

The Farmer-Herder Conflict in Nigeria: A Quest for Appropriate Policy

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Abstract: *In recent years, policies have been introduced, involving multiple stakeholders, including government bodies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and local communities. The paper examines the place of collaborative policy framework in managing the ongoing farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria. By analysing the successes, limitations, and challenges of these policies, this paper highlights the critical role of inclusive governance in effective conflict management. The conflict, driven by environmental pressures, socio-economic changes, and political factors, has led to significant violence, displacement, and economic losses across affected regions. The paper recommended a beneficial collaborative policy partnership formula to reduce, if not eliminate, the perennial farmer-herder conflicts when judiciously implemented.*

Keywords: farmer-herder conflict, collaborative policy

INTRODUCTION

The Farmer-Herder conflict, driven by environmental pressures, socio-economic changes, and political factors, has led to significant violence, displacement, and economic losses across affected regions. The Federal Government has launched many policy suggestions to reduce the conflict between pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers in Nigeria. The National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) included cattle colonies, Rural Grazing Areas (RUGAs), defunct grazing route recovery, and reserves to manage farmer-herder conflicts, which is unsettling. However, Nigerians viewed these measures with disdain, suspicion, and other conflicting attitudes, coupled with ethnic, regional, and religious division. State government usually opposed the ideas of RUGA and NLTP based on the 1978 Land Use Act which gave all lands to Governors. Thus, any program to carve land for cattle grazing is seen as a way to steal ancestral lands from locals in the afflicted States to give Fulani pastoralists, who were generally assumed to be foreigners or intruders. These policy acceptability issues have threatened Nigeria's age-old amicable relationships between farmers and herders, often culminating into wanton destruction that harms innocent and defenceless citizens.

The 'farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria' is one of the most pervasive and destabilising concerns, threatening thousands of lives and livelihoods (International Crisis Group, 2021). However, rapid climate change, population development, and land degradation have increased land rivalry, which has strained relations between these two groups (Okoli & Atelhe, 2023). Herders travel south to find grazing space and water, coexisting with farming groups through mutual respect. Confrontations between farmers and herders have been a source of security concerns in West Africa with dire effects on 'human and animal lives, properties, peaceful coexistence, and orderliness' (Blench,2004; Olaniyan,2015; Shettima &Tar, 2008; Tonah, 2006)

There is a consensus amongst scholars that the escalation of conflict between farmers and herders in the coastal areas of West Africa became widespread in the 20th century (Ofuoku & Isife, 2009; Tonah 2006;2002) In sub-Saharan Africa, the conflict between the farmers and herders is widespread with claims that in 2013, about 300 people were killed in Nigeria (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014, P.78). According to the April 2010 quarterly report of WANEP (West African Network for Peacebuilding), if the conflicts are unchecked, they will constitute major security problems which will accentuate into violent conflicts (cited in Olaniyan, 2015, P.331)

The farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria are recurring and escalating issues driven by competition over land and resources. They are exacerbated by population growth, environmental changes, weak governance, ineffective policies, and ethnic and religious tensions. These conflicts disrupt livelihoods, threaten food security, and contribute to insecurity and displacement, undermining national stability and economic development.

To avert the looming crisis in the future, ways must be sought to confront and solve the crisis. Potential solutions include conflict resolution mechanisms, improved resource management, and policy reforms. Policies which at best have been knee-jerk reactions have been emplaced without commensurate results.

Therefore, this paper focuses on the analysis of a policy framework that will help deal with these conflicts. The paper proposes a beneficial collaborative policy approach between all the stakeholders who include farmers, herders, indigenous land owners, local, and state governments and the federal government. This approach is believed to be a precursor to a lasting solution to this menace.

Research Questions

1. What are the root causes of the conflict between farmers and Herders in Nigeria?
2. What are the consequences of the farmers-Herders conflict in Nigeria?
3. What are the current policies of the Nigerian Government to effectively manage the conflict?
4. What are some International best practices of farmer-herders conflict management?
5. How can collaborative policies contribute in resolving the farmers and Herders in Nigeria?

Objectives

The broad objective of the study is to determine if the beneficial collaborative approach between all stakeholders can resolve the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria.

