

## THE CAUSES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HERDERS AND FARMERS CONFLICT IN SABON DAGA, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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### Article Information

Received: 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2024

Accepted: 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2024

Published: 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2024

**KEYWORDS:** Herdsmen, farmers, conflicts and socio-economic development

**Publisher:** Empirical Studies and Communication - (A Research Center)

**Website:** [www.cescd.com.ng](http://www.cescd.com.ng)

### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the prevalence of herdsmen and farmers conflict and its effect on socioeconomic development in Sabon Daga part of Niger State Nigeria. The study adopts the descriptive research design approach, Primary and secondary data were employed to provide answers to the research questions in a quantitative manner. A total of 400 questionnaires was administered on herders and farmers; 200 for herders and 200 for farmers respectively. However, only 345 questionnaires were returned completed. The study revealed that destruction of crops, stealing of farm produce, and killing of famers are among the most predominant causes of conflicts between herders and farmers in the study area. The study also established reduction in farm output displacement of farmers and reduction in farmer's income as the major socioeconomic problem in the study areas. The study concludes that the Herdsmen and farmers conflict created food insecurity, displacement and disruption of people's livelihood patterns and the exacerbation of poverty. Therefore, the study recommended that State governments should designate grazing fields in Niger State for the nomadic herdsmen and make them pay tax to the Niger state government.*

### Introduction

The Farmers and Herders conflict is one of the reoccurring conflicts in the Nigerian States (Bello, 2022). In some localities of Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa, and Adamawa state, farmers and herders are on a manhunt of each other (Ekpei, 2018). Lucas *et al.* (2020) corroborates the wave of violent crime and insecurity in Nigeria especially the farmers and herders' conflict that is increasingly becoming worrisome and alarming to every citizen. Numerous

security challenges cut across the nooks and crannies of Nigeria especially in recent times when the issue of kidnapping, insurgency and farmers-herders clashes repeatedly form the headline of most media outfits (Gonina *et al.*, 2020). Despite the incessant media reports on the current state of insecurity in Nigeria especially farmers and herders conflict it has not yielded much of the desired results (Ekpei, 2018).

The herders are exclusively Fulani who are largely nomadic, they move from place to place in search of pastures and water for their livestock, the farmers, on the other hand are the natives whose source of livelihood is dependent on the cultivation of the soil for different crops (Aliyu, 2015). Unlike the nomadic Fulani the farmers are sedentary in their respective localities (Kunle *et al.*, 2020). During the peak of rainy season that is characterized by cattle-breeding, more milk production and shorter grazing hours, cattle herding coincides significantly with arable crop production emanating in herdsmen and farmers conflict (Okoro, 2018). If a herdsmen loss his flock to drought and water scarcity, he may be frustrated because of the loss of livelihood (Okoro, 2018). From this reality, he may be aggressive and since he cannot channel it to the natural causes he may in the long-run channel it to any person or group that obstructs his migration to a safe or safer environment (Okoro, 2018). On the side of farmer's frustration occur when animals of the herdsmen trample on their farmlands to eat up their crops and because they are frustrated too they also become aggressive and channel their aggression to the herdsmen and their cows. Owing to this reality, conflict and confrontation is inevitable (Okoro, 2018). It is against this backdrop that the study looks in to the issues and analyse the prevalence causes of herdsmen-farmers conflict and its effects on socio-economic impact in Sabon Daga part of Niger State Nigeria.

The principal objectives of the research are to: Ascertain the prevalence of Herdsmen and farmers conflict in the Study area; ascertain the courses of herdsmen and farmers conflict in the study area; examine the effect of Herdsmen and farmers conflict on socio-economic development in the study area. Following the above objectives, the research seeks to answers the following questions; how often is the herdsmen and farmers conflict occurring in the study area? What are the courses of herdsmen and farmers conflict in the study? What are the effects of herdsmen and farmers conflict on socio-economic development in Niger State Nigeria?

Several existing works have approached the evolving conflict between pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria from a range of perspectives, mostly accounting for the reasons or causal factors driving such conflicts (Osaghae, 2017 ; Aliyu, 2015). This study takes a different

approach from existing studies that either explore the causes of herder and farmer conflicts or discusses it within the framework of national security. Rather, this study examines how the herders and farmers conflict is constructed, framed and represented as insecurity given Nigeria's socio-cultural diversity and recent political events.

