the general consumption. They already know their agro-ecological area, farming system and socio-economic environment intimately. Gubbles (2014) observed that peasant farmers knowledge about farming is superior to what outsiders could realistically hope to gain, even after prolonged study. They take responsibility for agro-ecosystem analysis".

The vast majority of the rural populations of developing countries rely on peasant and indigenous agriculture. Therefore the peasant farmers plays major role in food security. It is the humanity attempts to ensure food security through its own production, without reliance on the market. Also in many countries, the peasant farmers ensure that most of the agricultural production intended for national industries and exports are available, as it is the case in Africa for cotton, coffee, cocoa, etc. Lastly, it should be noted that peasant and indigenous agriculture also play a major role in employment, natural resource management and territorial development.

### **The Role of Peasant Farming and Cattle rearing in Nigerian Economy**

Before Nigeria attained independence, agriculture was the main sector of the economy, and accounted for more than 50% of GDP and more than 75% of export earnings. Consequently, with the rapid expansion of the petroleum industry, agricultural development was neglected, and there after witnessed a relative decline. However, a succession of good harvests, higher producer prices, reductions in cereal imports and a resurgence of public and private investment in crop production resulted in a sharp recovery in production (FAO, 2001).

Traditional smallholders, who use simple techniques of production and the bush-fallow system of cultivation, account for about two thirds of Nigerian's total agricultural production. They produce food crops (mainly sorghum, maize, yams, cassava, rice and millet), cash crops (mainly cotton, cocoa, rubber and groundnuts). According to FAOSTAT data 2005, steady growth has been observed in the agricultural production of both staple and cash crops since 1990. Though the current GDP from agriculture in Nigeria decreased to 3274725.01 NGN million in the first quarter of 2016 from 4481257.62 NGN million in the fourth quarter of 2015 (Source: Adopted from 2016 Nigerian Trading Economics).

Nigeria, like most of the areas in tropical Africa, is technically and industrially undeveloped. Agriculture does not only supply food, but most of available employment opportunities directly or indirectly. Crops and livestock farmers including cattle herdsman feed the country directly or indirectly in terms of providing raw materials for industries, trade, investments, source of income for the farmers and herdsman. It is also through the activities of crops farmers and herdsman that Nigeria engages in external trade which is a major source of foreign exchange earnings for Nigeria. The supply of food crops such as rice, wheat, maize, cassava, yam, potato etc. and the supply of cash crops for exportation (e.g.) cotton, cocoa, coffee, oil palm, rubber etc by the crops farmers, while the herdsman supply meat, hides & skin (leather) wool, horns etc. The provision of food and raw materials for industries and for exportation is a necessity and that must be achieved through agriculture via peasant farming, cattle rearing as well as large scale agricultural projects. Other benefits include:

- a) Maintenance of local food supply (i.e.) self-sufficiency in the production and supply of food crops and table eggs and meat.
- b) Protection of local agricultural industries
- c) Promotion of orderly growth of agricultural sector and urban areas development.
- d) To protect and guarantee the production of more commodities of which the locality is an important producer due to specialization, soil types and the prevailing climate of the area.
- e) Provision of recreational facilities such as gardens, parks, landscape, wild-life /games reserves, forests reserves and other aesthetics.

### **Environmental Problems Faced by Peasant Farmers and the Herdsman in the Middle Belt of Nigeria**

Peasant farmers and herdsman are increasingly faced with risk factors such as droughts, floods, diseases, pests, windstorms, fire, theft, damage and several other unpleasant events whose occurrence cannot be readily predicated and therefore, poses serious threat to the success of farming enterprise in Nigeria. Some of these problems are man-made such as resource control conflict while others are natural occurrences. Patrick (2010) opined that since farmers cannot predict the probability of occurrences of any of these and cannot bear these risks and uncertainties alone, they are faced with the option of transferring or sharing the risks involved in the day-to-day management of their farms to government and other reputable agencies for possible assistance. Some of these problems are discussed below:-

