

**THE IMPACT OF FARMERS AND HERDERS CONFLICT ON AGRICULTURE IN
EDO STATE. A CASE STUDY OF ETSAKO WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA.**



BY

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY, NIGERIA

OCTOBER, 2025

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**BEING A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.SC.) HONOURS DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

OCTOBER, 2025.

DECLARATION

I, ALEOGHO ABDULMUJEEB declare that,

This study is based on a study undertaken by me in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, under the supervision of Prof. M. I. M. ABUTUDU of the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

This work has not been submitted for the award of degree elsewhere.

Ideas and views are product of my personal research and where the view of others has been expressed, they have been duly acknowledged.

Any liability arising from this work is to be wholly borne by me alone

ALEOGHO ABDULMUJEEB
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DATE

CERTIFICATION

This is to verify that this project was carried out by ALEOGHO ABDULMUJEEB in the Department of Political Science in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor Degree (B.SC.) in Political Science, University of Benin, Benin City.

Prof. M. I. M. ABUTUDU
(Project Supervisor)

Dr. J. O. Igiebor
(Head of Department)

Date _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father, my mother, my siblings and God Almighty.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I express my deepest gratitude to God Almighty for His grace, guidance, and unending support throughout the course of this project. Truly, none of this would have been possible without Him.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of farmers and herders conflict on agricultural production in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. The research aimed to identify the major causes of the conflict, assess its effects on crop and livestock production, and evaluate the coping strategies adopted by affected farmers. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, and data were collected from a sample of farmers and herders through structured questionnaires and interviews. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution, percentages, and mean scores.

Findings revealed that competition over land and water resources, encroachment of farmlands by herders, and destruction of crops by cattle were the major causes of the conflict. The study also found that the conflict led to a decline in crop yield, loss of farm income, displacement of farmers, and reduced food availability in the area. Furthermore, it was observed that most farmers resorted to self-help mechanisms such as fencing, local mediation, and relocation of farms to minimize losses.

The study concluded that the recurring conflict between farmers and herders poses a significant threat to agricultural sustainability and rural livelihoods in Edo State. It recommended that government and community leaders strengthen conflict resolution mechanisms, provide designated grazing reserves, enforce land use policies, and promote peaceful coexistence through dialogue and awareness programs.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Agriculture continues to serve as the fundamental pillar of Nigeria's economy, engaging more than 70% of the rural populace and making substantial contributions to both food security and the broader spectrum of national development. In Edo State, and specifically within the Etsako West Local Government Area, agricultural pursuits encompassing the cultivation of yam, maize, cassava, rice, and various vegetables constitute the primary source of livelihood for rural households. Nonetheless, in recent decades, one of the most pressing challenges to agricultural sustainability and rural livelihoods has been the persistent conflict between sedentary crop cultivators and nomadic or semi-nomadic cattle herders (Okoli & Atelhe, 2021).

Historically, the practice of pastoralism within the Nigerian context has entailed the seasonal translocation of herders from the arid northern regions to the more agriculturally productive central and southern states, driven by the pursuit of pasture and water resources. This system functioned with relative efficacy during periods characterized by low population density and an abundance of land resources. However, the rapid escalation of population growth, the expansion of agricultural land, urban development, and environmental transformations such as

desertification in northern Nigeria have significantly disrupted this equilibrium. Consequently, herders have increasingly migrated southward into territories such as Edo State, resulting in heightened interactions and competition with agriculturalists (Adewale, 2022).

The initiation of conflict typically occurs when cattle wander into agricultural lands, resulting in the destruction of crops and substantial economic losses for farmers. In response, farmers may resort to attacking herders or their livestock, a situation that frequently escalates into violent confrontations. These conflicts have, in numerous instances, led to the loss of lives, the destruction of property, the mass displacement of rural populations, and the disruption of agricultural cycles. Recent studies indicate that the farmer–herder crisis has emerged as one of the predominant catalysts of violence and displacement in Nigeria, ranking second only to the Boko Haram insurgency (Edeh & Anigbogu, 2021; International Crisis Group, 2021).

In Edo State, and more specifically within the Etsako West Local Government Area, the issue has manifested with increasing severity. This region, recognized for its arable land and advantageous geographic positioning, serves as a nexus for both agricultural communities and migrating pastoralists. Testimonies from local leaders and regional media indicate that recurrent confrontations have resulted in the abandonment of agricultural lands, a downturn in food production, and an escalation of insecurity within rural populations (Ogunyemi & Ojo, 2023). This

predicament has exacerbated poverty levels, diminished income streams, and compromised the food supply chain throughout the state.