## **Literature review**

### **Causes of Conflict**

(Akinyetun, 2017) asserted that impact of climatic conditions, population growth, overgrazing and mechanized farming and the lack of regulatory policies to manage the relationship between land users have equally been highlighted as some of the root causes of the conflict between herders and farmers. In this regard (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014) notes that herders are both ecologically and structurally marginalized. Chukwuma (2016) further reiterated that it is due to desertification in northern Nigeria which significantly depletes grazing land and at the same time, the absence of proper implementation of policies to regulate land use contributes to the conflict between herders and farmers. By and large, the migration of herders labelled as Fulani-herdsmen into southern Nigeria assumed to be occupied by farmers and other ethnic communities provokes series of challenges: pastoralists in their search for pasture to graze their herds intrude into farmlands, in most cases, causing significant damages to crop yield. Consequently, some farmers and indigenous communities in these regions resort to cattle rustling and other reprisal strategies which only stoke the resolve of herders to adopt “deadly” techniques, spawning a vicious cycle of violence. It is in this context that the Global Terrorism Index, in 2015, classified herdsmen as “Fulani militants” and ranked “the group” as the fourth deadliest in the world (Global Terrorism Index, 2015). However, this labelling and ranking is both problematic and misleading (Aliyu, 2015). On the one hand, the representation of herdsmen as a “militant group,” ranked amongst other terrorist groups, essentialisms what appears to be a complex and an unfolding event that involves different actors.

A study of 27 communities in North Central Nigeria showed that over 40% of the households surveyed had experienced agricultural land related conflicts, with respondents recalling conflicts that were as far back as 1965 and as recent as 2015 (International Crisis Group, 2017)

A study conducted by (Nyong and Fiki, 2005) found a spatial differentiation in conflict occurrence, as more violent conflicts took place more frequently in resource-rich areas like the *Fadama* (flood plains) and river valleys than resource-poor areas.

A study conducted by Nyong and Fiki (2005) found a spatial differentiation in conflict occurrence, as more violent conflicts took place more frequently in resource-rich areas like the *Fadama* (flood plains) and river valleys than resource-poor areas. The Fulani cattle herdsmen have identified conflicts arising from land use as the most important problem they face in their occupation (Sunday, 2013). The months of March and April are usually the toughest for the herdsman and his cattle, as it is the hottest period in the grazing calendar. Indeed, he now herds his cattle only in the evenings and nights (Aliyu, 2015). May and June signify the end of dry season and vegetation begins to appear. This also marks the beginning of northward movement of cattle herds. From this period up till September, which is the peak of rainy season, though characterized by cattle-breeding, more milk production and shorter grazing hours, cattle herding coincides significantly with arable crop production (Adekunle & Adisa, 2010).

### **Socio-economic Impact**

The incidence of serious cases of conflicts for survival between pastoralists and farmers also led to loss of lives and destruction of properties with the emergence of insecurity due to the continuous desire for vengeance by the parties involved (Kunle *et al.*, 2020). Despite the occupational affinity between the nomadic herdsmen and sedentary crop farmers, the two groups have taken their disagreement to a terrifying and dramatic status of widespread killings, maiming and plundering with the farmers displaced from their ancestral lands (Kunle *et al.*, 2020). The Fulani herdsmen and attackers are predominantly Muslims, thus giving the whole saga a religious configuration (Kunle *et al.*, 2020). This fear has been severally expressed by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to the Federal Government under the leadership of Muhammadu Buhari. The view that is held by a cross-section of analysts is that the attacks represent a surreptitious strategy of advancing jihad to the non-Muslims areas of the country through the well-known jihadist tools of intimidation, destruction and carnage (Adamu & Ben, 2017; International Crisis Group, 2017a; McGregor, 2017) Another socio-economic implication of the crises is the rising number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), The herders-farmers conflicts have resulted in the displacement of many persons from their ancestral homes thus turning them into “exiles” and “refugees” in their own country. The implication of internal displacement is that individuals and their families have suffered in different ways, namely, the indignity of relying on assistant from state government and charity for survival also traumatization arising from forceful dislocation

from their ancestral environment, the destruction of their means of livelihood and consequent descent into poverty, and the depreciation in their overall quality of life (kunle *et al.*, 2020).