The specific objectives are:

1. To identify the root causes of the farmer/herder conflicts in Nigeria.
2. To uncover the consequences of the farmers-Herders conflict in Nigeria
3. To unveil the current policies of the Nigerian Government to effectively manage the conflict in Nigeria
4. To bring out some International best practices of farmer-herders conflict management
5. To identify the role of collaborative policies in resolving the farmers-Herders conflicts in Nigeria

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The Farmer-Herder Conflict in Nigeria

History of the Conflict

Marx and Engels (2002) opine that the history of most societies relate to conflict. The two brands of literature consist of those dealing with the Fulani history (the ethnic origin of most herders) including their migration, and the colonial authorities that accord them an advantageous position in the colonial rule. The African Research Bulletin traces the origin of the conflict to Uthman Dan Fodio who established the Sokoto Caliphate and urged Muslims to practise pristine Islam (AFB, 2019). Scholars of this school of thought ascribe the religious differences to the conflict in the middle belt.

Other scholars analysed the development of the Fulanis both before and after the colonial period (Amusan et al, 2017; Eke, 2018; Osimen et al, 2013). They are of the view that the Fulanis had an advantageous position during the colonial era (Eke,2018;). However, this status nose-dived after independence, especially, in the 1970s, with the introduction of indigeneity policies. Being nomads, they could not claim the indigeneship of the places they temporarily settled, without the 'host' communities resisting. This left them on the fringes of Nigerian society, which today helped to fuel the 'farmer-herder conflict' (Adebanwi, 2009; Okello et al, 2014)

On the other hand, Bolarinwa et al. (2013); Enwelu et al. (2015); Idowu (2017); Mayowa & Omojola (2005); Nzeh (2015); Okello et al. (2014) in discussing the conflict, focused on the history of migration of the Fulani. Scholars trace their origin to Senegambia and believe that issues of desertification, climate change, population explosion and war are the drivers of their migration. Bolarinwa et al. (2013) opine that land pressures which resulted in the farmer-herder conflict are a result of the itinerant nature of the Fulani cattle rearers from the 'Sahel and Sudan savannah and recently the rainforest regions' (Bolarinwa et al, 2013, p.2).

Causes of the Conflict'

Environmental factors, including desertification and water scarcity, have created conditions where herders are forced to move southwards, leading to clashes with local farming communities (Nyong et al., 2022). As land resources become increasingly limited, competition between herders and farmers has intensified, especially in northern and central Nigeria.

In addition to environmental issues, socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, and weak infrastructure exacerbate the conflict. Poor access to markets, healthcare, and education in rural

areas has deepened tensions, creating a climate where disputes over resources can quickly escalate into violence (Olorunfemi & Adebayo, 2021).

The conflicts are in so many dimensions ranging from disputes over access to land and water, cattle rustling, damage to farm crops, and violent clashes that lead to loss of lives and properties. The conflicts are prevalent in the North and Middle Belt regions of the country, but they have moved southwards because of the worsening climate conditions and the increase in the population of cattle herds (Enwelu et al, 2015).

Disagreements over resources, land use, religion, beliefs, family and even women are central to the conflicts of many societies including that of Nigeria. A proper placement of the 'farmer-herders conflict' has been problematic and an ongoing discuss. Many have placed the problem at the door-steps of several causes, 'ranging from land ownership and use, scarce resources, religion, values, beliefs and women'. There appears to be an agreement amongst scholars that 'it is an escalating crisis problem in need of immediate' solution. (Ruqayyah Baderinwa, 2019; farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria: a review of relevant literature)

The current literature points to the fact that the destruction of the farmer's crops is at the root of the conflicts between the farmers and herders. Other factors identified as contributory to the conflicts include cattle rustling, ethnic and religious identities of the protagonists, poverty, sexual harassment and rape of women by the herders, disregard of constituted authority by the herders, climate change, growing population, ECOWAS transhuman protocol, spillover of crisis from the Sahel region and slow dispensation of justice. The literature also details the part played by state and non-state actors in the conflict. Nigeria is referred to as the most populous black nation in the world. It has a population of over 200 million people, of diverse ethnicity, comprising about 250 ethnic nationalities with varied languages of about 500. The mainstay of the economy is agriculture, even with the contribution of crude oil. Agriculture, therefore, employs over 70% of the workforce. The conflict between the farmers and herders has greatly impacted negatively on this data with consequent loss of lives, livelihoods and properties with a humungous amount of money to the mix. This literature review therefore intends to look at the causes, nature and inherent consequences of the conflict in Nigeria, with particular reference to South East States, and how lessons learnt can be extrapolated to the rest of Nigeria.