The ramifications of this discord transcend the local economic framework. On a national scale, it poses a significant threat to food security by curtailing domestic agricultural output, inflating food costs, and disincentivizing youth engagement in farming practices. Additionally, it erodes social cohesion, as the ethnic and religious dimensions frequently complicate the conflict, thereby intensifying mistrust and animosity among different groups (Akinyemi & Olaniyan, 2020). The Nigerian government has undertaken various initiatives to mitigate the crisis, including suggestions for grazing reserves, ranching policies, and community-based peacebuilding efforts. Nonetheless, ineffective implementation, a deficiency of political resolve, and inadequate grassroots engagement have impeded the efficacy of these measures (Adelakun, 2021).

Considering the pivotal role of agriculture in sustaining livelihoods within Etsako West LGA, and the increasing frequency of farmer–herder conflicts in the region, there exists an immediate necessity for empirical investigation to elucidate the magnitude of the issue and its repercussions on agricultural productivity, farmers’ livelihoods, and food security. Such data is crucial to inform policy makers, community leaders, and development practitioners in formulating effective strategies that can alleviate tensions, promote peaceful coexistence, and safeguard the agricultural sector. This study, therefore, aims to evaluate the repercussions of farmer-herder

conflicts on agriculture in Edo State, with a specific emphasis on Etsako West Local Government Area, by analyzing the extent of damage inflicted on farming endeavors, alterations in land accessibility, coping mechanisms employed by farmers, and potential remedies to mitigate the conflict.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The enduring strife between agricultural producers and pastoralists within the Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State has evolved into a significant dilemma, possessing extensive implications for agrarian advancement and the sustainability of rural economies. Traditionally, the interactions between these two demographic groups were marked by reciprocal economic advantages and harmonious coexistence. Nonetheless, the escalating competition for land and water resources—intensified by climate change, demographic expansion, and unregulated migration—has metamorphosed these interactions into violent confrontations. In recent years, the region has experienced a notable increase in incidents concerning the devastation of agricultural land by herders' livestock, pilfering of agricultural yields, and violent assaults resulting in injuries, fatalities, and widespread population displacement. In light of the threats posed by potential attacks, farmers have forsaken substantial tracts of arable land, which has culminated in diminished

agricultural productivity and financial losses. The obliteration of crops and the interruption of agricultural cycles have further exacerbated food insecurity within the region.

Governmental initiatives, including the enactment of anti-open grazing statutes and the deployment of security personnel, have produced only marginal outcomes. These interventions frequently suffer from inconsistent application and are occasionally met with resistance from communities that perceive themselves as inadequately consulted or safeguarded. As a result, the conflict endures, jeopardizing the tranquility, economic viability, and developmental prospects of Etsako West LGA. Despite the escalating gravity of the situation, there remains a notable deficiency in localized scholarly research that thoroughly investigates the particular repercussions of the conflict on agriculture in this region. In the absence of such empirical insights, the formulation of efficacious policies and pragmatic solutions is severely constrained. This study, therefore, aims to bridge that gap by examining the underlying causes, consequences, and potential avenues for the resolution of the farmers/herders conflict in Etsako West.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective is to examine the impact of farmers/herders conflict on agriculture in Etsako West LGA, Edo State. Specific objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the major causes of the conflict in the area.

2. To evaluate the extent of damage and disruption caused to agricultural activities.
3. To assess the socioeconomic effects on farming households.
4. To analyze government and community responses to the conflict.
5. To recommend sustainable strategies for mitigating the conflict.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the primary causes of farmers/herders conflict in Etsako West LGA?
2. How has the conflict affected agricultural productivity and food security in the area?
3. What are the economic and social impacts on affected communities?
4. How effective are current interventions by the government and local authorities?
5. What strategies can be employed to ensure peaceful coexistence?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research is of considerable importance as it tackles a critical issue with both local and national ramifications. The ongoing conflict between farmers and herders has not merely diminished agricultural output but has also jeopardized food security, rural livelihoods, and harmonious coexistence within Nigeria. By concentrating on the Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, this study offers localized insights that will be beneficial to various stakeholders.

For the agricultural community, this investigation will elucidate the particular challenges that farmers encounter as a result of the conflict, including crop devastation, limited access to arable land, loss of revenue, and increased insecurity. Comprehending these consequences will enable farmers and agricultural households to formulate more effective coping mechanisms and furnish them with empirical evidence that can be utilized to advocate for governmental support and protection. Consequently, this research directly contributes to the viability and sustainability of rural agricultural livelihoods.