### **Herdsman and Farmers Conflicts**

The incessant resources control conflicts witnessed in the middle belt of Nigeria have resulted in loss of lives, properties and environmental degradation. The Fulani Herdsman have borne a large proportion of the blame for most of the conflicts. Ochonu (2016) reported in Vanguard Newspaper of March 18, 2016, that Nomadic Fulani herdsman have become a more-resented group of people across the country because of their non-tolerant attitudes. The resentment has intensified as they have clashed with farming communities across the country. The paper added that in the Middle Belt, however, it is no longer correct to refer to this attitude as resentment, just as it is no longer correct to describe what is happening as a clash. It is a sustained massacre, and it has engendered an attitude that is approaching hatred – the kind of hatred that one reserves for someone who threatens one's very existence.

Recently, hired mercenaries in the pay of Fulani herdsman massacred 300 people in several Agatu villages, burned down homes, food barns, and churches, and displaced tens of thousands of Agatu people. Fulani herdsman leaders in Makurdi then brazenly claimed the attack, describing it as payback for cattle theft. The massacre was a reprise of several murderous invasions across different parts of the Middle Belt. The

genocidal rampage of well-armed herdsmen has become a feature of life in the areas in the last seven years (Ochonu, 2016).

A study of major sources of these conflicts between the Fulani herdsmen and crops farmers show that land related issues, especially over grazing fields, account for the highest percentage of the conflicts. In other words, struggles over the control of economically viable lands cause more tensions and violent conflicts among communities. As herdsmen and cultivators have coexisted for a long time, the complexities over the land-use system have dramatically changed and thus become the independent variable in conflicts between herdsmen and the farmers.

However, the herdsmen indisputably represent a significant component of the Nigeria economy. They constitute the major breeders of cattle, the main source of meat, the most available and cheap source of animal proteins consumed by Nigerians. According to Gubbles (2014) the Fulani herdsmen own over 90% of the nation's livestock population which account for one-third of agricultural GDP and 3.2% of the Nation's GDP. Therefore, the contribution of the Fulani herdsmen to the local and national food security cannot be overstressed. To this therefore, there is need for peaceful co-existence among the peasant farmers and the Fulani herdsmen owing to their economic interdependence and importance in food security.

Due to the possible effects of climate change which has resulted in acute water scarcity and seemingly unending drought, tse-tse fly infestation, dry pastures/grasses and leaching, cattle-owners and herdsmen have increasingly been finding it difficult to locate suitable grasses or pastures and clean, fresh water for their cattle in their original localities. The nomadic pastoral herdsman while moving their livestock en masse, from location to location in search of grazing pasture, often move into local communities and farms along the way, with their cattle trampling on and eating up crops and grass, destroying the livelihood of farm owners in the process.

According to Okpaleke (2016) there are serious resistance from most local communities and farm owners as hectares of arable farmlands are often invaded by herdsmen at night or on market days (when most of the farmers must have gone to sell their crops or are generally away from their farms). Such ambushed fighting and armed attacks which characterize most pastoral conflicts, have become a syndrome, with the heavily armed herdsmen having the upper-hand as the often kill, set huts, houses, properties ablaze, sometimes going as far as to abduct innocent people from the affected and attacked communities.

Nyong (2010) noted that the exacerbation of vulnerability and conflicts in Middle Belt of Nigeria between Fulani herdsmen and farmers is not only caused by climate change but a combination of factors. For example, with the expansion of population, the rate of food production should naturally increase to meet the increasing demand. It is natural for the farmers to encroach into marginal lands that had been the traditional pasture routes for the cattle. This has therefore heightened struggle between livestock and crops producers which, more often than not, result in the escalation of conflicts. Hence, as population grows, more land is being cultivated and less is available for pasture, forcing Fulani herdsmen to migrate and trample on crops cultivated by farmers.