(Idowu, 2017) submits that the violence between herdsmen and farmers has displaced more than 100,000 people in Benue and Enugu States in State in Nigeria and left them under the care of relatives or in makeshift Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps while many are still struggling to rebuild their lives.

(Chukwuma, 2016) vigorously pointed out that farmers and herdsmen conflict are impediment to food security, the displacement of farmers from the affected communities has drastically reduced agricultural production, this has been amply demonstrated by relative shortage of farm produce in the rural and urban markets of central Nigeria. This is evidenced in the tremendous price hike of food commodities across the county.

However, (Taiwo, 2010) noted that armed conflict between herdsmen and their host communities had been reported to have taken place in over 20 villages in Nigeria, including, Ago Nla, Ago Kekere, Idi Ope Kekere, Olukore, Olokuta, Apena, Jaramosan, Akeeran, Alagigo, Aaaro, Temidire, Iya Ibadan, Ideto, Apapa, Akele, Agwo, Bodija, Olufayo, Oko Teku, Moniya, Oke Ogun, Shaki, Egbedore. Illobu, Efon Alaye, Alu, and Iya moye. Also, the study carried out by Sulaiman and Ja' afar to ascertain the economic effects of this type of conflict in Bauchi state from 2003 to 2007 discovered that: Livestock that were lost through the farmers-pastoralists conflict included 34 cattle and 11 sheep and goats, valued about 1.8 million Naira and N66, 000.00 for cattle and sheep/goat, respectively. Six persons lost their lives during the period with anticipated economic contribution valued at N2, 844,000.00. The number of persons injured in the farmer pastoralists conflict as revealed by the study was 45 among whom 15 persons were incapacitated that they could not perform their economic activities during the period of treatment. The cost implication due to the body injuries of those affected in this respect was about N2.64 million. In addition, a research carried out on the causes and effects of the perennial clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria by (Mercy Corps, 2015) between 2013 and 2016 funded by the British Department for International Development revelled that the conflict is costing Nigeria at least \$14 billion in potential revenues annually. Meanwhile, the usual resultant effects of the conflict are loss of lives, crops, destruction of houses, displacement of persons, decline in income, distrust; as well as threat to food and national security.

## Materials and methods

During this study, a combination of primary and secondary data was explored. Qualitative data were collected on the field using questionnaires and focused group discussion that covered every area of rural sociology and environmental impact of both the current and proposed farming activities.

### **Sampling Procedure and Sample Size**

The targeted population within the study area of Sabon Daga and for this study were the Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers. Respondents were randomly selected using the multistage sampling process in selecting farmers and herdsmen to be interviewed. The first stage involved identification of the affected farmers and herdsmen. This selection was based on the frequency of occurrence of farmer-herder conflict in the State. The second stage involved purposive sampling of neighbouring villages (farming communities) within the study area which is based on commonly used properties by both the farmers and the herdsmen. In the case of the herders, due to the nature of their settlement pattern and economic activities, their grazing places, markets and their extended family settlements (*Rugage*) were identified. A total of 200 farmers and 200 cattle herders from the study area were chosen using the random selection method. The snowball method was used by identifying one respondent that helps the researcher to identify the other, on and on. A total of 400 respondents were selected for questioning using structured questionnaire

### **Analytical Techniques**

All data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically, the mean, rating, frequency counts, ranking method and percentages and the analysis were presented using tables, charts, histogram and Likert scale.

## **Results and discussion**

### **Gender of Respondents**

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of respondents for the study. The result shows that male respondents formed most of the respondents for the study as they accounted for 79.9% of the respondents, while female respondents accounted for 20.1% of the respondents. The wide margin in the distribution of male and female respondents could be attributed to the religious and cultural affiliation of the people, which did not allow for direct interaction of their women with strangers, especially men.

### **Occupation of Respondents**

The occupation of the respondents for the study was classified into farmers, traders, artisans, and herdsmen. The result is presented in Figure 1, which shows that farmers (50%) accounted for the largest proportion of respondents. Traders accounted for 23%, artisans 18% and herdsmen 3%. This shows that majority of the residents of Sabon Daga are either farmers or traders. Therefore, Sabon Daga can be said to be an agrarian community.