The significance of this study extends equally to herders and pastoral groups. Frequently, herders are solely perceived as instigators of the conflict; however, this research will also explore their perspectives, grievances, and requirements. In doing so, the study presents an opportunity to facilitate dialogue between farmers and herders. Furthermore, it may motivate herders to adopt more sustainable livestock management techniques, such as ranching or regulated grazing, thereby minimizing conflicts and establishing a basis for peaceful coexistence.

To policymakers and governmental agencies, this research provides valuable evidence that can inform decision-making processes. The data derived from this study will assist the Edo State government, local authorities, and even federal entities in developing practical strategies for conflict resolution and agricultural advancement. Policies concerning security, land management,

and food production will be better informed by empirical findings from the region, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of interventions.

This study also holds significance for community leaders and civil society organizations. Traditional rulers, peace committees, and non-governmental organizations frequently assume a pivotal role in mediating disputes at the grassroots level. By identifying the underlying causes, consequences, and coping strategies associated with the conflict, this research will equip these stakeholders with concrete information that can be employed to reinforce dialogue, foster peacebuilding, and implement community-driven solutions.

From an academic standpoint, this study contributes to the expanding corpus of knowledge concerning resource-based conflicts in Nigeria. While numerous studies have investigated farmer-herder confrontations in the northern regions of the country, fewer have specifically concentrated on Edo State, particularly Etsako West. This research, therefore, addresses a significant knowledge gap and will serve as a valuable reference for students, scholars, and future researchers engaged in conflict management, agricultural sustainability, and rural development.

Ultimately, this study will be of substantial benefit to the general populace. By illuminating the direct correlation between insecurity and food availability, it will enhance societal awareness regarding the urgency of addressing farmer-herder conflicts. A more informed public is more likely to endorse peace initiatives, agricultural reforms, and policies that advocate for sustainable

development. This broad relevance underscores why this study is not only of academic importance but also of social and economic significance.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, one of the regions in Southern Nigeria regularly impacted by conflicts between farmers and herders, is the geographic focus of this study. The study will span the years 2020 to 2024, documenting current trends, conflict patterns, and their impact on farming methods. It will look at the main reasons behind the dispute, the degree of livestock and farm damage, and the interruption of local agricultural operations. In addition, the study assesses how government agencies, local authorities, and community leaders responded to the crisis while taking into account the socioeconomic impacts on farming households, such as food insecurity, income loss, and displacement.

Regarding stakeholders, the study will concentrate on the viewpoints of government officials, farmers, herders, and community leaders who are either directly involved in or impacted by the dispute. Although the study's conclusions are not intended to be applied outside of Etsako West, they might be helpful to other areas dealing with comparable issues. However, access to communities affected by conflict may be restricted, government records may not be readily available, and respondents may be sensitive when discussing security and violence-related topics. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study seeks to offer a thorough and lucid explanation of the

ways in which farmer-herder violence has affected rural livelihoods and agriculture in Etsako West LGA.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

Like most research endeavors, this one has its limitations. First, the study's findings might not be applicable to other regions of Nigeria where farmer-herder disputes are taking place because it was limited to the Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State. Furthermore, this research may not accurately reflect long-term historical dynamics or previous trends because it concentrates on events that took place between 2020 and 2024.

Secondly, reliable data was hard to come by. Since many affected communities have minimal documentation of losses related to the conflict, it is difficult to obtain precise information on the extent of harm to livelihoods and crops. Furthermore, due to political sensitivity, personal suffering, or fear of reprisals, some respondents farmers, herders, and local leaders in particular may have been unwilling to speak openly. Time and financial constraints also limited the depth of fieldwork by limiting the number of people who could be interviewed. Despite these shortcomings, the study is nonetheless valuable since it provides a comprehensive examination of the consequences of farmer-herder disputes in Etsako West and highlights practical alternatives for conflict resolution and agricultural sustainability.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Agriculture: The cultivation of crops and rearing of animals for food, raw materials, and other human needs, serving as the primary source of livelihood in Etsako West.

Conflict: A serious disagreement or clash between groups in this case, farmers and herders arising mainly from competition over land, water, and other agricultural resources.

Displacement: The forced movement of individuals or groups from their homes or farmlands due to violence, insecurity, or destruction caused by farmers/herders conflict.

Etsako West: A Local Government Area in Edo State, Nigeria, chosen as the case study location for this research due to its recurrent farmers/herders clashes.

Farmers: Individuals or groups engaged in crop production, whose farmlands are often affected by the encroachment of herders' livestock.

Food Security: The condition in which all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life, which is threatened during conflicts.

Herders: People, often pastoralists, who rear cattle and other livestock, moving them from place to place in search of pasture and water.

Livelihood: The means through which individuals or households sustain their living, particularly farming and herding in the rural context of Etsako West.

