

FARMER-CATTLE HERDSMEN CONFLICTS: CAUSES, MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS ON AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM IN AYAMELUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA.

BY

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Abstract

This paper was born out of fear and anger; Anger over the resource-based conflict between farmers and cattle herdsman, which thereafter undermines the growth of agricultural system in Nigeria. Fear over the vandalization of crops and valuable properties of farmers by cattle that may escalate to war in totality, if not well managed. Sequel to this, the paper reviewed the various states that were prone to conflict, conflict itself as a concept and also the conflict between farmers and cattle herdsman and asserted that conflict could be manifested in various forms. The implications of conflicts on agricultural system were also reviewed and suggested the various ways in which such conflict could be resolved. However, analytical approach was used in this paper by discussing the studies of herder-farmer conflicts in various states that escalated and resulted in multiple deaths.

Keywords: *farmers-cattle herdsman, conflicts, implications*

Introduction

Agriculture still remains an important sector that employs over 70% of the Nigerian labour force and also serving as a potential vehicle for moving Nigeria economy towards development (Isa, 2013). Nigeria is a very diverse agro-ecology with different farming systems including pastoral farming, cereal, Root and tuber crop, tree crops, fishery among others. Conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria have been in existence since the beginning of agriculture. Its decrease or increase in intensity among various states relies on economic and environmental factors prevailing in the place (Blench, 2010).

In Nigeria, conflict has become pervasive in occurrence to the extent that it affects all spheres of human life. The degree to which conflict affect a state may be different from another state. The conflicts between cattle herdsman and peasant farmers in Udenigida village of Nasarawa Local government caused a bloody war, which about 30 people died, many houses, crops and other valuable properties set ablaze (Isa, 2013). The cause of the conflicts was due to the destruction of rice farmland by cattle. Between 1996 and 2002, Bauchi state and Gombe state respectively recorded 28 and 112 death tolls caused by the conflict, between Fulani herdsman and farmers in the state (Ajuwon, 2009). However, large animal losses and crop damages were equally recorded in addition to other injuries inflicted on human, animals among others.

Another conflicts between farmers and Fulani rearers in Miga, Kaugana, Birni Kudu, Garki and Maigatari Local Government areas of Jigawa state claimed many lives, and properties that estimated to N1.56 billion (Isa, 2013). In 2002 pastoralists were driven out of Basa local government Kogi state after a bloody encounter with farmers. Between 1996 and 2002, another 49 cases of conflicts between farmers and pastoralists were reported in Kogi state (Ajuwon, 2004). In

the year 1999 plateau state and pastoral fulb were in conflict due to the eruption of the ethnic religious crises which led to driving many pastoralists out of their domain and killing of their cattle with chemicals. All these have produced adverse consequences in the destruction of villages, settlements, crops, irrigation facilities human beings and Animal lives therein (Ajuwon, 2004). In 2009, hundreds of pastoral Fulbe were expelled from Demboa Local government of Borno state as a result of the conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsmen. However, the invasion of Tipo, Kisa, Samne, bangi Wurke and Gure communities in Lamurale local government area of Adamawa state by cattle rearers with guns left unconfirmed number of death and injured persons with over 2000 people rendered homeless due to the destruction of their village (New Nigerian, 2010).

With the available literature, there are a number of factors that provoke the escalation of conflicts in Nigeria; Religious and ethnic related issues which account for about 40% of conflict (b) land related conflict account for about 50% of the whole conflicts (New Nigerian 2010). Furthermore, the conflicts between arable crop farmers and cattle herdsmen have become common occurrence in many parts of Nigeria. The competition between these two agricultural land user groups has often turned into serious hostilities and social frictions (Ingawa, Ega and Eri harbor, 1999). In the South east zones of Nigeria, the conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsmen were reported to have claimed many lives and properties in Imo state (Ajuwon, 2004).

According to Blench (2010) there were sporadic incidents of conflict between the Mambila farmers and pastoralists as far back as 1923 when Fulbe allowed their cattle to trample on crops. The obstruction of Fulb movement around valleys led to the last culminating in burning down of Mamabila village among others. More so in Anambra State, it has been observed that between 1990-2014, the conflict between farmers and herdsmen in Ayamelum local government of Anambra State have claimed several lives, wounded over 100 people, destroyed many properties and caused displacement of pastoralists from their temporarily abode (Udemezue 2015).