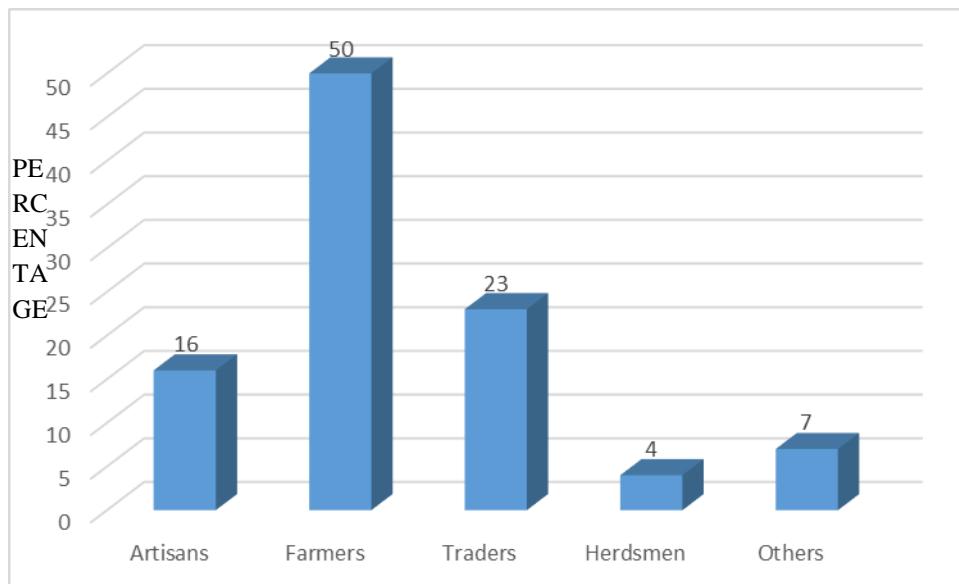


Figure 1: Occupation of Respondents

#### **Awareness of Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers Conflicts**

Table 2 shows the proportion of the respondents that had witnessed clash between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in Sabon Daga. The result shows that 67.2% of the respondents had witnessed at least one form of clash between the herdsmen and farmers in Sabon Daga prior to the last incidence, while 32.8% of the respondents have not witnessed any form of clash between herdsmen and farmers in Sabon Daga prior to the last incidence. This is an indication that friction between the herdsmen and farmers in Sabon Daga has been on for a while, even though the last incidence was the most devastating

**Table 2: Awareness of Herdsmen and Farmer Clashes in Sabon Daga**

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Yes</b>	232	67.2
<b>No</b>	113	32.8

<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100.0</b>
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**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

### Frequency of Occurrence

The rate of occurrence of herdsmen and farmer's clashes was categorized into four: monthly quarterly, bi-annually, and annually, and the result is presented in Figure 2. The result shows that 48.4% opined that clashes between herdsmen and farmers occur bi-annually, while 27.6% suggest that the clashes occur annually, while only 13.6% and 10.4% rated the occurrence of clashes between herdsmen and farmers as a monthly and quarterly occurrence respectively.

