From Farm to Camp: Impacts of Farmer-Herder Conflicts on Agricultural Production and Rural Livelihoods in Keana Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract
Farmer-herder conflicts have become a major driver of insecurity and humanitarian crises in North Central Nigeria, with profound imparts on rural settlements in Nasarawa State, particularly in Keana Local Government Area (LGA). This study examines the agricultural dimension of the impact of these conflicts, focusing on livelihood disruption, reduced food production and the transition of productive farming population to displaced camps. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach that combines key informant interviews and secondary data, the study investigates the causes, patterns, and consequences of conflict and displacement on agricultural production and rural economies in Keana LGA. The study adopted the Resource Conflict Theory and Frustration-Aggression Theory as a theoretical framework. Findings show that competition over land and water resources, climate variability, seasonal pastoral migration, and weak governance contribute to widespread crop destruction, retaliatory violence, and mass displacement of farming population, particularly women and children. Fertile farmland are abandoned due to fear, resulting in significant poor crop yields and heightened food insecurity. State response has mostly remained reactive with inadequate mechanisms for prevention, resolution, resettlement and recovery of victims' means of livelihood. The study concludes that addressing the problem requires comprehensive interventions including legislation that enforce rights of land users, conflict resolution mechanisms, and targeted support for internally displaced persons to restore livelihood and agricultural productivity.

Keywords: *Agricultural Production, Displacement, Farmer-Herder Conflict, Food Security Livelihoods,*

Introduction

Farmer-herder conflicts in recent decades have added to the complicated internal security challenges in Nigeria especially in Benue, Kogi, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger and Taraba States of

the North-Central region (Audu & Rilwan, 2026). These conflicts, traced to violent competition over land, water, grazing routes and other environmental pressures evolved from relatively manageable seasonal disputes into violent confrontations that have resulted in loss of lives, property, and displacement. The struggles for environmental resources especially driven by environmental degradation, climate unpredictability, population growth, expansion of cultivated areas, the weakening of traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms and the movement by pastoralists in search for grazing areas have intensified the frequency and violent clashes between sedentary crop farmers and nomadic pastoralists. These clashes have resulted in wanton loss of lives, destruction of crops and livestock, destruction of residential settlements and displacements (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014; Faiyetole & Abiodun, 2026).

For Blench (2001), pastoralists' movement are categorized into two: Transhumance and nomadic herdsmen. Transhumance refers to seasonal movement of herders' livestock, such as cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys along fixed grazing routes. While nomadic pastoralism is an undefined or opportunistic form of movement occasioned by climatic influence and instability with no defined grazing routes. These two movements, whether transhumance or nomadic, herders are driven in search of pastures, water and moisture and to escape adverse weather conditions. This gives rise to fierce competition between farmers and herders over land, water and other scarce resources.

Nasarawa State, like most states in the North central region of Nigeria has experienced repeated violent clashes between agrarian farming communities and nomadic pastoralists as a result of its fertile soils and strategic location bordering river Benue in Benue State. The arable land and longer rainy season within this region attract pastoralists in large number who struggle for the same land, fuelling intense resource competition. The known existing traditional symbiotic rosy relationship between farmers and herders has broken down and become increasingly violent and has led to loss of lives and property, livelihood disruption, displacement, crop destruction, cattle rustling, and retaliatory violence with devastating consequences on agricultural production (Jibrin, 2025).