Ochonu (2016) explained that one of the causes of the problem is the unchallenged, open bearing of automatic firearms by Fulani namads. Nigerian laws forbid regular citizens to own or bear automatic weapons, but the Fulani herdsmen do own and carry arms about and presumably use them on farmers, creating tensions and putting farmers on edge. This impunity on the part of the Fulani herdsmen is inexplicable. The herdsmen have to be disarmed unless the government wants farming communities to similarly arm themselves with sophisticated military-grade weapons. That would be disastrous for everyone and for the country. Moreso, Nori, Switzer and Crawford (2005) have assessed the sources of conflicts between the herdsmen and farmers. It was shown that the Fulani herdsmen only had control over their animals and do not have control over pasture land and water, and this have direct and significant impacts on their livelihoods and the host communities as they sourced for this resources (pasture land and water). The greatest threat to Fulani herdsmen's livelihood is nothing other than the insecurity of their cattle due primarily to poor or inaccessibility to pasture land and water points. These clashes generally centre on access to and competition for arable land for crops productions and grazing land and water for cattle. As pasture land shrinks, sequel to taking over of such land by farmers, conflicts become inevitable.

## **Consequences of Herdsmen's and Farmer Clashes on Crop Production Activities, Demand, Supply, Prices and the Lives of Both Man and Animals**

Braimah (2016) explained that herdsmen have constituted themselves into a great threat to national food security by their brazen and deliberate destruction of crops which results in avoidable crises. As a result, farmers deserted farms because of insecurity. This has significant effect on crop production activities, supply, demand, prices and the lives of both man and animals. Crops farmers across the country are increasingly becoming apprehensive over the negative attitude of the herdsmen who unleash their herds on farmers' crops, destroying them to points of no redemption. According to Duru (2016) reported in Vanguard Newspaper of 22/2/2016 in Makurdi, Nigeria, ASSAPIN, pleaded with the Federal Government to take immediate action to stem the unending attacks and killings of farmers in some parts of the country by suspected Fulani herdsmen. The paper added that the Association said, if prompt action was not taken to address the issue, the country will face a steady decline in food crop production and its attendant food shortages.

According to Ijustdey (2016), food scarcity is imminent across the nation, following a drastic reduction in food production as a result of insecurity in different parts of Nigeria. Farming activities have come under threat in the middle belt, northern Nigeria and southern regions owing to the menace of Fulani herdsmen. Duru (2016) reported that the prices of food had skyrocketed because of low supply from farmers due mainly to attacks on farmers by the herdsmen. Ijustdey (2016) gathered that while many farmers in the south had abandoned their farmland(s) for security reasons, traders from the North have cut down on the quantity of cattle, rice, beans and vegetables they move down to the South for sale. The result has been an unprecedented increase in prices of these staple foods in the market, causing serious threats to human and animal lives. Braimah (2016) added that farmers now incur extra cost to put hedges around their farms to fend off the marauding cattle whose owners have grown most insensitive to the plights of the average farmers.

Over the past three years, farmers in North Eastern parts of Nigeria and other parts of middle Belt are no longer able to farm for security reasons especially for fear of attacks by the dreaded Boko Haram sect who continued to unleash untold havoc in some parts of Nigeria. The insurgent activities have in turn affected food production and consequently raised prices of foods that are majorly cultivated in the affected parts of the country. This same part of the country has been known for mass rearing of cattle, which is greatly affected by the criminal activity of cattle rustling. Many peasant farmers have been displaced, while others are restricted from going to their farms because of checks and militaristic counterterrorism approach of the government.

Faiza (2012) described the threats of Boko Haram sects to agricultural sector as "disturbing". Faiza argued that the industry is experiencing low productivity as many farmers have abandoned their farms for fear of attack on their farm lands and their lives. Aliyu (2012) admitted that this attack by Boko Haram insurgent is further compounded by what is referred to as 'farmers drain'. Aliyu explained that many youths from rural areas that used to tend the farm lands have migrated to Maiduguri to join the "Jihad" (an Islamic term referring to a war or struggle against unbelievers) while others had moved to neighboring states or countries. In both cases, lower turn over in agricultural production should be expected, thus affecting availability and accessibility to food.

According to IRIN (2015), the ongoing attacks by Boko Haram sects have destroyed land and killed thousands of young men since 2009, and, in some cases, wiped out or displaced entire generations of farmers and herders. IRIN added that more than 17,000 farmers have fled from northeastern Nigeria to the south since 2012, according to Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency.