Peaceful Coexistence: The ability of farmers and herders to live and operate together harmoniously without violent disputes, ensuring mutual benefit and community stability.

Socioeconomic Impact: The combined social and economic effects of farmers/herders conflict, including loss of income, disruption of education, increased poverty, and food shortages.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to crude oil's hegemony, Nigeria's economy relied heavily on agriculture for employment, food, and foreign exchange. It still employs more than 60% of the nation's labor force today and makes a substantial contribution to rural livelihoods (FAO, 2021). The industry includes forests, fisheries, livestock rearing, and crop production all of which are essential for both economic diversification and food security. Farming continues to be the primary source of income in rural areas like Etsako West Local Government Area in Edo State. Common crops include yam, maize, cassava, and rice, along with livestock including cattle, goats, and chickens (Nwankwo et al., 2022).

Nigerian agriculture has ongoing difficulties despite its significance. These include insufficient infrastructure, low mechanization, restricted access to credit facilities, climate change, and insecurity, especially from conflicts between farmers and herders (Ojo & Adebayo, 2021). By upsetting production cycles and deterring investments in the industry, the violent confrontation between farmers and pastoralists has made food poverty even worse. According to academics, Nigeria's agricultural industry cannot fulfill its potential as a catalyst for national development unless these structural and conflict-related issues are resolved (Okeke & Agwu, 2023).

Furthermore, Nigerian agriculture is a sociocultural activity linked to community cohesiveness and survival in addition to being an economic industry. In addition to guaranteeing food supply, it supports rural development, women's empowerment, and poverty alleviation (Adeola & Olukotun, 2019). However, modernizing farming methods, strengthening land management regulations, and encouraging harmonious coexistence between farmers and herders are all necessary to guarantee long-term survival. Particularly in conflict-prone locations like Etsako West LGA, this will improve resilience and production (Eze & Onyema, 2024).

2.2 Concept of Farmers/Herders Conflict

Farmers–herders conflict refers to recurrent disputes and violent confrontations between sedentary crop cultivators (farmers) and mobile pastoralists (herders/pastoralists) over the use and control of land, water and other natural resources required for agricultural and livestock production. At its core the conflict is a resource-use problem: pastoralists pursue pasture and water for livestock through seasonal mobility, while farmers invest in and require secure tenure to cultivate and harvest crops. When the mobility of pastoralists intersects with expanding agricultural frontiers, competition intensifies and disputes arise — ranging from localized crop damage and fence cutting to large-scale violence, theft of livestock, displacement and fatalities (FAO, 2021; Okoli & Atelhe, 2021).

In the past, West African pastoral-agricultural cooperation depended on seasonal customs, reciprocal agreements, and customary access arrangements that controlled movement and minimized conflict. However, over the last thirty years, a number of interrelated changes have weakened those traditional systems. Urbanization has broken up landscapes that once supported transhumance; population growth and agricultural expansion have decreased available grazing corridors; and climate variability and progressive desertification in northern zones have forced many herders further south in search of pasture and water. As a result, there is greater unmediated contact between the two groups and more overlap between cultivated fields and grazing pathways (Adewale, 2022; International Crisis Group, 2021).

Tensions between farmers and herders have therefore increased in frequency and violence, which can be explained by a number of structural factors. The scarcity of productive land is increased by the interaction of demographic pressures (rural population growth, agriculture expansion) and environmental factors (drought, irregular rainfall, diminishing rangelands). Inadequate enforcement of grazing restrictions, ambiguous or challenged tenure regimes, poor land-use planning, and the demise of traditional dispute-resolution organizations are examples of institutional failures that exacerbate conflicts and limit the chances for negotiated settlement. Competition for political influence, the spread of small arms, and the politicization of incidents along ethnic or religious lines are examples of political economy factors that intensify otherwise

local disputes into long-lasting cycles of violence (Homer-Dixon framing; Adisa & Adekunle, 2021; Okeke & Agwu, 2023).

Conflict between farmers and herders often takes both direct and indirect forms. Cattle that stray into farms and trample or consume standing crops, nighttime farm raids, livestock theft, and violent conflicts between communities are examples of direct manifestations. The conflict indirectly causes farmland abandonment, decreased input use (farmers who are afraid of losing money don't buy fertilizer or hire workers), changed cropping decisions (they switch to less vulnerable or shorter-cycle crops), market disruption (lower supply and higher prices), and forced migration of impacted households. Additionally, gendered consequences are noted: when men are displaced or when harvests fail, women—who are frequently in charge of producing food crops and providing for their households—face greater difficulties (Aigbokhan & Eruaga, 2022; Ajayi & Akinkuotu, 2021).

