

Assessment of Farmers-Herders Conflict and Food Security in Benue State

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Abstract: *Over the past decade, the intensity of the farmers-herders conflict has notably increased in Nigeria's middle belt and southern zones, posing a significant threat to the nation's food security and overall stability. The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) report in 2016 identified it as the single most widely spread peace and security threat in Nigeria. Benue State has an economy that is driven by agriculture and it produces large quantities of farm produce. Sadly, sustained crisis in the State continue to impact its agricultural sector, making it difficult to achieve food security. Consequently, this paper examined the impact of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue State. The paper was guided by two research questions. These include: How has the loss of lives due to the farmers-herders conflict undermined crop production in Benue State? How has the forced displacement of farmers and herders undermined food availability in Benue State? To analyze the issues raised, the paper was anchored on the eco-security theory. The estimated population of the study area is 446,000 persons. The paper adopted a mixed-methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. From the population of the study, a sample size of 600 respondents was drawn using a purposive sampling technique based on the expertise, knowledge and familiarity of the relevant stakeholders with the subject matter and study area. Semi-structured interview and questionnaire instruments were used to generate primary data while secondary data was sourced from relevant literature. Based on the findings of the paper, we recommend that the government should strengthen security in farming areas by deploying more security personnel and establishing community-based early warning systems to prevent attacks.*

Keywords: assessment, farmers-herders, conflict, food security, Benue state

INTRODUCTION

The intensity of the farmers-herders violent conflict has notably increased in Nigeria's middle belt and southern zones in recent years, posing a significant threat to the nation's food security and overall stability. This study investigates the impact of farmers-herders conflict on food security. The 2016 Strategic Conflict Assessment of Nigeria, conducted by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), identified the herders-farmers conflict as the most widespread peace and security threat in the country. Consequently, various states have implemented measures to address the crisis. In 2017, Benue State enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Establishment of Ranching Law, prohibiting open grazing and triggering heightened tensions between farmers and Fulani herdsmen. Several other states have not only adopted anti-open grazing laws but have also established state or regional vigilante forces, or both.

This study aims to assess the impact of farmers-herders violence on food security in Benue State from 2015 to 2025. Choosing this period allows for a focused examination of recent findings on the subject, considering the extensive literature on farmers-herders violence. During the years under President Buhari's administration, marked by the first successful civilian-civilian and ruling-opposition party transition in the Nigerian democratic experiment, there was a notable surge in farmers-herders clashes. This violence has resulted in widespread destruction of lives and properties, leading to severe humanitarian and economic crises. Benue State, traditionally known as the food basket of the nation, has been particularly hard-hit, underscoring the urgency and necessity of this study.

Statement of the Research Problem

Nigeria's food security is tied to human security. Attacks on farmers have made farming activities hazardous. Nigeria's food crisis is already here. But without an urgent and comprehensive study leading to the understanding of the crisis and the way forward, the entire nation will be enveloped in worst consequences. Although Nigeria chiefly is known for its oil and gas production, agriculture employs about 70% of its labour force. Small-holders in the middle belt and south harvest most of the country's tuber and vegetable crops while pastoralists in the north raise most of its grains and livestock (Blench, 2010). However, farmers-herders violence constitutes serious threats to national security.

Evidently, conflicts between farmers and herders have long been a recurring issue in Nigeria. However, there has been a notable increase in both the frequency and intensity of these conflicts over the past decade, with a particularly marked escalation in 2018. The inability of food security to sustain households extends beyond personal responsibility; it reflects on the overall responsibility of any nation or state. A nation incapable of adequately feeding its population cannot be deemed responsible. Recent estimates indicate that the number of hungry people in Nigeria has surpassed 52 million, constituting approximately 30% of the country's total population of around 200 million. Furthermore, 52% of this population is living below the poverty line (Ajayaoba, 2010). These alarming statistics are a cause for serious concern, especially given that Benue State, recognized as the nation's food

basket, has historically been self-sufficient in food production. The state plays a crucial role in supplying food items to other regions of the federation.