Consequences of the Conflict

Literature discussing the farmer-herder conflicts concentrates on the loss of lives and properties and the displacement of both farmers and herders from their domiciles. The Global Terrorism Index (GTI); the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR); Ameh (2018); Duru (2016) and Egbuta (2018), all attest to the fact that over 10,000 lives have been lost to the conflicts in the past decade. Similarly, over 60,000 persons have been displaced due to the conflicts (Ameh, 2018; CFR; Duru, 2016; Egbuta, 2018). The conflict has led to the displacement of a mass of people in Nigeria, who now live in camps as internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The conflict between the farmers and herders, mostly of the non-Fulani stock of the agrarian communities and the herders, mostly of the Fulani stock of the pastoralist communities, has been occurring over centuries in Africa. The farmer-herder conflict, though, entrenched in Northern Nigeria,

has become a recent phenomenon in the South East, which is the focus of this paper. If allowed to fester, it will have untold effects on its food security, the delicate Christian-Muslim cleavage, the issues related to the Nigeria-Biafra civil war, and the rising secessionist uprising in the South East, emanating majorly from the seeming marginalisation of the geopolitical zone (Okibe, 2022).

It is as a consequence of this, that this paper evaluates the effects of this conflict and proffer a policy solution that will bring about peaceful coexistence to the protagonists and by extension to the whole country. The cattle herders are by nature itinerant people, and move their cattle throughout the country in search of grazing land, and indeed land cultivated by the agrarian communities. The predictable result of this access to scarce resources is conflict.

Because most pastoralists are Fulani, the indigenous landowners are afraid of domination, which breeds mistrust. Religion and politics exacerbated the crisis. Both parties have used weaponry and ammunition to defend their resource domains in this supremacy struggle. This has major security implications for the states.

Policy and Implementation

This conflict requires a holistic approach in proffering solution(s). The causes of the conflict are multifaceted. There is a need for policies that will promote peaceful coexistence, encourage the development of alternative sources of livelihood, and provide security for all. It is based on this, that this paper is focusing on a policy thrust that can help resolve the conflicting demands on land and its resources, which is the harbinger of the farmer-herder conflicts. The beneficial collaborative policy being proposed will involve the cattle herders, the community, and local, state and federal governments. The community, local and state governments will provide the land for ranching. And the cattle herders will agree to a partnership with these entities. The government will emplace a regulatory framework agreeable to all stakeholders for the operationalisation of this model. The government will also provide an enabling environment for the ranch. The waste from its operation can be used as organic manure by the farmers in the community, and billed as part of their dividend. Once every stakeholder is brought into the beneficial collaborative arrangement and agrees to the modalities, this will engender a sense of belonging and they will take ownership of the programme and ensure its success and survival.

Gaps in Existing Knowledge

The farmer-herder crisis in Nigeria is ongoing, and so most of the literature and research are in their infancy. Most of the research work is exploratory. Only a few have tried to establish a correlation between the varied variables in the body of knowledge. Some studies have spoken about the collaborative policy (Isaac et al (2024)). The research highlights the importance of addressing the underlying grievances while also promoting innovative solutions such as sustainable cattle-rearing practices and collaborative land-use policies. However, none to the knowledge of this paper has gone further to espouse the type of collaborative policy dynamics that will ensure peaceful coexistence between all the stakeholders. That dynamics are what this study proposes.

Timelines for the beginning of the conflict are vague. Expressions such as ‘the conflict has existed since the beginning of agriculture’ (Bolarinwa, 2013; Eke, 2018; Nzeh, 2015; Olayoku, 2014) suggest the lack of certainty of the timelines.