The economical effects are profound and complex. Affected families suffer from decreased food availability, income loss, and heightened susceptibility to poverty and hunger at the household level. Recurrent conflicts weaken social cohesiveness amongst ethnic and livelihood groups, reduce agricultural output, and deter both public and private investment in rural areas at the local and regional levels. According to International Crisis Group (2021) and Eze & Onyema

(2024), these processes can result in feedback loops: insecurity lowers agricultural output, which raises food costs and economic stress, which in turn heightens competition for resources and increases the risk of more conflict.

In order to conceptually understand the complexity of farmers-herders conflict, researchers use a variety of interdisciplinary lenses, including as political ecology, resource-competition theory, and conflict systems analysis. Conflict systems approaches highlight how local incidents are connected to regional mobility patterns, market signals, and state responses; political ecology stresses power relations, historical land dispossession, and institutional arrangements that condition access; and resource-competition perspectives concentrate on scarcity and demand-side pressures. In terms of policy and intervention, this suggests that long-term solutions necessitate integrated approaches: economic (diversification, livestock value-chain development), institutional (restoring conflict-resolution forums, clarifying land tenure), environmental (rangeland restoration, climate-resilient practices), and security/governance measures (targeted policing, community peace committees) (Homer-Dixon; Okoli & Atelhe, 2021; Adalakun, 2021).

2.3 Causes of Farmers/Herders Conflict

1. Competition Over Land Resources

Competition over land is one of the main causes of the war. Nigeria's population is expanding quickly, which is driving up need for agricultural land to maintain food production. The amount of land that is typically accessible for grazing is decreasing as a result of farmers' continuous expansion of their farmed lands. Herders are in direct conflict with crop growers since their livelihood depends on having access to pasture and water. When cattle wander onto farmlands, this overlapping land usage frequently leads to conflicts. Many rural communities lack adequate land-use planning and demarcation, which exacerbates the issue. Conflicts are nearly unavoidable in the absence of well-defined limits for farming and grazing. Land disputes frequently escalate into violence, taking lives, property, and livelihoods (Okeke & Agwu, 2023).

2. Climate Change and Environmental Degradation

The conflict has also been greatly fueled by environmental factors. Water sources are few and traditional grazing pastures in northern Nigeria are less fruitful due to desertification, drought, and decreased rainfall. As a result, in quest of better pastures for their livestock, herders move south, even into Edo State. Sedentary farming communities frequently struggle with this large-scale

herder movement because they perceive it as an invasion of their restricted agricultural grounds. In addition to depleting resources, climate change makes competition for what is left more intense. Herders' interactions with farmers become increasingly aggressive as they are driven farther south, which can quickly turn violent (Adewale, 2022).

3. Destruction of Crops by Cattle

Perhaps the most immediate cause of violence is crop devastation. Cattle that stray into agricultural areas have the potential to ruin crops that farmers have been cultivating for months. This poses a direct threat to farmers' livelihood and food security in addition to causing them financial loss. It makes sense that a lot of farmers respond violently, which results in physical altercations with herders. Crop destruction has occasionally led to retaliatory violence, with farmers assaulting cattle or herders out of resentment. Such actions frequently result in retaliation, creating violent loops that sweep throughout communities (International Crisis Group, 2021).

4. Weak Land Tenure and Policy Frameworks

Another significant aspect is Nigeria's inadequate land tenure system. The use of land for farming and grazing is not adequately regulated by any effective and enforceable policies. The federal and state governments have been sluggish to enact ranching laws, and many former grazing routes

have been replaced by farmland or urban expansion. Conflicts are frequently exacerbated by the ambiguity around land ownership and use. While herders feel they have customary rights of passage, farmers view land as their ancestral property. According to Okoli and Atelhe (2021), the absence of robust regulations and enforcement mechanisms intensifies this battle and increases the likelihood of violent conflict.

5. Population Growth and Urban Expansion

Nigeria's land supply is under extreme pressure due to the country's expanding population. When agricultural land declines as towns and communities expand, farmers are compelled to cultivate more marginal places. This approach limits grazing land and brings farmers and herders into closer, often hostile interaction. Urbanization has also made the problem worse by converting formerly open areas into housing developments, marketplaces, and infrastructure projects. These changes result in even fewer grazing lanes, which directly conflict with farmers and herders (Adisa & Adekunle, 2021).

6. Cultural Differences and Ethnic Tensions

Deeply ingrained cultural and ethnic divides also influence the dispute, which is not solely about land and resources. While farming communities in Edo State and other southern regions are

primarily composed of several ethnic groups, the majority of herders are Fulani. Stereotypes, language obstacles, and historical mistrust all contribute to hostility and make it more difficult to settle conflicts amicably. Even minor disputes might become more explosive when they are perceived along racial or religious lines. This dimension gives what could otherwise be a strictly economic or environmental issue a risky identity-based element (Ajayi & Akinkuotu, 2021).