Overtime, researchers such as Fisher (2000), Tonah (2010), Adisa (2012), Abbass (2014), Onuoha & Ezirim (2015), Tersoo (2016), Okoli & Atelhe (2014) Dimelu *et al* (2017), Ajibefun (2017), Sen (1981), Solomon (2021) Nwosu (2017), Lal (2013). Dary *et al* (2017), Antwi (2018), Godwin (2018) and several others have variously contributed in the area of the causes, effects, government responses to the farmers-herders conflict and food security. Most of them anchored their analysis on the etiology and the general effects of the conflict between pastoralists and cultivators.

From the foregoing views of these scholars such as Fisher (2000), Blench (2010), Moritz (2012), Adisa (2012), Abbass (2014), Okoli & Atelle (2014), Onuoha & Ezirim (2015), Dary *et al* (2017), Antwi (2018) Lal (2013), Nwosu (2017), Nwankwo (2020), Solomon (2021) among several others, it is evident that they have failed to uncover the extent to which the loss of lives has disrupted farming activities, affecting productivity and output; more so, the impact of the displacement of both farmers and herders on food availability is yet to be given adequate attention in empirical research. Therefore, this research intends to fill these gaps in literature.

Research Questions

This research is predicated on the following research questions:

- How has the loss of lives due to the farmers-herders conflict undermined crop production in Benue State?
- How has the forced displacement of farmers and herders undermined food availability in Benue State?

Objectives of the Research

The study has both broad and specific objectives. The broad objective is to assess the impact of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue state from 2014-2024.

The specific objectives of the study include:

- To ascertain whether loss of lives due to the farmers-herders conflict undermined food production in Benue State;
- To examine if the forced displacement of farmers and herders undermined food availability in Benue State;

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research shall adopt a thematic approach of literature review, capturing the major variables of the research topic, farmers-herders conflict and food security.

Farmers-Herders Conflict

Fisher (2000) understands conflict to mean dissension and differences in opinion, fights and grapples among individuals, groups or states. Conflict is part of the social fabric which is arguably intrinsic

and inevitable violent conflicts are detrimental to the development of communities. In the words of Hocker Wilmot (1985), conflict is the interaction of independent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving goals; the incompatibility may exist or maybe a delusion with opposing interest being the backdrop.

Katz (1965) cited in Fisher (2000) identified three sources: economic, value and power conflicts. According to him, economic conflict erupts due to competition over limited or scarce resources. Land, minerals, water, forest, pastures and oil are among the scarce resources which can cause economic conflict. History shows that countries like Nigeria, Rwanda, Ghana, Mali, and Tanzania with such two groups as (farmers and herders) have been engaging in violent conflicts. Most of such conflicts have ended up in loss of lives, displacement of people, destruction of property and turning the area into war zones (Benjaminsen, 2009).

Consequently, Blench (2010) noted that the conflict between pastoralists and cultivators in Nigeria has the capacity of slowing down Nigeria's economic development, as the conflict keeps eroding the socio-cultural peaceful coexistence of these groups. Adisa (2012) pointed out in a similar vein that the herders-farmers conflict has adverse effect on agricultural and rural development in Kwara State including displacement of farmers, reinforcement of poverty and low schooling especially among children.

Abbass (2014) showed that farmers-herders conflict is traceable to competition over natural resources, especially water and land along plains that have enough water during the dry season. However, Okoli & Atelhe (2014) argued that farmers-herders conflict in Nasarawa State, Nigeria mostly occur due to crop destruction by herders. Onuoha & Ezirim (2015) noted that farmers and herders make significant contributions in meeting the nutritional needs of the country and thus contribute to food security of households.

Dary et al (2017) also identified 14 triggers of farmers-herders conflict to include destruction of crops by herders, and competition over scarce resources. The findings of a similar study by Antwi (2018) support this position. Nevertheless, Lal (2013) examined the various causes of the food insecurity in Nigeria to include population increase, climate change, and land competition for urbanization. Nwosu (2017) argued that though farmers-herders crisis predate the Buhari administration, the administration's actions and inaction have subjected it to too much flak by Nigerians.