In contrast, the body of work on the causes of the conflict seems much developed. Empirical studies done across Nigeria point to the fact that the destruction of crops is the major igniter of the conflict among the farmers and herders.

With regards to the resultant consequences of the conflict, there appears to be a hush on the anti-Fulani sentiments across the country including the disappearance of peaceful mutual existence within communities outside the conflict areas. (Ruqayyah Baderinwa, 2019) (farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria).

From the above, it clearly shows that more research needs to be done to fill the gaps. The focus of my paper will be on a policy framework for a beneficial collaborative relationship between all the stakeholders, as an approach towards managing the farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The paper seeks examines the implications of collaborative policy on the farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria. The paper employs a qualitative case study design, focusing on regions in Nigeria where collaborative policies like COMITAS (contributing to the mitigation of conflict over natural resources between farmer and herder communities in Adamawa state, Nigeria) have been implemented. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the complex dynamics and stakeholder perspectives involved in conflict management. The study uses existing researches by reviewing relevant literature in journals, policy reports, academic articles, government publications and any other relevant sources.

This paper employs a conceptual framework analysis, drawing insights from case studies in Nigeria and comparative data from Kenya and Sudan. This approach is suitable for examining how theoretical frameworks apply to real-world policies and highlighting the practical implications of collaborative approaches.

Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes and patterns within the data. Themes included policy implementation challenges, stakeholder cooperation, and community engagement. This method allowed for a nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of collaborative policies and the factors influencing their outcomes.

FINDINGS

Causes of the Conflict

The causes of the conflicts are numerous, as they are also complex, although, they are majorly attributed to shrinking access to grazing land which is primarily due to the effect of climate change, desertification and deforestation in the North, which has caused the migration of the pastoralist's southwards for more arable lands for their herds, and the extreme population explosion that has been witnessed over the last 30 years. The need for agricultural lands and urbanisation is also contributory factors. Enwelu, Dimelu & Asadu (2015) delineated the causes of the conflict into immediate and remote causes.

The immediate causes of the conflict as Enwelu et al (2015), noted are crop destruction by cattle, contamination of drinking water sources, herders sexually harassing women of the host community, the host community harassing the herders, cattle rustling, disregard of herders to constituted authority. The remote causes on the other hand are ethnic and religious inclination, poverty, effects of climate change, and rapid population growth. Added to this milieu is the increase in the acquisition of light weapons to enable territorial security by both parties and the unfortunate helplessness of the government in managing the crisis (Ofuoku, 2009; Usman et al, 2017; Kehinde, 2014; Nzeh, 2015 & Adelokun et al, 2015)

Consequences of the Conflict

Fulani Migration into South East Nigeria has posed four major challenges. First it poses a threat to farming and human safety. Although the violence associated with this migration in the southeast, is not as in other places, there is ample evidence to suggest it will imitate the same trajectory. Second the disputes and conflicts associated with it, have heightened fears of upsurge of violence in a region already bedevilled with secessionist agitations because of the perceived marginalisation of the region. Third, the migration will exacerbate the religious fault lines between the Christians and Muslims, and the fears that the invasion is a façade for an impending jihad. This perception is not helped by the silence of the federal government on the activities of the marauding Fulani herdsman. Fourth and finally the migration heightens competition over scarce land resources, which the South Easterners are in dire need of.

It has impacted negatively on the socio-economic life and development of the country. Huge populations of the inhabitants of the conflict areas have become internally displaced persons, with damages to property, and lands and the burning down of entire villages. This inadvertently has affected food security, agricultural productivity, an increase in poverty levels, and social upheavals. The conflicts have led to ethnic mistrust, breakdown of bonds of friendship, heightened tension and a deep sense of insecurity between the ethnic groups.

In Nigeria's South East states, the impacts of farmer-herder conflicts are widening. Farm settlements and food hubs in the five States of Enugu, Ebonyi, Abia, Imo and Anambara with volatile centres like Adani, Nimbo, Eha-Amufu, Ugbawka, Oduma, Nde-Abbor, and Awgu in Enugu state; Izzi, Ikwo, Ezza, Ezillo, and Egedegede in Ebonyi State, Igbariam, Ebenebe, Umunneochi, Ngwa, Oboro, Igbere and Ariam in Abia State, have witnessed significant levels of destruction. These communities and farm settlements cultivate rice, yam, cassava, and other crops and cereals in commercial quantities.