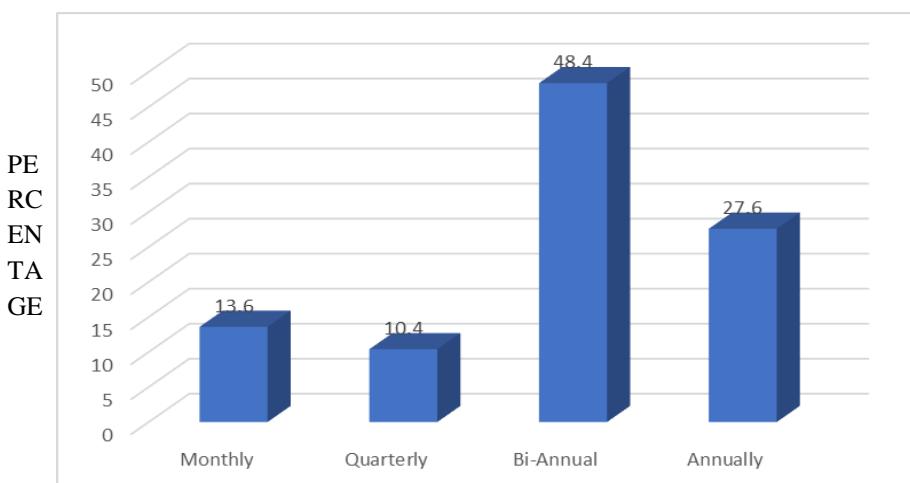


Figure 2: Frequency of Clash Occurrences

### Types of Weapon Used

The type of weapons used during Fulani herdsmen and farmers clash is presented in Table 3. The analysis reveals that 32% of the respondents reported that the clash is usually characterized by the use of Daggers/Cutlass, while 25% involve the use of sticks/stones. The use of guns and arrow/spear accounted for 12% and 9% of the weapons used. The study also revealed that 22% of the clashes involved the use of physical hand among both parties. The implication of this analysis is that the impact of the clash may likely be fatal since it involves the use of harmful weapons like guns and cutlass.

**Table 3: Types of Weapon Used During Herdsmen and Farmers Clash**

<b>Weapons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
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Hand/Fist	75	22
Stick/Stone	87	25
Daggers/Cutlass	110	32
Gun	43	12
Arrow/spear	30	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

### **Duration of the Herders-Farmers Conflict**

The duration of farmers-herders conflict is presented in Table 4. The result shows that the conflict between herders and farmers in Sabon Daga usually lasted for less than 24 hours as reported by 41% of the respondents. It was also reported that 38% of the conflict lasted for more than a day, while 20% of the conflict lasted for about a week. This shows that the conflict between herdsmen and farmers could last for a week in some cases.

**Table 4: Duration of Herders-Farmers Conflict in Sabon Daga**

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Within 24 Hour	141	41
1-6 Days	132	38
1 Week or more	72	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

### **Time of Occurrence**

The time of occurrence of conflict in Sabon Daga is presented in Figure 3. It can be observed that 43% of the respondents experienced conflict during the evening and late hours of the nights. Only 9% of the conflicts occur during the morning hours of the day, while 19% of the conflicts occur at noon. The time of occurrences of the various clashes between the farmers and herdsmen is presented in Figure 3.

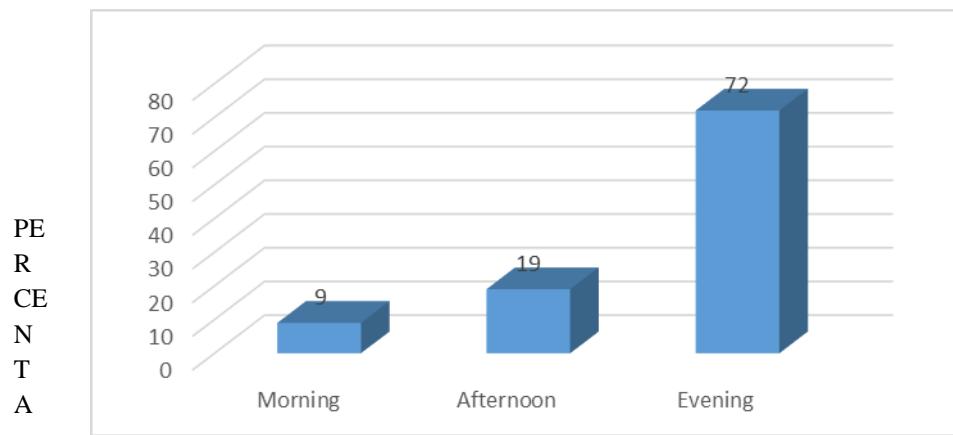


Figure 3: Time of Occurrence

### Causes of Fulani Herdsmen and Farmers Clash in Sabon Daga

Factors that influence clashes between both parties were gathered from extant review of literature; respondents were then asked to rate these causes on a likert scale of 5. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 5. The result reveals the extent to which the identified factors influenced or triggered clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Sabon Daga community. According to the result, destruction of crops and farm produce (4.08) is the most prevalent cause of crisis between herdsmen and farmers. This variable ranked first amongst all other causes identified; followed by reprisal attack (3.84) reprisal and killing of cattle (3.79) in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> positions respectively. Female harassment (2.55) and political influence (2.86) are the least ranked causes with a rank of 10<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> respectively. It can also be observed from the result that all the causes identified have high influence on the crisis between herdsmen and farmers; except for political and religious factors with moderate or fair impact.