Another related study was carried out by Ahynet al (2018). It accessed the effects of herdsmen-farmers conflicts on national integration in Nigeria. From the findings of the study, farmers-herders crisis will have far-reaching consequences on National Integration if left unchecked. In addition, the study found that in each of the regions affected by crisis suffered food crisis. The study is therefore relevant to this study because it tends credence to the salt that clashed between the two groups affected food production distribution and quantity of food available for consumption. Okoli & Atelhe (2014) in their – Farmer-Herder conflict in Nasarawa State, Nigeria showed that the farmer-herder crisis in Nasarawa State mostly occurred due to crop destruction they explained that when crops are damaged

by cattle, farmers harbour hatred about herders which later result in attacks and counter attacks. This supports the findings of Turner et al (2006) in Agro pastoral zone in Niger. They further argued that in Nasarawa State conflicts between herders and farmers have created tensed and volatile inter-group relations among various groups. This has resulted in the killing of 130 herders and farmers from 2011-2013.

Food Security

The right to food is among the fundamental human right which is championed by most national governments and international organizations, especially in war-torn areas. Food rights are therefore explicit in Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Right which states that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food...” (Assembly, 1948). The right to food was intended to ensure food security and the UN ensures that this is achieved through their policies and plans such as MDGs and SDGs. For instance, goal 1 of the MDGs talks about halving hunger in the world and goal 2 of the SDGs also touches on food security.

Food security as a concept came to limelight during the world food crisis between 1972 and 1974 which called for the first World Food Conference (Maxwell and Smith, 1992). The meaning of the concept of food security has change over time since scholars, and different organizations do not agree on one way of achieving food security.

Smith et al (1993) cited in Maxwell (1996) pointed out that there are nearly 200 different definitions of the concept which have shifted from the Malthusian idea of supply to access by individuals championed by Sen’s work in 1981. When the concept first emerged in 1974, it was defined as “availability at all times of adequate supplies of basic foodstuffs “(Maxwell 2001, cited in Jaresz 2014). Therefore, the focus then was on availability and adequate supply to meet the increasing world population demands. The availability was basically about states producing more food so that supply will even exceed demand for people to have enough to eat.

In the 1980s, there was a shift from focusing on only adequate supply (availability) to involve access when Sen (1981) put forward his entitlement approval concept? Sen’s work influenced international organizations like Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), World Bank and United Nations to review their definitions to include access to individuals and households. According to Janson (2014), the World Bank in 1986 defined the concept to include ‘access to enough food at all times for an active and healthy life’. Moreover, FAO (1983) defined food security as “ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need” (Burchi Ode Muro, 2016). The UN World Food Summit (1996) also stated that “food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their daily needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.

From the above definitions, much emphasis is placed on access (economic and physical) because, despite abundant food supply, some individuals and groups of people are food insecure because they

are unable to afford or do not have the means to produce food. The focus was shifted from supplies of enough food to access and from national to individuals and families. This supports the argument of Sen (1981) that starvation is the result of people not having enough access and not about low availability.

The third element of food security is utilization; it means the actual consumption of food by individuals: how it is stored, prepared, and consumed and the nutritional benefits that gain from eating food. There are two types of utilization: physical and biological. Physical utilization is concerned with the ability of the household to have all the physical means to use available food. The physical means includes cooking faculties, family structure, knowledge, cultural regulated feeding habits and others. Biological utilization is also concerned with the ability of the body to efficiently break down and use the nutrients once food is consumed. This will translate into energy for daily use or stored for future use. Therefore, utilization is the connection between food and nutrition. The fourth dimension of food security is ensuring that availability, accessibility and utilization remain stable to avoid temporary food insecurity.

United States Agency for International Development (USAID, 1992) defines stability as ‘the ability to access and utilize appropriate levels of nutritious food ever time. In most definitions of food security, there is the inclusion of “at all times” which implies stability. Stability can be guaranteed when supply is constant to meet demands, access improved and appropriately utilized by all. However, stability can be affected by natural disaster on human activities. Human activities include violent conflict, political instability, land degradation, use of harmful chemicals and overuse of farmlands.

Having x-rayed what the above mentioned scholars such as Blench (2010), Adisa (2012), Abbass (2014), Okoli & Atelhe (2014), Onuoha & Ezirim (2015), Dary et al (2017), Antwi (2018), Lal (2013), Nwosu (2017) and several others have written, it is evident that they have failed to uncover the extent to which the loss of lives has disrupted farming activities, affecting productivity and output in Benue state; more so, the impact of the displacement of both farmers and herders on food availability is yet to be given adequate attention in empirical research. Therefore, this research intends to fill these gaps in literature.