The movement of Fulani pastoralists for pasture into various parts of Nigeria has been accompanied with attendant challenges and opportunities for both the farmers and pastoralists. However, the movement has brought about conflicts and wars to further emergence of the state of insecurity, political instability, social upheaval and social-economic quagmire. More so, the conflicts have demonstrated high potential to cause food crises and insecurity in rural communities where majority of the conflicts frequently occurred. It portends a grave consequence for rural development as well as imposing threat to various aspects of human life. In the light of this, it behooves this paper to appraise the degree of conflicts between the two parties (farmers-Fulani herdsmen) in Nigeria. In all, it is pertinent to know “The encroachment of Fulani herdsmen into the crop field of farmers is a call to war between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria. Their crop is their life, because to every farmer, life is worthless without his crop. Therefore, war is their next option when their source of existence is destroyed”.

Ayamelum Background

Ayamelum is a local government area in Anambra State with headquarters at Anaku. In the year 1996, Ayamelum was excised from Oyi Local Government Area in Anambra State to be a local government of its own. Since then till now, it is an existing local government endowed with a numerous natural resources (Onigbo, 2007). The local government is of eight communities; Omor, Anaku, Omasi, Igbakwu, umuerum, Umueje, Omasi and Ifite Ogwari. The strategic importance of Ayamelum is agricultural activities and other artisan culture that has started a long period of time. Formally, the people of Ayamelum were traditionally bounded, but now majority of the population are being transformed into Christianity as a result of Western education.

Agriculture is the main stay of Ayamelum economy, even though there are other mineral

resources available. In Ayamelum rainfall occurs seasonally with a short dry season which brings about changes in ecosystem and ugly relationships resulting in the conflict between the sedentary farmers and the nomadic pastoralists. Ayamelum has its boundary with the following local governments. In the North with Uzo Uwani local government in Enugu State, in the South with Anambra East Local Government in Anambra State, in the East with Awka North Local Government in Anambra State and in the West with Anambra West Local Government in Anambra State.

Conflict as a concept

The word “conflict” connotes different meanings to different people, but the truth remains that conflict cannot occur in a vacuum or isolation without being correlated with another predetermined factors. Therefore whichever way it is being defined two parties or more are involved at the detriment of societal development. According to long man Dictionary, (4th edition), conflict is defined as a state of disagreement or argument between people, groups, and countries among others. Obi, Ananti and Onwubike (2014) see conflict as a behaviour intended to obstruct the achievement of some other person’s goals. However, they linked it with negative features and situations which give rise to inefficiency, ineffectiveness or dysfunctional consequences. Therefore, conflict in agriculture can also have effect as ineffectiveness and decrease in productivity since the farmer are under the climate of fears and threats. Austin (1976) opined that since there is an interaction among individuals or groups, there is conflict within, conflict is a disagreement between two or more individuals or groups which each individual or group trying to gain acceptance of its view or objective over others. However, Hammed and Ayatuji (2002) were of the view that conflict could be a stepping stone for positive change if constructively handled.

In view of the above, Otite (2001) defines conflict as a way of settling problems originally from opposing interests and for the continuity of society. Conflict on its own is not necessarily good or bad but can be inevitable feature of organizational life which should be judged in terms of its effect on performance. According to Schmidt (1974) conflict on its own has merits and demerits. For positive outcome of conflict; people Forced to search for new approaches, there would be chance for people to test their capacities and a better idea would be produced. On the negative aspect, some people feel defeated and demeaned, the distance between people increased, climate of suspicious and mistrust developed and resistance developed instead of teamwork. With reference to the above synopsis on conflict, it is pertinent to note that conflict does not occur in isolation or a vacuum. It goes hand in hand with other factors which may be its facilitator. Therefore, conflict could be defined as the friction or disagreement between people, groups, and countries or states with different opinions or interest in which one group or individual is trying to gain the interest of his rivals. Thus, Agricultural conflict occurs when some farmers tend to gain interest at the expense of other farmers. But farmer- herdsman conflicts occur when Fulani herdsman feed their animals at the detriment of Farmers’ crop.

Implications of Conflict on Agriculture

The implications of conflicts on agricultural sector should not be over emphasized because they display consequent effects in all the spheres of agricultural field and even brought about fundamental problems with regard to food crisis in the prone areas.

Conflicts in Nigeria since the 1960s have fundamentally undermined the stability and development of Nigerian state and economy. The social, economic, and political tension created as a result of numeral escalations of violent conflict have raised fundamental national questions for survival of the Nigeria state (Elaiwu and Aknidele, (1996) in Isa (2013). However, once conflict

launches into agricultural system, issues set in farmers can lose focus on the result they supposed to achieve. Owing to this, it leads to agricultural between farmers and Fulani herdsmen which in return cause low productivity among farmers. Conflicts distort the economy and worsen income inequality of rural farmers. It is a big challenge which had eaten deep into every fabric of all facets of Agricultural production.