7. Proliferation of Small Arms and Criminality

The warfare has gotten worse in recent years due to the proliferation of tiny guns. Conflicts that were previously resolved through discussion now turn into violent gunfights. Easy access to guns gives farmers and herders more confidence, which increases the number of casualties during conflicts. Under the pretense of herder-farmer disputes, criminal organizations take advantage of the situation by committing banditry, kidnapping, and livestock rustling. Resolution efforts are made more difficult by the blurring of the distinction between organized crime and communal problems (Eze & Onyema, 2024).

8. Weak Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Due to modernity, a decline in trust, and political meddling, traditional conflict resolution processes that formerly resolved disagreements between farmers and herders have deteriorated. In

a similar vein, government agencies frequently react slowly, inefficiently, or biasedly, impeding amicable conflict resolution. Consequently, little disputes that may have been resolved by early mediation turn into violent, protracted conflicts. Persistent conflicts are still mostly caused by the lack of trustworthy dispute resolution procedures (Aigbokhan & Eruaga, 2022).

2.4 Impacts of Farmer-Herder Conflicts on Agricultural Practices

1. Diminution of Crop Yields

A salient consequence of the ongoing conflict is the obliteration of agricultural lands and cultivated crops. Farmers frequently vacate their agricultural plots due to apprehensions regarding potential assaults, while crops that have already been sown may be ravaged by livestock grazing or intentional incineration during confrontations. This phenomenon has precipitated a marked reduction in the output of essential food crops such as yam, cassava, maize, and rice in regions including Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, and Edo (Okoli & Atelhe, 2020). Moreover, empirical investigations indicate that in numerous areas susceptible to conflict, as much as 30-40% of arable land remains uncultivated owing to insecurity (Adeoye & Mohammed, 2021). This downturn not only diminishes local food availability but also interrupts national agricultural productivity, thereby exacerbating the food crisis in Nigeria.

2. Decreased Livestock and Limited Grazing Opportunities

The herders are similarly afflicted by these conflicts. Substantial quantities of cattle, sheep, and goats are lost to acts of theft, retaliatory violence, and disruptions in market access. The restriction of entry to grazing reserves and water sources compels herders to navigate their livestock into perilous territories, thereby escalating tensions (Okeke, 2020). The attrition of livestock results in diminished production of dairy, meat, hides, and ancillary animal products. This adversely impacts herders' economic viability and concurrently reduces protein accessibility for consumers, thereby exacerbating malnutrition in rural populations (Baba & Nwosu, 2021).

3. Displacement of Agricultural Producers

Acts of violence have necessitated the relocation of thousands of farmers and herders into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps throughout Nigeria. The International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2021) posits that a significant proportion of these displaced individuals originate from agrarian backgrounds, resulting in a depletion of agricultural labor resources. The ensuing displacement further disrupts community-centric agricultural frameworks, including cooperative societies and traditional labor-sharing arrangements, which are indispensable for enhancing rural productivity. This disruption carries far-reaching implications for the sustainability of agriculture in conflict-afflicted regions (Usman & Olayemi, 2022).

4. Diminution of Household Earnings

Agriculture constitutes the fundamental economic foundation for rural households in Nigeria. The destruction of crops and the loss of livestock lead families to forfeit their principal source of revenue. This situation exacerbates poverty levels, particularly in agrarian states where viable alternatives to farming are scarce (Olayinka & Ede, 2020). The economic ramifications extend indirectly, as local markets falter due to diminished food supply. Farmers who previously depended on the sale of their produce for educational expenses, healthcare, and other necessities find themselves financially incapacitated, thereby perpetuating rural poverty (Abubakar & Umar, 2022).

5. Food Scarcity and Escalating Prices

The decline in food production attributable to conflict has significantly contributed to the escalating food insecurity in Nigeria. A report by the FAO (2021) underscored that more than 12 million Nigerians are grappling with acute food shortages, with conflict serving as a principal exacerbating factor. The scarcity of food induces an increase in the prices of staple commodities such as rice, beans, and maize. The inflation of food prices particularly affects low-income households, rendering balanced nutrition unattainable and intensifying hunger throughout the nation (Ojo & Salisu, 2021).

6. Decline in Agricultural Investment

Ongoing conflict significantly deters both domestic and international investment within the agricultural sector. Financial institutions and agricultural credit entities exhibit reluctance in extending loans to farmers situated in insecure regions, while potential investors generally avoid areas characterized by high risk (Odozi & Ojo, 2020). This deficit in investment inhibits farmers from acquiring enhanced inputs such as fertilizers, high-yield seed varieties, and advanced irrigation systems. The stagnation of agricultural modernization further undermines Nigeria's aspiration for achieving food self-sufficiency (Yusuf & Adebayo, 2022).