According to IRIN (2015) interview with Bulama Modu, a rice farmer from Gwoza who has since taken refuge at a camp for internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Malkohi, he told IRIN: "Boko Haram has prevented farmers from tilling their fields, they have been attacking us and many farmers were killed, mostly youth, we had to run without cultivating our rice". "At first, the sect imposed levies and taxes on the farmers in exchange for not burning their crops", he said. In one village in the Chwawa area of Madagali, a community leader, who wished to remain anonymous, said these "fines ranged from between one million

and three million naira, depending on the size of the village. But later, they started slaughtering people and this situation forced us all to flee”, Modu said.

The issue of “Boko Haram” is always on the front burner of public discourse for some years now in Nigeria. So many things have been said to be the root causes of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria which highly affects negatively the activities of peasant farmers in the middle belt and Northeast of the country. The fundamental ideology is “Western education is forbidden” they are known to destructively attack churches, mosques, schools, police stations and government, private and public owned facilities with a kind of guerilla warfare tactics.

According to Sani (2015), who described Boko Haram as a “demonic force” and a serious threat to Nigeria and humanity. Factors responsible for Boko Haram insurgency are as follows:

- I. Poor Relationship between government and the governed.
- II. Prevalence of social and economic in-justices.
- III. The collapse of public education.
- IV. Massive unemployment
- V. Proliferation of arms
- VI. Unguarded borders.
- VII. Human right abuse and extra-judicial killings.
- VIII. Capitalism breeds terrorism
- IX. Lack of unity and ethnic crises in the North
- X. The distortion of religious realities (According to him, “The fact is the seed of terrorism and that is where the seed is. If you are a preacher and you distort the teachings of religion and bring something that is not supposed to be there, you are creating a monster”).

### **Possible Solutions to Herdsmen and Peasant Farmers Conflict**

There should be a peaceful co-existence among the Fulani herdsmen and farmers to promote food security in Nigeria. Many Nigerians have suggested that there should be ranches for the Fulani herdsmen to feed their cattle. Olorunyomi (2016) in Premium Times on Tuesday, June 28, 2016 reported that President Muhammadu Buhari said on January 25, 2016 that a plan to map out grazing areas will soon be presented to the Nigerian governors forum as a temporary solution to the frequent conflicts among Fulani herdsmen and the farmers until cattle owners are persuaded to adopt other means of rearing their cattle.

Also Olorunyomi (2016) in Premium Times on 3rd April, 2016 reported that the President and governors agreed that there would be no grazing areas; rather, ranches would be established by government where the cattle would be kept in one place and fed. The paper also noted on May 11, 2016 that the Federal Government had reaffirmed its plans to establish cattle ranches as lasting solution to the frequent clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. According to Nwokeoma (2016), Punch on Tuesday, May 3, 2016 confirmed that ranching was picked as the best solution to the crises, in a poll published on punch www.punchng.com. The poll respondents pointed out that since ranching is being practiced all over the world and has worked well in reducing conflicts between farmers and herdsmen, the model should also be adopted in Nigeria.

The government and NGOs to arrange peace – Building efforts which address the root causes and effects of these conflicts would serve better and would ensure more durable and sustainable peace between the contending parties in these seemingly perennial and incessant conflicts. Such peace-building efforts should include, among other things, the setting down of structures which, while engaged in identifying and addressing the said root causes of these violence, would also include efforts at supporting, enhancing or promoting internal local capacities for conflict resolution and peace management among the conflict parties. By so doing, the recurrence of violence could be prevented or minimized.

On the part of herdsmen according to Okpaleke (2016) if they could, in liaising with their national association and in consultation with relevant government arms and agencies, develop new business models which are in tune with best practices and world standards, by building and situating their cattle in well-watered locations, the problem of pastoral conflicts could be reduced to the barest minimum.



The Fulani herdsmen must be told in clear terms to give peace a change by grazing their herds and flocks on empty fields only. They should give way to peaceful co-existence with peasant farmers to promote food security in Nigeria.