Moritz (2010) opined that farmers-herdsmen conflict did not only have direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of those involved but also disrupt and threaten the sustainability of agricultural and pastoral production in West Africa. On contrary, Rashid (2007) also saw conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers as something that undermines the impact of agricultural extension service delivery and innovative usage among farmers in Nigeria. A study conducted by Rashid (2007) shows that majority (77%.8%) of farmers in the study area perceived conflict as a loss while about (68.4%) of the herdsmen also saw it as a threat. This shows that both parties did not see conflict as an avenue to gain or progress in all ramifications. Between 1990-2014, the conflict between farmers and cattle herdsmen in Ayamelum local government Area, Anambra state Nigeria have claimed several lives, wounded over 100 people, destroyed many properties and also displaced a lot of pastoral from their temporary abode (Udemezue 2015). More so, a study conducted by (Udemezue 2015) shown that majority of the farmers perceived the effect of conflict as loss of crop yield, loss of soil fertility, environmental pollution, loss of income and farm destruction. Farmer-herdsmen conflict significantly had impact on agricultural production particularly on the farmers' household in Nigeria. As a result of this, farmers did not perceive it as an opportunity to gain rather they saw it as an impediment to rural development as well as being excruciating to their survivals. However, another research conducted by Rashid (2012) indicates that loss of material followed by loss of crop Yield (85%) household resources (23.5%) and stored products (23%) were more widespread consequence to conflicts among farmers in Kwara State. Daniel (2006) with his findings confirmed family instability and intense frustration among farmers as a negative consequence of farmer-herdsmen conflicts.

With respect to the above, it is pertinent to know that whatever the consequences may be, farmers and herdsmen suffered several negative socio-psychological consequences relating to their family lives, because whatever happens at work could automatically affect what happens at home. To support this, Potter (1995) opined that it is absolute impossible to find a frustrated person at work who is still energetic at home and these effect were farmers than herdsmen, probably due to the fact that farmers suffered more losses than herdsmen. All in all, conflict between crop farmers and cattle herdsmen over the use of agricultural land is still pervasive and has created grave consequences for rural development.

Approach to conflict management

When people with different goals and needs come together to perform a common task, conflict comes in people with different opinions and objectives tend to arrive at conflict once there is no compromise to one another. However, if conflict is not dealt with effectively it can break down the agricultural system thereafter, unresolved conflict leads to people losing insight on how to achieve goals, members soon begin to undermine each other, lack of respect to one another and erosion of faith in the work emerged (NIMC Staff Hand Book, 2013). To deal with this effectively, individuals must understand their conflict styles and know when and how to apply them when the situation occurs. According to Thamas and kilman (1970), the following styles should be adopted for conflict resolution by the people involved.

- (a) Competitive (b) Collaborative (c) Compromising (d) Accommodating (e) Avoiding

Competitive

People who tend towards a competitive style take a firm stand and know what they want. They usually operate from a position of power, drawn from things like position, rank, expertise or persuasive ability. This style can be useful when there is an emergency and a decision needs to be made fast, when the decision is unpopular, or when defending against someone who is trying to exploit the situation selfishly. The implication of this is that people may feel bruised, unsatisfied and resentful when used in less urgent situation.

Collaborative

People tending towards a collaborative style try to meet the needs of all people involved. These people can be highly assertive but unlike competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. This style is useful when you need to bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution; when there have been previous conflicts in the group; or when the solution is too important for a simple trade-off.

Compromising

People who prefer a compromising style try to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone. Everyone is expected to give up something and the compromise himself or herself and also expects to relinquish something. Compromise is useful when the loss of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground, when equal strength opponents are at a standstill and when there is a deadline looming.

Accommodating

This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the persons own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. This person is not assertive but is highly cooperative. Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party, when peace is more valuable than winning or when you want to be in a position to collect this “favor” you gave. However, some people may not return favors and overall this approach is unlikely to give the best outcomes.

Avoiding

People tending towards this style seek to evade the conflict entirely. This style is typified by delegating controversial decision, accepting default decisions, and not wanting to hurt anyone’s feelings. It can be appropriate when victory is impossible, when the controversy is trivial, or when someone else is in a better position to solve the problem. However, in many situations this is a weak and ineffective approach to take. Apart from this, it is obviously known that different conflicts have different style management, that is to say the rule applied for conflict A management may not be applied for conflict B management and so on because over a time, people’s conflict management styles tend to mesh and a “right” way to solve conflict emerges (Thomas and Kilmann 1970) therefore, it is good to recognize when each style can be used effectively and make sure that people understand that different approaches may suit different solutions depending on the circumstance surrounding the conflicts. As a result of this, the following process can be used to resolve conflicts in an organization.