Keana LGA is a rural and agrarian area with arable land which majority of people depend largely on for the production of crops such as maize, yam, cassava, guinea corn (sorghum), and rice, which form the primary source of livelihood. The agricultural production of this area has been affected by persistent incidents of violent clashes as a result of pastoral migration and spillover effects from neighbouring Benue communities. Insecurity contributes significantly to poor agricultural inputs, restricts access to remote farmlands, and undermines sustainable rural development. The consequences of these conflicts extend far beyond immediate violence as farmers are repeatedly forced to abandon their fields at critical farming cycle, affecting cultivation, planting, weeding, or harvest; leading to large scale crop losses affecting the local economy, increasing poverty of the rural dwellers. Generally, displacement affects rural development and poses a humanitarian challenge especially for women and children. Prior to and during crisis, affected communities are forced to abandon their homes without access to basic social amenities like shelter, food, clean water, clothing, healthcare and education. Displaced households relocate to temporary camps, host communities, or urban centres, thereby creating a visible trajectory "from farm to camp." This displacement results in acute labour shortages, reduced cultivated area, declining aggregate agricultural output and loss of household income. According to the 2026 report of the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCRMIDP), a total of 3,679,757 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are currently living in various camps, as well as host communities across the country as a result of different triggers from crises to natural disasters. Majority of this number are women and children who are forced to relocate from their homes for safety.

From the report of International Organization for Migration (2026), about 573,953 people in North-Central region of Nigeria were displaced and living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps across five states of Benue, Niger, Plateau, Nasarawa and Kogi. Nasarawa State has recorded 27,143 IDPs spread across 138 locations within the state as at 2026. This displacement is mostly from communal conflicts, farmer-herder conflicts and armed groups attacks. The absence of comprehensive efforts by Government in addressing root causes or supporting the recovery of agricultural systems has led to recurrent clashes and devastating consequences. State agencies efforts in the past have been reactive, concentrating on short-term security deployments and emergency relief, these steps have not sufficiently prevented recurrence (Nnam, 2025; Omotola, 2023). Although several studies have examined the dynamics of farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria and Nasarawa State, few have focused specifically on the agricultural production impacts within Keana LGA or systematically reviewed the transition pathway from farm abandonment to displacement camp and its impacts on food production. Existing data points to measurable declines in farm cultivation, it is against this backdrop this study investigates the agricultural impacts of farmer-herder conflicts in Keana Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, with particular attention to how conflict contributes to displacement and transforms productive farming communities into vulnerable population depending on external support and also exploring more effective peace building interventions in Keana LGA.

Perspectives on Farmer-herder Conflicts

Farmer-herder conflict refers to the clash of interest between a farmer and a herder which is driven primarily by the desire to access and use land resources in order to derive livelihood satisfaction. In other words, farmer- herder or nomadic pastoralists' conflict could be described as the struggle between sedentary farmers and nomadic herders over access, control and usage of scarce natural resources such as land, water and pasture (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014; Jibrin, 2025). In recent times in Nigeria, reports have indicated that this conflict has attracted national and international interest due to its violent and devastating effects on rural communities. The wanton loss of lives and property, destruction of settlements, farm produce and livestock raise serious concern in the middle belt region of Nigeria and Nasarawa State in particular.

Conflicts between farmers and nomadic cattle herders in contemporary West Africa, has continued to feature as one of the challenges to livelihood (Tonah, 2023). Cattle rearing is common with the fulbe/fulani herders and have maintained large number of cattle ownerships compared to other ethnic groups within the region. Contextualising this conflict therefore, in Nasarawa State, it is the clash between the Alago, Eggon, Tiv, Migilli, Agatu, Akye farmers and the Fulani pastoralist over scarce landed resources.

According to Roger Blench who has written extensively on pastoralism, resource conflict, and farmer-herder relations in Nigeria and West Africa with focus on the dynamics, pattern and dialectics of farmer-herder conflicts and its impact on development, he described the emergence of farmer-herder conflicts as a shift from cooperation to confrontation (Blench, 2004; Blench, 2010; Blench, 2016; Blench 2019). Farmers and herders enjoyed a mutual relationship with each benefiting symbiotically, as the farmer benefits from protein, milk and manure from the herds in exchange for post-harvest grazing and food crops. In addition, there was an occupational distinctive line of demarcation between the farmer and the herders where the farmers utilized the arable land during the raining seasons, from cultivation to harvest, while the herders grazed after harvest. This created a communal bond in the northern part of Nigeria until 1990s.