**Table 5: Cause of Herdsmen and Farmers Clash in Sabon Daga**

Causes	Very Low	Low	Fair	High	Very High	Mean	Rank
Destruction of Crops	0	25	62	118	140	4.08	1 <sup>st</sup>
Reprisal attack	5	47	79	100	114	3.79	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Domestic Violence	30	49	73	87	106	3.55	7 <sup>th</sup>
Ethnicity	27	36	88	93	101	3.59	6 <sup>th</sup>
Politically Motivated	55	86	100	59	45	2.86	9 <sup>th</sup>
Inadequate Grazing							
Reserve	16	56	64	101	108	3.66	5 <sup>th</sup>
Female harassment	95	83	75	65	27	2.55	4 <sup>th</sup>
Pollution of water Point	32	51	46	79	137	3.69	10 <sup>th</sup>
Stealing of farm							
Produce/Cattle	15	34	69	100	127	3.84	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Indiscriminate Bush	45	69	120	57	54	3.02	8 <sup>th</sup>

Burning  
**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

### Socio-economic Impact of Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict in Sabon Daga

Items lost as a result of Fulani herdsmen and farmers crisis in Sabon Daga is depicted in Figure 4; the items are: houses, farm produce, lives, properties in form of cars, motorcycles, livelihood means and social ties. The result of the analysis as presented in Figure 4, shows that the largest proportion of the respondents (76%) lost their farm produce, another 65% lost valuable properties (cars, motorcycle, and other electronics), while 56% lost their houses. Other items lost as a result of the crisis as identified by respondents include: loss of social ties (51%), Livelihood means (47%), and loss of lives (32%).

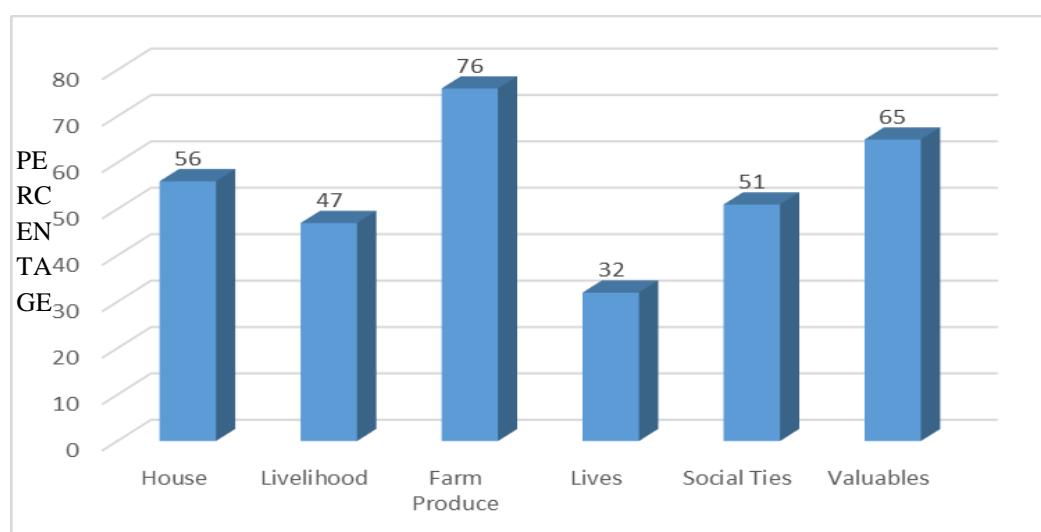


Figure 4: Types of Properties Lost During the Crisis

### Socio-economic Effect of Conflicts

The effects as identified by the respondents are presented in Table 6. Reduction in farm output (4.15) is the first major socio-economic effect experienced by the respondents. Displacement of farmers/herdsmen (3.78) is also a major effect as it ranked second among other effects identified. Reduction in income generation (3.63), decreased job opportunities (3.59), and loss of lives (3.43) were amongst the major effects of the crisis. The minor effects recorded are; increased crime rate (2.86) and distrust (2.76). This is in line with the report of Governor Ortom of Benue as reported by Premium Times of 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2017 which states that from January 2015 to February 2017; at least 62,000 people were displaced in Kaduna, Benue and Plateau states as a result of herdsmen and farmer's crisis.