Existing Policies

The Nigerian government has implemented several policies to address the ongoing farmer-herder conflicts. Amongst these policies are:

- a) Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP). This was launched in 2019. The policy aimed at modernizing livestock management by establishing ranches and reducing open grazing. It seeks to curb the movement of cattle across the country and reduce deadly herder-farmer conflict.
- b) Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) Settlements. This initiative proposed creating designated settlements with necessary amenities for herders to reduce clashes over grazing land. However, due to widespread opposition and concerns over land ownership, the policy was suspended.

- c) Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law. This was enacted by states like Benue. This law bans open grazing and promotes ranching to prevent conflicts between farmers and herders. The law has faced challenges in implementation and has led to tensions spilling over into neighbouring states.
- d) Establishment of Grazing Reserves and Routes. Efforts have been made to create grazing reserves and routes to facilitate herders' movements and reduce conflicts. However, this initiative has faced criticism and has been largely unsuccessful due to distrust and opposition from various regions.

What was common to all these policies was that a top-to-bottom approach was adopted with the government dictating what they think should be done instead of allowing the stakeholders to come up with what they think would work. It is in this regards that the collaborative policy is being proposed.

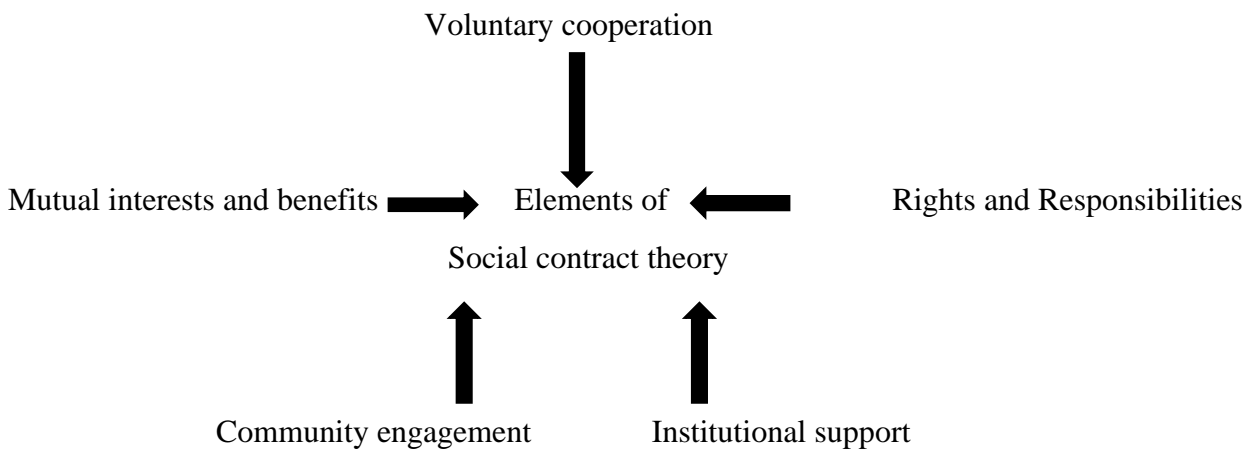
International Best Practice

Other African countries with similar conflicts, such as Kenya and Sudan, have implemented collaborative policy frameworks with varied success. In Kenya, local councils play a significant role in resource management and conflict prevention, while Sudan has seen improvements through international partnerships and the involvement of tribal leaders (Mwaura et al., 2021). Lessons from these countries highlight the importance of localized approaches and inclusive governance in managing resource-based conflicts.

The Proposed Collaborative Policy

The policy is anchored on two theories, the Social Contract Theory (Rousseau, 1762) and the Governance Collaborative Theory (Ansel & Gash, 2007). The policy is as a way of bringing a solution to the farmer-herders crisis with a focus on Nigeria and the South East States. This theory which is associated with such philosophers as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, states that individuals voluntarily come together and agree on a social contract within a society. The contract establishes the rights and responsibilities of the participants. This can effectively be applied as a panacea to the seemingly intractable farmer-herder conflicts. The social contract theory conceptualises the need for collaboration towards peace and beneficial relationships.