According to Blench (2019), demographic factors and inadequate vegetation exert pressure on land access and use rather than religious connotation. The increase in population of farmers, other land users and urbanisation has affected the accessibility to land, while climatic changes and other environmental factors has critically affected pastoralism across the northern part of the country forcing migration to the southern part of the country. The interplay of these two causes have affected the occupations of the farmers and the herders. Farmers rely on land for subsistence farming for local economy and livelihood. On the other hand, nomadic pastoralists struggle to access pastures, water and grazing routes which were hitherto reserved during the colonial era for free movement of transhumance. This difficulty has contributed to the fierce confrontation between the farmers and herders (Blench, 2016). Competition for scarce resources like land, water, pasture constitute the genesis of the farmer-herder conflicts. This competition, which emanates from distrust and suspicions has led to losses by both parties. Farmers and herders have seen themselves as enemies of each other, this has affected the crop and livestock productions in affected areas including loss of lives and property. In the study by Okoli and Atelhe (2014), which examined the the nature, causes, patterns, effects, and broader implications of the farmer-herder violence in Nasarawa State through the political ecology framework, these conflicts arise from a desperate competitive struggle for survival and subsistence in an environment of ecological scarcity and livelihood insecurity. Climate change contributes to land and water resource pressure driving pastoral migration and heightening competition with sedentary farming communities. The paper frames the crisis as a classic resource conflict rather than purely ethnic or religious hostility, while noting how identity differences are often politicized. The study, drawn from qualitative research, reveals that between 2011 and 2013 alone at least 130 people were killed in Nasarawa, with significant displacement, injuries, and livelihood disruption. In addition, the study highlights structural and environmental explanations rather than ethnic and religious narratives as the reason for farmer-herder clashes in Nigeria's Middle Belt. Despite the foundational contribution of this study to the farmer-herder discourse, the study treats Nasarawa State relatively holistically. It does not provide micro-level, community-specific analysis of high-intensity LGAs such as Keana, Obi, Awe, or Doma, nor does it examine variation in conflict intensity and agricultural outcomes across affected localities. Limited focus on agricultural impacts which does not systematically measure concrete agricultural effects such as crop destruction volumes, reduced cultivated area, yield losses, farm abandonment rates, market disruptions, or the specific pathway from productive farmland to displacement camps. Momale (2024), viewed the causes and impacts of farmer-herder conflicts in a study of Jangargari, Nasarawa State, Nigeria, through the lens of political economy and food production. This in-depth study of Jangargari ward (Awe LGA, bordering Benue) examined the issue of land tenure, unhealthy changes in pastoral practices (younger herders with less elder oversight, reduced family migration), and multi-ethnic competition and dynamics between Hausa/Tiv farmers on one side and Fulani herders on the other. The study underscores the causes of farmer- herder conflicts with particular reference to growth in population, urbanisation, identity politics of ethnic and religious definition, increased demand for land usage, poverty and youth unemployment and weak state apparatus, especially, ineffective justice system. Conflicts within the community has been recurring since the 1980s and worsening recently due to the high influx of herders from Benue State to the neighbouring communities in Nasarawa State as a result of the signing into law the Benue State Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law (Audu & Rilwan, 2026). The competition for land and other resources and the tensions of these herders' movement to communities along the borders of Benue state generated crises that resulted in displacement, deaths, and property destruction with impacts that include

poverty, livelihood loss, and food production disruptions. The study highlights institutional failures, shift in traditional grazing system and poor conflict prevention and reconciliation mechanisms rather than scarcity narratives.

For Omotola (2023), the study, drawing on Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) data (107 incidents and 539 fatalities, 1997–2020, with peaks pre-elections such as 2014 and 2018). The study traces conflict history and trends across five LGAs of Awe, Doma, Lafia, Keana and Obi.The study shifts its focus from the formal institutions of conflicts prevention and resolutions to the informal means involving the traditional institutions (village heads, ward heads, district heads and graded chiefs and emirs). The traditional institutions play vital role in mediation, however with challenges from unclear constitutional mandates, politicisation and declining state capacity. Despite constitutional limitations, traditional institutions retain local legitimacy. Recommendations focus on repositioning traditional authorities for better peacebuilding and strengthening social cohesion among the people.