Set the scene: In this process people should know that conflict may be a mutual problem, which may be resolved through discussion and negotiation rather than through raw aggression. Therefore, a victim of the conflict should emphasize that his or her perception is necessary for

conflict resolution. However, it is advised that people should use active listening skills to ensure that they hear and understand other's positions and perception.

Gather Information: There you are trying to get to the underlying interests, needs and concerns. Ask for the other person's view point and confirm that you respect his or her opinion and need his or her cooperation to solve the problem.

Try to understand his or her motivations and goals and see how your actions may be affecting these. Also, try to understand the conflict in objective terms: is it affecting work performance? Damaging the delivery to the client? Disrupting team work? Hampering decision-making? etc. Be sure to focus on work issues and leave personalities out of the discussion.

Agree the problem: This sounds like an obvious step but often different underlying needs, interests and goals can cause people to perceive problems very differently. You will need to agree to the problems that you are trying to solve before you will find a mutually acceptable solution. Sometimes, different people will see different but interlocking problems, if you cannot reach a common perception of the problem, then at the very least you need to understand what the other person see as the problem.

Brain storming: Here a set of people with different opinions is gathered together to have a fair input about the prevailing conflict. Each and everyone were expected to make an input in generating solution to the conflicts.

Negotiate a Solution: In this case, both sides may better understand the position of the other, and a mutually satisfactory solution may be clear to all.

Furthermore, with respect to the available literature, Udemezue (2015) saw the following as the coping strategies for conflict resolution between farmers and cattle rearers in Ayamelum local government of Anambra State, Nigeria: use of early harvesting method by farmers, use of physical fight by the farmer, use of traditional rulers and application of supplementary occupation. However, involvement of dispute resolution institutions of police and courts of law was found to be very insignificant. The reason is that police are corrupt, detain people and delay case unduly without achieving the desired goal.

More so, Rashid (2007) identified three conflict resolution used by farmers and cattle herdsmen in Kwara State;

- a. Problem- oriented coping strategies such as: Increase farm size/ herd size, relocate farm/herd, multiple farm plots/herd splitting, early harvesting /stock disposal.
- b. Emotion-oriented coping strategies such as appeasement, pray for peace, Pretense, Vengeance, Used drugs/ alcohol.
- c. Social support coping strategies; help from union/Association, help from relations/friends, help from local leaders, sought litigation, help from government, Insurance policy, Bank credit , NGO support.

In view of the above, it is vertically clear that a lot of styles for conflict management were employed by different scholars but what matters is the way you understand the conflict and what you think could be the best solution at the moment irrespective of the styles. It is also pertinent to understand the above different styles, because once you understand them, you can use them to think about the most appropriate approach for the situation you are in. Therefore, you can also think about your own instinctive approach and learn how you need to change this if necessary.

Causes of Conflicts

Herder – Farmer conflict 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 west Africa (Moritz, 2010). Therefore, it is unjust and unwise to ignore the proximate cause of the conflicts between farmers and herdsman because what we regard as local conflicts may escalate into real war. However, we need to know not just why friction begins, but also why and how conflicts between herders and farmers escalate into widespread violence. With the available literature, herders and farmers in many localities make their livelihood within the same geographical, political and socio-cultural conditions which may be characterized by the scarcity of resources and this gives rise to conflicts between farmers and herdsman. (Braukamper 2000).

In 2004, president Obasanjo of Nigeria declared State of emergency in central plateau state, when there were herder-farmer conflicts which more than 20,000 refugees fled to neighboring Cameroon and this articulated with ethnic, political and religious conflicts characterized the state (Morritz, 2010). In Ghana, crop damages have on numerous occasions resulted in widespread violence among farmer, youths and fulbe herders (Tonah, 2006).

Moritz (2010) identified many structural factors that contribute to the increasing incidence of conflict between herder and farmers as follows; Resource scarcity, decreasing interdependence of pastoral and agricultural economies, institutional failure to resolve conflicts and cultural differences between herders and farmers. However, Bassett (1988) saw drought and high cereal price as the proximate cause of the conflict between herders and farmers. In the same vein, Mitchell (1981) identified incompatibility as one of the causes of the conflicts between farmers and herders. Since the goals of both parties are incompatible, it is likely that they would compete with one another over natural resources, which thereafter result to escalation of conflicts. The influx of Fulani, the growth of their herds, and the expansion of cash crop production has led to greater competition over land between Grass field subsistence farmers and Fulani herders. According to Goheen (1996), gender is an important variable in herder-farmer conflicts in the Grass fields of Northwest Cameroon because subsistence farmers are primarily women and Fulani herders are men. In some parts of Cameroon, women have limited rights over land and because of this the fon and lineage chiefs receive tribute for allocating farm land to Fulani very close to women farm. As a result, women's work load increases and conflicts with herders are almost inevitable (Kum, 1983).