**Table 6: Socio-economic Effect of Herdsmen and Farmers Crisis**

Causes	Total Score	Mean	Rank	Remark
Reduction in farm output	1432	4.15	1 <sup>st</sup>	Major effect

Displacement farmers/herdsman	of 1305	3.78	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Major effect
Loss of lives	1185	3.43	5 <sup>th</sup>	Major effect
Reduce job opportunity	1240	3.59	4 <sup>th</sup>	Major effect
Increased crime rate	988	2.86	6 <sup>th</sup>	Minor effect
Reduction in Income	1254	3.63	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Major Effect
Encourage Distrust	952	2.76	7 <sup>th</sup>	Minor effect

Source: Field Survey, 2024

### Institutions Involved in Herdsmen and Farmers Resolution

The study identified seven major institutions involved in crisis resolution between herdsmen and farmers in Sabon Daga over the years. The institutions are presented in Figure 5. The most prominent among the institutions identified is the police (93%), followed by traditional rulers (89%), government committees (62%), while the courts account for 27%. The contribution of crop farmer's association (21%), Miyetti Allah (18%), and civil organizations (5%) is minimal compared to that of the police and traditional rulers in the area.

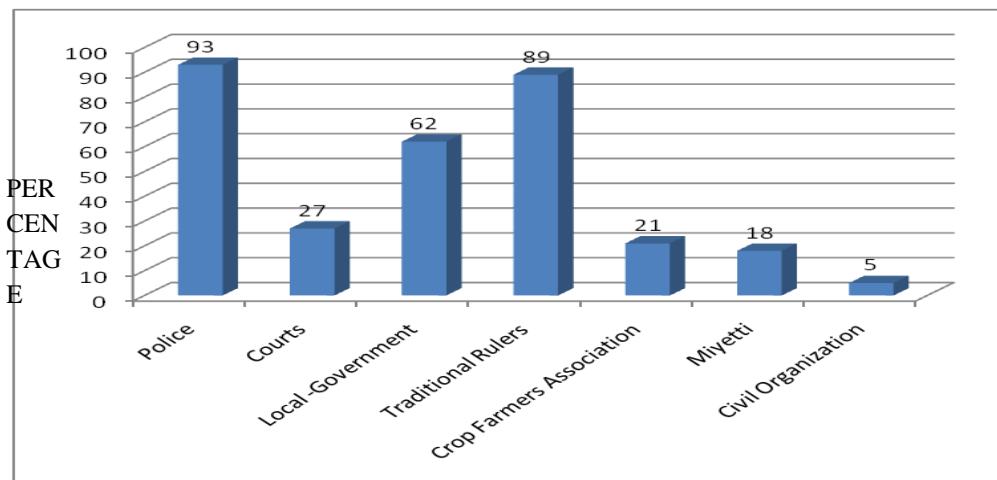


Figure 5: Institutions Involved in Herdsmen and Farmers Resolution

### Conclusion

The findings established that the root cause of conflicts between farmers and herders arise from land encroachment, destruction of crops, contamination of streams, female harassment and harassment of nomads by host communities and finally the socio-economic effects of the conflicts includes reduction in crop yield, displacement of farmers, loss of lives and property and loss of products in storage. The study suggests that local development plans should be established to reduce conflicts.

## Recommendations

- i. Nigerian borders should be well-manned in order to check the influx of foreign herdsmen.
- ii. Additionally, our respondents generally agreed on the urgent need to resuscitate and massively fund the various river basin authorities, especially in the north to enable the growth of grass for animal grazing to minimize nomadic mobility across the country. Cultivation of Napier grass also known as elephant grass or Uganda grass which is primarily used for grazing; where cultivated, nomads do not have to go outside their domain in search of greener pastures.
- iii. Considering the importance of national security, there is a need for the creation of appropriate and adequate security architecture. This would help to keep track and checkmate the influx of illegal small arms and light weapons into the country.

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