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for this study is the eco-security theory. Eco-security theory, also known as environmental security theory, is an interdisciplinary framework that explores the relationship between environmental factors and security issues. While there is not a singular, universally accepted eco-security theory, various scholars and experts such as Malthus (1798), Ronnfeldt (1997), Homer-Dixon (1994; 1999) and Gladitsch (2001) have proposed frameworks that share common assumptions. Some of the basic assumptions underlying eco-security theory include:

- The eco-security theory assumes that large populations in many developing countries are highly dependent on four key environmental resources that are very fundamental to crop production:

fresh water, cropland, forests and fish. Scarcity or shrinking of these resources as a result of misuse, over-use or degradation under certain circumstances will trigger off conflicts.

- Another assumption of the theory is that decreases in the quality of renewable resources, population growth and unequal resource access act singly or in combinations to increase the scarcity, for certain population groups, of cropland, water, forests and fish. This can reduce economic productivity both for the local groups experiencing the scarcity and for the larger regional and national economies. The affected people often trigger ethnic conflicts when they move to new areas, while decreases in wealth can cause deprivation conflict.
- Again, a fundamental theoretical assumption of the theory is that resource scarcity is the product of insufficient supply, too much demand or an unequal distribution of a resource as a result of environmental hazards are in turn caused by variables such as population growth, economic development, pollution and obviously climate change. Thus, environmental resource scarcity will constrain agricultural and economic productivity, further inducing the disruption of economic livelihoods, poverty and migration.
- The theory assumes that certain communities and regions are more vulnerable to environmental changes and disruptions. These vulnerabilities may be influenced by factors such as geography, socio-economic conditions, and governance structures. Eco-security emphasizes the importance of identifying and addressing these vulnerabilities to enhance overall security.

In applying this theory to the study, it is essential to note that one key element of herdsmen is migration. Those who migrate to new lands may face opposition from the indigenes, which can result in ethnic conflict (since they are seen as aliens), coup d'états or deprivation conflicts (this may happen when groups or individuals draw from a limited pool of resources) (Homer-Dixon 1994).

An example is a Sahelian drought in years, which caused the movement of herders to other West African Countries in search of fodder and water for their cattle. The migration resulted in population growth and competition over shrinking natural resources and therefore rampant herders-farmers conflict in most West African Countries.

Percival and Homer-Dixon (1998) further explained that there are three types of environmental scarcity; Supply induced scarcity, demand induced scarcity, and structural scarcity due to unequal distribution of natural resources. Supply induced occurs when there is no adequate supply of resources because of land degradation, depletion, and deforestation. Moreover, demand induced scarcity arises when population increases, and it does not increase in tandem with natural resources so there will be high demand as against low supply which will result in scarcity.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. By employing a mixed-methods research design, we will be able to capture both the breadth and depth of our research questions, providing a more robust and comprehensive analysis of the complex interplay between farmers-herders conflict and food security in Benue State. The study was conducted in Benue State. The State is one of the seven (7) North-Central States of Nigeria.

It has twenty-three (23) Local Government Areas. The research was carried out in twelve (13) communities in eight (8) local government areas. These include Guma (Gbajimba, Ortese), Gwer-West (Agagbe, Naka), Makurdi (Atson), Logo (Tse-Agure), Ado (Igumale), Agatu (Okokolo), Apa (Odugbo, Ikobi, Opaha, Ankpali) and Otukpo (Umogidi). The choice of these communities is based on the frequency and scale of the conflict. The estimated population of the study area is 446, 000. Primary data was collected through questionnaire instrument that was administered to 600 participants who were purposely selected from the population based on their expertise, knowledge and familiarity with the subject matter and study area. 450 questionnaires were returned successfully. All the respondents answered questions on the impact of farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue State. To enrich the study, secondary data was generated from existing literature.