Sani (2015) said, “For us to win the war against insurgency, we must break the wall of fear. Our religious clerics should choose the option of either engaging the insurgent or confronting them. The battle against insurgency is the battle for the soul of Islam, for the soul of the North and for the soul of Nigeria. We must in every respect take these battles as our collective battle”.

Public opinions and citizens solutions to end terrorism suggested the following action points according to Ezekwesili (2014);

- a) Financing the security apparatus in the country such as mobilization of agents on the field, weapons, Intel and logistics.
- b) Local security governance
- c) Conclusive prosecution of both civil and criminal cases
- d) Proper immigrants and citizens’ identification
- e) Promotion of peace education
- f) Social welfare such as: specific programmes to educate and empower women, creation of job opportunities for Nigerian youth, design and delivery of robust programmes for destitute children, and enhanced provision of education and literacy programmes.

### **Implication for Farmers/Herdsmen and Business Education.**

The competition – driven conflicts between the peasant farmers and cattle herdsmen have become a common occurrence in many parts of Nigeria. These conflicts are caused by the struggle for rights over ownership, use and occupation of land. It leads to wanton destruction of lives, properties and abandonment of farming and farming communities for safety. In this situation, it is necessary to educate the farmers and herdsmen on the need to co-exist peacefully as both groups need each other’s goods and services in order to live.

The importance of education cannot be over-emphasized in human endeavour and relationships. The federal, state and local governments should reactivate the machinery of Adult and non- formal education schemes to train the farmers and herdsmen on how to live together peacefully and work together to make use of the available land without trespassing or encroaching on others’ right. These groups of people (peasant farmers and herdsmen) need to be educated on the land use acts, regulations, peace keeping and conflict management strategies. There is need for strengthening of Agricultural extension service and nomadic education as well as incorporating the concepts of land use law in the programmes. These schemes are pertinent and must be given urgent attention to reduce or minimize conflicts arising from struggle for land occupation.

### **Conclusion**

The negative influence that the physical and political environment imposed on farmers and agricultural activities are due to natural and human actions. Fulani herdsmen’s and farmers’ crises, and the activity of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has posed tremendous effects on farming in the middle Belt of the country thereby threatening the food security in Nigeria. The Middle Belt of Nigeria is generally refers to as the food basket of the country. The region has contributed immensely to food supply in the country.

For peasant farmers to meet food demand in the country and eradicate food shortages and hunger, there is need for environmental protection against human and natural threats that militate against effective performance of peasant farmers in the region. Climate change and adverse weather conditions, Fulani herdsmen clashes with farmers, and Boko Haram insurgency are seen to hinder food production and supply. By implication therefore, availability and accessibility of food products to the people are considerably affected. Indeed, farmers in the middle belt are faced with the fear of environmental insecurity and insurgency. The government and other relevant authorities should take concrete steps to address the needs of herdsmen in terms of availability and accessibility to grazing land, seek lasting solution to insurgency

and resolve the re-occurring conflicts in farming sector by ensuring peaceful co-existence among farmers in order to promote steady and full capacity food production in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

For peaceful coexistence among peasant farmers in the middle belt and beyond, and food security to be achieved, the following recommendations are made:-

- (1) Demarcation of grazing reserves for Fulani herdsmen on their various grazing tracks is necessary since it would restrict the movement of herdsmen to designated areas, away from farmlands and communities.
- (2) Laws that forbid citizens to own or bear automatic weapons should bind all groups of people including the Fulani herdsmen in order to disarm the cattle herdsmen.
- (3) Flash points of possible conflict should be promptly identified and possibly address them before they occur.
- (4) All stakeholders should be made to participate at all levels of conflict resolution and resource management.
- (5) Laws that prohibit environmental degradation should be enforced by government and relevant authorities.
- (6) Government should be firm and fair in the administration and implementation of decisions, with regards to minning of natural reserves within Nigeria.
- (7) The harmful waste (special criminal provisions) Act, 1988 enacted by Government should be enforced and more of such laws should be enacted and enforced by government for effective protection of the arable and range lands.

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