Jibrin (2025), explored the impacts of farmer-herder conflicts on displacement and humanitarian crisis. The mixed-methods research (surveys, interviews, secondary data) in Keana LGA of Nasarawa State linked conflicts primarily to land and water competition, climate change, and weak state governance. Seasonal pastoral migration causes crop destruction, retaliatory attacks, and mass displacement (especially of women and children), leading to deaths, livelihood loss, food insecurity, and social fragmentation. State responses are reactive and inadequate; recommendations include grazing reserves, stronger land policies, early warning systems, and IDP support. The study focused on highlighting the implication of farmer-herder conflicts on the socioeconomic status of the displaced victims of the crisis. The relocation of the people from their ancestral homes to IDPs camps constitute a serious rural development and humanitarian challenge. The victims in camp suffer from malnutrition, poor hygiene and sanitary condition; without access to education and healthcare. Although the work explored the displacement consequences, it did not generally address the agricultural effects that result in increasing the poverty index of the agrarian communities. Ogezi (2026), examined and compared the impacts of farmer-herder conflicts on livelihoods in conflict-affected and non-conflict affected communities in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria. The study adopted a historical political economy framework, arguing that violence prone less from climate change, population pressure, or ethnic antagonism alone and more from weak institutions and governance that once regulated mutual farmer-pastoralist relations. The paper concludes that institutional breakdown is the major factor linking violent competition for land and other scarce resources and recommends carefully mitigating measures for inclusive sustainable land resource use plans that address the future concerns of farmers and herders. The study highlights that climate change, population escalation and other causal factors are not sufficient to cause violence if there are strong institutional framework that addresses early warning, preventive and strong mitigating measures. Generally, conflicts could be described as a struggle over values, claims to scarce status, power and resources (Ezebuiro et al., 2021). Conflicts arise from human relations on two grounds: firstly, Individuals or groups have different needs, interests and values; secondly, the resources of the society are limited and therefore, there is bound to be competition for access (Toure, 1999). In addition, violence may erupt in an atmosphere of unrestrained and unconstrained attempt to dominate in a fight over power, prestige and material interests. The results of incompatible goals and values make parties in conflict to make attempts to prevent each other from achieving desired objectives. Tensions essentially emerge when these divergent and in-compatible interest are pursued without agreement. Hence, a conflict situation is generated where the attempts to control each other's choices and aspirations is met with resistance

and generate adverse feelings and behaviour towards each other. Conflict situation therefore arises when two or more social entities are connected to at least one form of antagonistic interaction and relationship through interference with one another's effort to satisfy their personal needs and interest at the expense of others. Farmer-herder conflict is driven by a combination of competing land-use systems; sedentary crop farming and nomadic pastoralism influenced by demographic growth pressure, climate variability, and institutional weakness. Disputes can occur when herders' livestock damage farmers' crops, when agricultural expansion blocks traditional grazing routes, when cattle are stolen or killed, or when access to water sources becomes contested during dry seasons, these result in violence (Kosec, 2026). As a result, conflict degrades agricultural productivity in agrarian community by reducing land use and effectiveness of key inputs, eroding its profitability and viability thereby increasing food insecurity.