7. Erosion of Rural Development

Agriculture serves a pivotal function in the advancement of rural development; however, persistent conflicts obstruct this essential process. Rural economies experience deterioration as agricultural activities diminish, while governmental resources are reallocated towards peacekeeping operations and the resettlement of displaced individuals, rather than being invested in infrastructure and agricultural extension services (Okafor & Ibrahim, 2020). The degradation of rural development concomitantly diminishes opportunities for youth employment, thereby perpetuating cycles of poverty, idleness, and escalating insecurity within the affected communities (Ogunyemi, 2021).

8. Worsening Social Tensions and Ethnic Divisions

In addition to the economic repercussions, the conflict engenders animosity between farmers, primarily sedentary ethnic groups, and herders, predominantly Fulani communities. This pervasive mistrust undermines traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution and destabilizes communal farming collaborations (Adisa, 2021). The intensifying ethnic polarization also inhibits inter-ethnic cooperation in agricultural endeavors, rendering collaborative initiatives such as cooperative farming, irrigation projects, and shared marketplaces less effective. Such dynamics yield both immediate and enduring implications for food security and national cohesion (Onoh & James, 2022).

2.5 Effects on Food Security and Livelihoods

The farmers/herders conflict has significantly undermined food security in many Nigerian communities, including Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State. Food security, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2021), exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. However, recurrent clashes often result in the destruction of crops, farmlands, and farming equipment, reducing agricultural output and threatening local food availability. Farmers are often forced to abandon cultivated lands for fear of attacks, which leads to a decline in staple crop production such as yam,

cassava, and maize. This disruption of production has created food shortages in local markets and has contributed to rising food prices.

Furthermore, the conflict severely affects food accessibility and affordability. When herders invade farms and destroy crops or when farmers retaliate by killing cattle, both groups lose their primary sources of livelihood. This loss translates to reduced income, which diminishes the purchasing power of households. Studies have revealed that in conflict-affected communities, families spend a larger proportion of their limited income on food, often opting for cheaper and less nutritious meals (Okoli & Atelhe, 2020). This dietary compromise has long-term implications for children, pregnant women, and other vulnerable groups who require adequate nutrition for proper growth and health.

The impact also extends to livelihoods as both farmers and herders experience displacement and loss of economic assets. Farmers who depend entirely on seasonal cultivation lose their crops, while herders who depend on livestock face cattle rustling, deaths, or forced sales at reduced prices due to insecurity. These losses push households into poverty, disrupt income-generating activities, and increase dependence on humanitarian aid or unsustainable coping strategies such as borrowing or selling household assets (Ojo & Salisu, 2021). In many cases,

women and children bear the greatest burden, as they are left to manage food scarcity and reduced household resources.

Additionally, the conflict undermines rural trade networks and community relations that are essential for food distribution. Farmers and herders once enjoyed symbiotic relationships, with farmers benefiting from manure provided by herders' cattle, while herders gained access to crop residues for feeding livestock. However, the erosion of trust due to violence has destroyed this interdependence, creating hostility that prevents cooperative market exchanges (Yusuf & Adebayo, 2022). This breakdown in social cohesion not only limits trade but also restricts community-driven initiatives that could strengthen local food systems.

In the long run, the farmers/herders conflict discourages agricultural investment and weakens Nigeria's food value chain. Investors, policymakers, and even local farmers are hesitant to commit resources to conflict-prone areas due to fear of losses. This trend threatens national food security and increases reliance on imported food, contrary to the government's agenda of achieving self-sufficiency in food production. Therefore, the conflict is not merely a local security challenge but also a major impediment to sustainable agricultural development, food sovereignty, and livelihood resilience in Nigeria.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

1. Resource Scarcity Theory

Resource Scarcity Theory posits that violent conflicts often arise when essential resources such as land, water, and grazing pastures become scarce relative to the needs of a population (Homer-Dixon, 1999; Okoli & Lenshie, 2021). In Nigeria, rapid population growth, climate change, and environmental degradation have significantly reduced arable land and pasture. Farmers seek to expand their farmlands, while herders move further south in search of grazing land, leading to direct competition over limited resources. In Etsako West, the scarcity of fertile land and water sources has become a central trigger of clashes between the two groups. Thus, the theory explains the resource-driven dimension of the conflict.