Theorists who study conflict escalation argue that not all escalation events are alike, therefore, we should not treat all herder-farmer conflict alike, rather, and there are general patterns on how conflicts metamorphose into widespread and violent engagements. These patterns of transformation can be found in who or what groups of people are involved in the actions they take, and in the stakes they hold or the goals they pursue during the conflict (Moritz 2010). Pruitt and Kim (2004) enumerated five-fold transformations that occur during conflict escalation;

- a. Shift from small to large (i.e increasing investment in the conflict)
- b. Shift from light to heavy tactics(from persuasion to violence)
- c. Shift from specific to general (from crop damage to ethic conflict)
- d. Shift from few to many (increase in the number of people involved in the conflict)
- e. Shifts in goals from doing well to wining to hurting the other party (from solving the problem to killing all opponents).

Conflict theorist have offered three general models for conflict escalation: contends- defender model, the conflict spiral model and the structural change model (Pruitt and Kim, 2004). Contender- defender model views conflicts in terms of the actions of one party (the contender) who seeks changes and the reactions of the other party (defender). Contender uses more of coercive strategies to attain his goals. The conflict spiral model focuses on the interaction between the two parties, in particular the vicious circle of actions and reactions of retaliation and deterrence. The

structural change model focuses on psychological changes that take place in the parties as conflict process. The psychological changes involve emotion, attitudes, perceptions and behavior of individuals, for example, the dehumanization and ... of other (Pruitt and Kim, 2004).

On the other hand, conflict theorists argue that parties do not seek to escalate the conflicts they have engaged in, escalation is instead usually an unintended consequence of conflict behavior and may occur inadvertently, step by step without the opponents having carefully considered the implications of their actions. (Kriesberg, 2007). However, this should not call for much argument, because it is obviously known that parties can escalate the conflict in which they have engaged in intentionally, because they know the possible consequences of the conflicts and tend working towards the achievement. It is not an unintended act of conflict behavior but a well planned act designed for the achievement of the desired goals.

A community that defeated by another community in a war years ago may later in future gather momentum and escalate conflicts with a strong confidence that their opponent must surrender. People in authority are much likely to escalate conflicts with their competitors who are not, because they have the supreme confidence that their rivals must be submitted to their authority and goals, since power is on their side. Therefore, parties can escalate the conflicts they have engaged in because the “consequences” serve as a road map and leading path for escalation of the conflicts. In 1954, Hindus and Muslims engaged in a serious conflict as a result of crop damage done by cattle (Moritz, 2010).

According to De Haan (2002), destruction of crops by cattle and other property (irrigation equipment and infrastructure) by the pastoralist are the main direct causes for conflicts cited by the farmers, whereas burning of range land and fadama and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are important direct reasons cited by the pastoralists. He also noted that antagonistic perceptions and beliefs among farmers and herdsmen could compound conflict situation. Other perceived causes of farmer-herdsmen conflicts include: inequitable access to land, diminishing land resources, antagonistic value among user groups, policy contradictions and non-recognition of rights of indigenous people (Adisa, 2011). Whatever the causes of farmers-herdsmen conflicts are, it is good to know that the conflicts have been of great negative effect on human lives and agricultural development. Therefore, for both parties to conform with federal government’s agricultural transformation agenda they should eschew conflicts and embrace peace. In view of this, it is therefore pertinent to know that if the conflicts between farmers and cattle herdsmen are properly managed, it will exploit agriculture to ensure food security and also be a catalyst to move national economy towards a positive change. It can as well boost agriculture as a pivot for rural development.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper reviewed the various states in Nigeria that were affected by conflicts, the conflict itself as a concept and also the conflict between farmers and cattle herdsmen and found out that conflict could manifest in various forms. It looked into the implications of conflicts on agricultural system and suggested the different ways in which conflicts could be resolved. The paper, however, saw conflict as a loss or threat which has no positive implication to the parties involved; rather it imposes negative implications on them.

In view of this, this paper therefore recommends that those factors that cause or escalate conflicts must be seriously avoided and if perchance occur should be entrusted in the hands of the traditional rulers of the community involved. Government at all levels should handle conflict with their utmost capacity thereby enacting laws that will give cattle herdsmen right to land use in order to reduce insecurity and ameliorate the spate of conflict. Traditional method of conflict

management should be articulated with modern ones in order to stop further eruption of conflicts.

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