How does the social contract theory support the collaborative policy framework?



This theory provides the foundation towards understanding the necessity for collaboration and cooperation amongst diverse groups in a society. It justifies the proposed implementation of a beneficial collaborative policy framework, which emphasises voluntary cooperation, the rights and responsibilities of the participants, the role of the community, the need for institutional support, and ensuring that the interests of the participants are taken care of.

The Collaborative governance theory emphasizes the importance of involving all stakeholders in the decision-making process to create solutions that reflect diverse perspectives. By engaging farmers, herders, local leaders, and NGOs, collaborative policies aim to develop more inclusive and effective resource management frameworks (Akinwale et al., 2023). This theory suggests that stakeholder involvement fosters local ownership, reduces resistance to policy initiatives, and promotes adherence to established agreements.

Collaborative Policy as Conflict Resolution

Collaborative policy involves multiple stakeholders working together to design, implement, and manage solutions. Unlike traditional top-down approaches, collaborative policies prioritize the input of affected communities, ensuring that solutions are context-sensitive and more sustainable (Akinwale et al., 2023). This approach is grounded in theories of participatory governance, which suggest that policies are more effective when those impacted are part of the decision-making process.

The suggested land partnership ownership structure by the stakeholders is thus:

Cattle Herders - 70%

Community landowners - 15%

Local government - 7%

State government - 7%

Federal government - 1%

The perennial farmer-herder clashes in Nigeria have surged dramatically over the past decade, leading to high fatalities, destruction of properties, and the abandonment of farmlands. According to ThisDay newspaper of 7th June 2020, between 2017 – 2020, there were 654 attacks between the farmers and herders. These conflicts resulted in 2,530 deaths and 253 people kidnapped.

Once ignited, the crisis is often amplified by the emotionally potent issues of ethnicity, religion and culture, which inflames primordial sentiments, and often leads to reprisal attacks that extend to communities not immediately linked to the initial flashpoint (Africa Security Brief, 2021)

The major strengths of the collaborative policy are in its bottom-up approach and the engagement of all stakeholders. Other specific advantages include:

- a) Stakeholders' input in policy formulation. This is necessary as experience has shown that when the grassroots are not invited to participate in any policy formulation, the implementation is always met with challenges. It is of paramount importance, and that is part of the focus of this study, that all stakeholders, especially the grassroots implementers, are involved in the policy formulation process. Their buy-in and ownership are key.
- b) Role of government. The government has a great role to play because the Land Use Act vested all lands in the government's custody. Also, the operational modalities and the rules that will govern the implementation of the policy are within the government's purview. The government is also expected to monitor the process and sanction defaulters appropriately.
- c) The role of the committee of stakeholders in managing the conflict. A committee of all the stakeholders is constituted to include all stakeholders' representatives. The role of this committee is to ensure that the policy dynamics are adhered to. They are expected to nip in the bud any disagreement that may arise with regards to the implementation of the policy.
- d) Access to land emanating from the beneficial collaborative relationship. Once all the stakeholders buy into the policy, it is expected that access to land will not be restricted. However, access will only be operated within the confines of the policy. For instance, if the farmer wants to access the land, it will be to evacuate the organic manure that is produced by the interaction of the herds and the land.

When properly implemented, the policy has the potential of achieving many positive things amongst which are:

- a) Reduction in Violent Clashes: Collaborative initiatives like COMITAS have been effective in reducing the frequency of violent confrontations by fostering dialogue and building trust between farmers and herders (Mercy Corps, 2021).
- b) Improved Resource Sharing: Policies that encourage shared access to resources, such as grazing zones and water points, help to mitigate competition and create mutually beneficial systems. These arrangements have proven effective in communities where both farmers and herders rely on limited resources (Akinwale et al., 2023).
- c) Strengthened Community Engagement: Collaborative policies have increased community involvement in conflict resolution, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and ownership over resource management decisions. Local councils and community committees have

facilitated peacebuilding efforts by allowing communities to address issues proactively rather than reactively (Etim, 2022).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