The study adopted the descriptive method for the analysis of primary data and content analysis for examining the secondary data. The questionnaire instrument designed was based on the four Likert-scale with options ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The mean score was used to analyze the research questions. To determine the acceptance and rejection level of each item in relation to the research questions, a decision rule based on the criterion mean score up to 2.50 and above was accepted while mean score of 2.49 and below was rejected. The analysis outcomes were used to determine the agreement or disagreement with the questionnaire items and to address the research inquiries of the investigation. A criterion mean was determined as follows: SA = 4; A = 3; D = 2; SD = 1

Hence, criterion mean = Weighted Total/Sample Size

Therefore, $4+3+2+1/4 = 10/4 = 2.5$

The average of the scores obtained by dividing the sum by the entire number of alternatives is defined as the criterion mean, which is 2.5. Those with a mean score below 2.5 were considered negative and thus rejected. Conversely, those with a mean score of 2.5 and above were considered positive and were therefore accepted.

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question 1: How has the loss of lives due to the farmers-herders conflict undermined crop production in Benue State?

Table 1: Number of Attacks and Death Statistics in Benue State January 2015- June 2024

Year	No of Attacks	Death Figure
2015	09	265
2016	08	337
2017	06	349
2018	54	450
2019	26	152
2020	16	315
2021	17	122
2022	14	111
2023	8	275
2024	12	214
2025	N/A	N/A
Total	170	2,590

Source: SEMA (2024)

The Table above revealed that between 2015 and 2024, there were recorded 170 attacks and 2,590 deaths. The numbers of attacks experienced a decline from 2017, and went up again from 2018 while the death statistics was on the increase with the implication that more hands were disengaged from farming and could negatively affect food production and added to the challenges of food insecurity. From the findings, it became evident that people are killed, men and women, children including those who are not parties to the conflict. In certain circumstances where women lost their husbands, farmlands are taken from them if their husbands were farming on family lands, thereby affecting their capacity to produce crops and livestock. Moreover, the study reveals that the fear of being killed or injured has compelled most farm laborers to relocate to other farming communities thereby making it expensive to hire the few ones available. Aside this, the killings have caused households to lose work force for farming activities. The situation is also same with the hired Fulani herders as some of them are fleeing the area for fear of losing their lives.

Table 2: Decreased Agricultural Productivity due to Farmers-Herders Conflict in Farming Benue Communities

S/N	Loss of Lives and Low Crop Production in Benue State	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1.	The conflict affected only herders resulting in fewer cattle due to killings of livestock	61 (244)	90 (270)	144 (228)	185 (185)	450 (927)	2.06	Rejected
2.	There is significant reduction in the quantity of harvested crops such as yams, cassava, etc. due to violent attacks	216 (864)	87 (261)	114 (228)	33 (33)	450 (1386)	3.08	Accepted
3.	Many farmers have abandoned large portions of their farmland due to insecurity, leading to smaller cultivation areas	219 (876)	116 (348)	78 (156)	37 (37)	450 (1417)	3.15	Accepted
4.	There is usually delays in planting or harvesting due to insecurity	226 (904)	113 (339)	59 (118)	52 (52)	450 (1413)	3.14	Accepted
5	Labour cost has increased due to a shortage of farm workers due to killings	195 (780)	120 (360)	95 (190)	40 (40)	450 (1370)	3.04	Accepted

Source: Field work, 2025

Table 2 above contains 5 questionnaire questions related to the first research question. The interpretation of the table is based on the frequency of respondents' replies, which are shown in various mean scores for each item. The result from Table 2 shows that questionnaire item numbers 2,3,4 and 5 were accepted by the respondents to verify that there was a decrease in agricultural productivity due to the Farmers-Herders conflict in Benue State; this is because the mean values of the accepted items were above the criterion mean of 2.50 while item 1 was rejected by the respondents. This rejection means that while different categories of people were affected by the killings including farm owners, farm labourers, herders, traders, etc. farmers and not herders were the major victims of the conflict. In addition, item 3 in the table has the highest score mean of 3.15 which is above the criterion mean score showing that decreased agricultural productivity is significantly related to killings of farmers as a result of farmers-herders conflict.

Research question 2: How has forced displacement of farmers undermined availability of food in Benue State?