Farmer-Herder Conflicts, Agricultural Production and Rural Livelihoods

The main occupation of the people in Nasarawa State and other states in the North Central region of Nigeria is Agriculture (NSG, 2024). Agriculture here refers to subsistence crop farming and rearing of animal for both local consumption and commercial basis. Crop farming primarily is for household consumption and the surplus for commercial purpose to cover livelihood expenses. Staple cereal crops such as maize, guinea corn, cassava, yam and rice are given priority, followed by edible oil crops such as sesame and groundnut. Farming cycle season moves from cultivation to harvest all carried out in subsistence quantity. Agrarian farming communities in Nasarawa State generally store their harvest locally in huts or market stores and sell some quantities as per their needs and also use the money to buy agricultural inputs and rent machinery for the new farming season. This describes the farming cycle of the rural areas of Nasarawa State, including Keana LGA. Where the land is arable and the rains are maximal, agriculture has sustained the local economy of the rural dwellers and have contributed to food security and rural development (FAO, 2023). Apart from other climatic and environmental factors, conflict, especially armed conflict severely affects agricultural and food systems, leading to displacement, poor production, food insecurity, higher prices and livelihoods disruption (Blench, 2018; Flintan et al., 2025). Conflicts generally result in multi-dimensional losses to both farmers and pastoralists leading to food and human insecurities. Since farmer-herder disputes occur in agrarian communities, these conflicts disrupt significantly, agricultural outputs, contributing to the vicious cycle of hunger and poverty. Agricultural impacts of farmer-herder conflict denote the effects or consequences of conflicts on crop farming and livestock production. These effects limit full agricultural outputs by obstructing cropping farming and pastoralism. One of the devastating and irreparable consequences of farmer-herder conflicts is loss of lives and property. Violence leads to loss of lives, destruction of property, and survivors are displaced, leaving behind a bitter experience. Since human lives cannot be replaced, no amount of compensation of victims can restore lives no matter how handsome the compensation or fair the justice served. Many times, retaliation from victims of farmer-herder conflicts leads to another cycle of violence that leads to death and displacement. According to Ukoji and Ayodokun (2025), approximately 1,015 people died from farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria in 2025. This has a serious implication on food security. Another grave impact of farmer-herder conflicts on community with agricultural prospects is the loss of means of livelihood. Since most rural farmers depend on subsistence agriculture and petty trade, ethnic conflicts constitute a threat to their continuous survival. The aftermath of violence results in farmers being displaced from their ancestral homes and are forced to seek refuge in public buildings like schools, markets and other unoccupied residential houses as IDPs without basic means of survival. Some resort to

street begging and depending on the goodwill of others to meet basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. Many could not return back due to the trauma of the violence, while others who could not withstand the harsh conditions from the impacts of the crisis develop health complications that cut short their lives. This has led to abandoning of farms, making productive population to be dependent. Farmer-herder conflicts leave behind high rate of crime and brigandage constituting serious challenges to sustainable rural development. People around communities who suffered ethnic conflicts find it difficult to move from one place to another due to high level of crime. This is because many who suffer as victims of ethnic conflicts violence take to crime for survival while hoodlums who had arms at their disposal, engage in crime and criminality.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a combination of two theories; the Resource Conflict Theory and Frustration Aggression Theory in explaining farmer-herder conflicts and agricultural impacts. Resource Conflict Theory states that conflict emanates from competition over natural resources in a depleted ecology which result to violence especially where there is significant weakness in institutional performance in regulating the behaviour of competitors (Homer-Dixon, 1999), while the Frustration-Aggression Theory propounded by Dollard, Doob, Miller and Sears in 1939, states that "the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always lead to some form of aggression" (Breuer & Elson, 2017). Frustration here is seen as an expressed action or event rather than inherent emotional state. As noted earlier, the societal goods and resources are scarce and individuals and groups needs to compete and fight which may lead to conflict. As a result, Deutsch (1945) in Breuer and Elson (2017) agrees that one of the fundamental root causes of frustration that gives birth to violence in the society is competition. When societies compete for scarce resources, they tend to seek to oppose one another and adopt means that may block, threaten or annihilate the opposition. This competition explains the basis why farmer and herder's competition has contributed to the poor agricultural produce in affected communities.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey design supported by a mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) approach to investigate farmer-herder conflicts and the consequent displacement of farming population, with particular reference to the effects on agricultural production. The design is deliberately chosen because it facilitates systematic collection and analysis of both numerical and narrative data, thereby enabling a comprehensive examination of the fundamental causes, dynamics and patterns of the conflicts, and their measurable implications for agricultural output in Keana LGA. By integrating quantitative and qualitative components, the mixed-methods framework permits triangulation of findings, enhancing the validity and reliability of the results and yielding a richer, multi-dimensional understanding of the intricacies surrounding farmer-herder conflict and its socio-economic impacts. The quantitative component is employed to measure trends, determine the scope and intensity of the conflicts, and measure the extent of agricultural decline in terms of reductions in cultivated land, crop yields, and livestock productivity. Complementarily, the qualitative element explores the lived experiences, perceptions, coping strategies, and historical antecedents of affected communities, thereby situating the statistical patterns within their broader socio-cultural and historical contexts (Haruna, 2025). In operationalising this design, the research draws on a range of secondary sources, including extant scholarly literature, official government reports, and policy documents. Key

Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted with individuals directly affected by the conflicts in various communities across Keana LGA supplemented the secondary sources. This combination of documentary analysis and first-hand testimony ensures a wide range investigation of the problem.

Farmer-herder Conflicts, Agricultural Production and Rural Livelihoods: The Nexus

There is a strong relationship between the farmer-herder conflicts with the declining agricultural production and eroded rural livelihoods in Keana LGA. These conflicts, driven primarily by competition over land and water, have become a major source of insecurity, displacement, crop losses, and food insecurity. These conflicts involve sedentary crop farmers often from Alago, Tiv and Eggon ethnic groups and Fulani pastoralists in Keana town, Kadarko, Agaza, Aloshi, Kwara and Giza communities leading to loss of lives and property (Ogezi, 2021; Jibrin, 2025).

Data from extant studies and local reports consistently identify resource and governance issues are central to the emergence of conflicts. Conflicts imparts directly on agricultural production by reducing output through the destruction of standing crops by livestock, farmers abandoning remote or interior fields due to fear of attacks limiting cultivation and harvest, restricted access to land, disrupted labor, poorer road conditions in affected areas, and lower labor productivity contributing to statewide food production shortfalls, higher food prices, and reduced internally generated revenue tied, to agriculture the mainstay of the local economy.

Generally, resource competition and weak institutions trigger conflict, conflict on the other hand destroys production and displaces people, leading to loss of livelihoods that results in food insecurity. Where livelihoods are destroyed, it intensifies struggles and desperation for the few opportunities, promoting suspicion, distrust and eroding social cohesion (SBM Intelligence, 2025). The above cycle forms the nexus connecting the farmer-herder conflicts to the recurring decimal that leads to retaliation and endless violence between farming communities and the pastoralists.

The findings from farmer-herder conflicts in Keana Local Government Area (LGA) of Nasarawa State revealed multi-dimensional agricultural impacts have turned productive population to IDPs and fertile farmland into abandon lands. Empirical evidences indicate that competition over land and water resources, population pressure, blockage of traditional grazing routes, incessant crop destruction by livestock, and ineffective state governance constitute the root causes of recurrent violence. Various research have shown that about 54 farmers were killed between 2021-2025 particularly around the border areas of Kadarko, Gidan Sule, Antsa, Giza, Amudu, Tse-Jimin, Obosidoma, and Sarkin Noma as a result of clashes over land (Punch, 2021; 2024, Daily Post, 2024, The Sun, 2024; UFA, 2024; TIDA, 2024).

Crop destruction emerged as the most immediate and widespread impact of Farmer-herder conflicts. According to data obtained from National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (2023), of maize (cereals) production, cultivation area fell short roughly 16% (from ~115,000 to ~96,000 hectares) between 2022 and 2023, with production declining about 15%; output remained below earlier peaks even with partial recovery. Comparative assessments of affected communities and non-affected communities in Benue and Nasarawa show dramatically lower annual crop output in conflict zones (roughly 2.09 million kg vs. 7.17 million kg in one analysis), alongside worse land access and productivity metrics. Records show frequent grazing of cattle on cultivated fields, particularly during the rainy and early dry seasons, leading to total or partial loss of staple crops such as maize, rice, cassava and guinea corn. In several communities, farmers plant multiple times in a season only to lose all harvests. This has resulted in sharp reductions in cultivated area, with many households abandoning distant or 'faraway' farmlands due to fear of attacks. Farming activities have been reduced toward safer, often less fertile lands,

reducing overall output and increasing pressure on remaining arable land. Crop destruction and fear of violence operate as dual mechanisms: the former destroys current production, while the latter prevents future investment and expansion. This aligns with present state where insecurity leads farmers to abandon remote fields, reduce cultivated area, and move from risky areas to safe areas with poor agricultural yields.