Obtaining the full benefits of the collaborative policy, like every other policy, rests on its implementation. The complexity of the issue requires continuous evaluation and adaptation of policies to address the underlying causes and promote peaceful coexistence. Specific challenges to watch out for include:

- a) **Political and Ethnic Resistance.** Collaborative policies can face resistance from communities and political leaders who perceive them as favouring one group over another. Ethnic tensions and political biases can undermine trust in the policies and limit their effectiveness (Johnson & Bawa, 2022).
- b) **Limited Funding and Resources.** Many collaborative initiatives are hampered by a lack of adequate funding, which limits their reach and effectiveness. Sustainable funding is essential for the continued operation of conflict-resolution platforms, training programs, and resource-sharing agreements (Olorunfemi & Adebayo, 2021).
- c) **Lack of Coordination Among Stakeholders.** Effective collaboration requires consistent communication and coordination among all stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and local communities. In some cases, a lack of alignment between these groups leads to inconsistencies in policy implementation and reduced impact (Ali & Gana, 2021).

Many factors cause conflicts, but climate change, desertification, and deforestation in the North have reduced access to grazing land, forcing pastoralists south to find more arable land for their herds. Several government measures have been adopted to resolve farmer-herder conflicts. These attempts have not yielded the desired results due to regional distrust and hostility. Experience shows that most policies are top-down, yet stakeholders' input is needed. Most policies fail because policy implementers are never invited to the table. This paper emphasises the need to include all stakeholders, especially grassroots implementers, in policy creation. It is necessary that they buy into the process so as to own it and drive the implementation. The government is expected to play a key role since the Land Use Act invested the custody of all lands to the government. The government also must oversee the policy implementation and operational rules. Government oversight and punishment of defaulters are also required.

Kenyan local councils manage resources and prevent conflict, while Sudan has improved through international collaborations and tribal leaders (Mwaura et al., 2021). These countries demonstrate the relevance of localised and inclusive governance in resource-based conflict management. As seen in these two African countries, a committee of all stakeholders is needed before any policy is enacted. If the community sees the proposal's benefits, they will likely provide land for the project.

Collaborative policy works, albeit with hurdles, in farmer-herder conflict, according to all the literature. But the obstacles are surmountable.

Farmer-herder friendship and coexistence will improve. The result will be peace for progress, prosperity, dignity of life property rights and security. Collaborative strategies will improve farmer-herder conflict management.

CONCLUSION

This paper believes a well-designed and implemented collaborative policy framework can reduce farmer-herder conflicts. Farmer-herder conflicts are complex and require more research. The pros and cons of historical approaches are assessed. A one-sided approach is insufficient to achieve peaceful coexistence and harmonious relationships that will sustain Nigerian farmers and herders' economic development. A holistic approach is needed where policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders seek effective solutions to similar difficulties encountered in other places and learn from these findings. This study shows that collaborative strategies like RUGA and the National Livestock Transformation Plan have helped Nigerian farmer-herder disputes. Although implementation and political resistance are difficult, these policies provide a framework for sustained conflict management. Improved collaborative frameworks require government funding, local involvement, and technical innovation. If improved to overcome these constraints, collaborative strategies can help Nigeria resolve conflicts sustainably.

Recommendations

1. This paper recommends a beneficial collaborative policy approach between all the stakeholders – farmers, herders, indigenous land owners, local, and state governments and the federal government - whose dynamics have been enunciated in the body of the paper. The approach may be the precursor to a lasting solution to this menace.
2. Increase Government Support: The Nigerian government should provide funding and resources to ensure that collaborative policies are properly implemented and maintained.
3. Enhance Community Involvement. Policies should prioritize local leadership and community inputs to create solutions that are culturally and contextually relevant instead of the top-down approach that has been adopted.
4. Develop Early Warning Systems. The integration of Geographic Information System (GIS) and other technological tools can help predict and prevent conflicts by providing real-time data on resource availability and migration patterns (Onimisi, 2023).

Direction for Future Research

Future studies should focus on the long-term impacts of collaborative policies on economic development and social cohesion. Additionally, research on the role of technology in monitoring and managing resources could provide valuable insights for enhancing conflict management strategies.

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