Table 3: Statistics of Internally Displaced Persons Living in Host Communities in Benue State

S/N	Name of Comm.	No of Households	Total no of IDPs	Children 0-5 & 6-17yrs	Women (Adult)	Adult 18+ Men
ADO LGA						
1.	Igumale	1,020	2,108	1,400	400	308
AGATU LGA						
2.	Okokolo	1,150	3,100	1,850	470	780
APA LGA						
3.	Ankpali	695	1,240	630	386	224
4.	Ikobi	705	1,088	670	250	168
5.	Odugbo	1,460	3,340	1,900	740	700
6.	Opaha	690	1100	540	260	300
GUMA LGA						
7.	NRC Gbajimba	2,549	7,412	3,734	1,197	2,481
8.	Ortese	1,182	5,140	2,429	712	1,999
GWER – WEST LGA						
9.	Agagbe	3,233	13,056	6,866	3,188	3,002
10.	Naka Comm.	2,548	12,436	5,366	3,807	3,263
LOGO LGA						
11.	Tse Agure	1,416	9,474	4,332	2,459	2,683
MAKURDI LGA						
12.	Atson	1,677	8,206	3,931	1,526	2,749
OTUKPO LGA						
13.	Umogidi	9,060	2,440	1,223	540	677
	Total	27,385	70,140	34,871	15,935	19,334

Source: SEMA, 2024

Table 3 highlights the alarming number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in camps and host communities across Benue State, a consequence of ongoing attacks on agrarian communities by suspected herdsmen. Given Benue's critical role as a major contributor to food production and security in Nigeria, this situation is particularly troubling.

The deteriorating humanitarian conditions have made agricultural activities nearly impossible. Many displaced farmers are unable to return to their farms to harvest crops and are now reliant on support from host communities and government interventions. This has not only jeopardized the food security of the affected population but also disrupted the supply of agricultural produce to other parts of the country.

Table 4: Lack of Availability of Food Due to Forced Displacement of Farmers in Benue State

S/ N	Forced Displacement of Farmers and Lack of Availability of Food in Benue State	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1.	Crops such as yams, cassava, maize, rice, soya beans, etc have become scarce in the local markets due to displacement of farmers	265 (1060)	140 (420)	30 (60)	15 (15)	450 (1525)	3.39	Accepted
2.	Many local food traders have difficulties in sourcing agricultural products due to further fear of attacks	266 (1064)	110 (330)	64 (128)	10 (10)	450 (1532)	3.38	Accepted
3.	Many young people in the local communities have lost interest in farming due to insecurity	239 (956)	136 (408)	58 (116)	17 (17)	450 (1497)	3.33	Accepted
4.	The extent to which local markets rely on external food sources to meet local demand has increased	235 (940)	123 (369)	50 (100)	42 (42)	450 (1451)	3.22	Accepted
5	The number of households experiencing food shortages due to insecurity has gone up	155 (620)	180 (540)	105 (210)	10 (10)	450 (1380)	3.07	Accepted

Source: Field work, 2025

Table 4 shows the responses derived from the respondents in the study area on the impact of forced displacement of farmers on availability of food in Benue State. From the table, it was observed that most of the respondents agreed to all the five (5) items enumerated. The accepted items are all above the 2.50 criterion mean standard. With a criterion mean of 3.39 on the item 1, respondents agreed that crops such as yams, cassava, maize, rice, soya beans, etc have become scarce in the local markets due to displacement of farmers. Similarly, with the criterion mean of 3.22 on item 4 in the table, respondents accepted that the extent to which local markets rely on external food sources to meet local demand has increased. These and the other responses of the respondents in the table go to show that the forced displacement of farmers due to the farmers-herders conflict undermined availability of food in Benue State.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has critically examined the impact of the farmers-herders conflict on food security in Benue State, highlighting how the loss of lives, forced displacement and destruction of property has collectively undermined agricultural productivity and food availability. The findings reveal that the persistent conflict has led to reduced food production, displacement of farming communities, and increased food prices, posing a serious threat to food security in the region. By adopting the eco-

security theory and utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study has provided a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic consequences of the conflict. Ultimately, addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach involving enhanced security measures, support for displaced farmers and herders, and the rebuilding of agricultural infrastructure to restore food production and stability in Benue State. Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, we recommend as follows:

- i. The government should strengthen security in farming areas by deploying more security personnel and establishing community-based early warning systems to prevent attacks. This will encourage displaced farmers to return to their lands and resume food production.
- ii. Authorities should provide resettlement assistance, including access to farmland, seeds, and financial support for displaced farmers and herders. This will restore food production capacity and improve food availability in Benue State.

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