The second devastating dimension to farmer-herder conflicts is displacement. Daily Post (2025) and IOM (2026) indicate that about 14,718 rural farmers have been displaced from their ancestral homes following farmer-herder conflicts in the Nasarawa Southern Senatorial District, comprising of Awe, Doma, Keana. Lafia and Obi LGAs. Displacement causes households to leave their farms for IDP camps for temporary safety and survival. Displacement constitutes the most transformative agricultural consequence. A significant proportion of farming households, especially Tiv, Eggon and other farmers have been forced to flee their ancestral lands and settlements following threats and attacks. For example, the IDP camps at Giza, Keana, Kadarko and Kwara, have more women and children, who constitute a productive farming group who are turned into beggars and dependents. Another implication of Farmer-herder conflicts on agriculture is the permanent relocation of farming population from agrarian communities. Many young farmers relocate to urban centres like Abuja, Benin, Lagos, Kano in search of menial jobs like commercial motorcyclists (Okada riders) securitymen, domestic servants among others. These young men who are depressed from incessant farm destruction abandon fertile and arable land for fear of attacks. This has negative implication on agricultural production and leads to under employment. Many of such communities who retaliate by poisoning livestock sources of water and farmlands leading to the death of livestock are attacked by herders leading to loss of lives, livelihood and are subjected to hunger, poverty and unemployment.

Conclusion

This study has established that farmer–herder conflicts in Keana Local Government Area of Nasarawa State have severely disrupted agricultural production by turning productive farming communities into insecure areas and forced displacement. The conflicts, driven by competition over dwindling land and water resources, herders' seasonal migration patterns, and inadequate governance institutions for resource regulation and governance, have resulted in widespread crop destruction, livestock losses, abandonment of farms, and the relocation of farming households into temporary camps. Consequently, agricultural productivity has declined sharply, rural incomes have fallen and affected local economic status of the rural dwellers. Beyond immediate economic losses, the conflicts have eroded social cohesion, heightened inter-group tensions, and created a cycle of vulnerability that threatens long-term rural development and sustainable food production in the area. The shift "from farm to camp" is not merely a spatial movement but a symptom of systemic failure in land-use planning, conflict prevention, and inclusive resource management. Without decisive intervention, these impacts will continue to deepen hunger, poverty and unemployment encouraging rural-urban migration at the expense of Nigeria agricultural prosperity.

Recommendations

The study proposes the following recommendations:

1. Government and traditional rulers at all levels should develop and enforce inclusive grazing policies that demarcate grazing reserves in Keana LGA. This can be enabled by state and local government legislation that addresses and balances the rights of both crop farmers and pastoralists.

2. Establish and strengthen local conflict-resolution platforms comprising traditional rulers, religious leaders, farmers' and herders' representatives, community leaders, and local government officials. These committees should be responsible for mediation, reconciliation and enforcement of mutually agreed terms and to regulate the excesses of farmers and herders. The committee will also ensure mutually agreed compensations for losses as a result of actions and inaction of farmers and herders.
3. Government should establish livelihood recovery support mechanisms for victims of farmer-header conflicts. These supports should include resettlement plans for displaced farming communities in addition to given agricultural inputs to farmers and assisting herders with improved breeds. These steps will ensure early resettlement of the displaced and reduce complete loss of means of livelihood that encourages crime and criminality.

The above recommendations when implemented inclusively and sustained will restore agricultural productivity, reverse the trajectory from farm to camp and build stability and peace in Keana Local Government Area of Nasarawa State and similar communities affected by farmer-herder conflicts across Nigeria.

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