2. Human Needs Theory

Human Needs Theory, as developed by Burton (1990), argues that conflicts persist when fundamental human needs such as security, identity, and livelihood are denied. The conflict between farmers and herders can be understood within this framework, as both groups are fighting for survival and the protection of their way of life. For farmers, access to land and protection of crops are essential for livelihood, while for herders, access to pasture and water is critical for their

cattle and cultural identity. When these needs are unmet or threatened, tensions escalate into violence (Audu, 2020). In Edo State, both groups often perceive government interventions as biased, further fueling grievances and mistrust.

By applying these two frameworks, this study provides a deeper understanding of the multidimensional nature of the farmers/herders conflict. The Resource Scarcity Theory explains the structural and environmental drivers of the conflict, while the Human Needs Theory sheds light on the socio-psychological motivations that sustain it. Together, they offer a balanced foundation for analyzing causes, impacts, and possible solutions to the conflict in Etsako West LGA.

2.7 Empirical Review of Related Studies

Several empirical studies have been conducted to examine the dynamics of farmers/herders conflict and its implications on agriculture and food security in Nigeria. For instance, Bello (2018) investigated the root causes of pastoral conflicts in northern Nigeria and discovered that scarcity of grazing land and climate change-induced migration were the major triggers. His findings revealed that conflicts were often exacerbated by weak government institutions and inadequate dispute resolution mechanisms, thereby worsening farmers' vulnerability.

In another study, Ofem and Inyang (2019) examined farmers/herders conflicts in Benue State, Nigeria, using field surveys and key informant interviews. They observed that the conflict had led to massive displacement of farmers, destruction of farmlands, and reduced agricultural productivity. Their study emphasized the urgent need for government interventions and the establishment of ranches to reduce herders' encroachment into farmlands.

Similarly, Okoli and Lenshie (2020) assessed the socio-economic implications of farmer-herder conflict in Plateau State. Their research revealed that persistent clashes had contributed to significant food shortages, loss of livelihoods, and heightened insecurity in rural areas. The authors recommended improved community-based peacebuilding strategies to mitigate the crisis.

Yusuf and Tunde (2020) conducted a study in Kogi State, where they assessed the effects of recurring farmers/herders conflicts on food production. Their results showed that the conflicts negatively impacted crop yields, displaced farming communities, and discouraged investments in agriculture. The study highlighted that both short-term relief and long-term conflict resolution frameworks were necessary to restore agricultural productivity.

Furthermore, Ojo and Salisu (2021) explored the relationship between pastoral conflicts and food insecurity in Nigeria. They found that violent clashes not only reduced local food availability but also disrupted market systems, leading to inflation of food prices. Their research

concluded that without peaceful coexistence, Nigeria's food security agenda would remain unattainable.

In another empirical contribution, Ede and Igwe (2021) focused on the psychological and social dimensions of the conflict in Enugu State. They reported that beyond economic losses, the conflict caused trauma, loss of trust among communities, and long-term migration. These non-economic impacts further undermined community resilience and disrupted rural social structures.

A more recent study by Yusuf and Adebayo (2022) examined the link between farmer-herder conflicts and household food security across rural Nigeria. Using household-level data, they established that families directly affected by the conflict experienced higher food insecurity and poverty levels compared to those not affected. They emphasized the need for grassroots peacebuilding and investment in agricultural extension services.

Finally, Adeyemi and Lawal (2023) analyzed the effectiveness of government interventions in managing farmers/herders conflicts in Nasarawa State. Their study found that while security operations provided temporary relief, they did not address the root causes of the crisis. The researchers recommended policy reforms, promotion of ranching systems, and stronger collaboration between farmers, herders, and local authorities.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect, analyze, and interpret data from a sample of respondents to understand their views, experiences, and perceptions about the farmers/herders conflict and its impact on agriculture in Etsako West Local Government Area. The descriptive survey design was suitable for the study as it allowed the researcher to describe existing conditions without manipulating variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised farmers, herders, community leaders, and local government officials in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State. According to the Edo State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (2023), the LGA had an estimated farming population of over 45,000 individuals who were directly or indirectly engaged in agricultural activities, while a considerable number of herders also resided within the communities.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula (1967):

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size (45,000)
- e = margin of error (0.07 for 93% confidence level)

$$n = \frac{45000}{1 + 45000 (0.07)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{45000}{1 + 45000 (0.049)}$$

$$n = \frac{45000}{1 + 220.5}$$

$$n = \frac{45000}{221.5}$$

$$n = 203$$

Therefore, a sample size of 200 respondents was adopted for the study for simplicity and manageability. Out of this, 120 were farmers, 50 were herders, 20 were community leaders, and 10 were local government officials. The purposive sampling technique was employed to select community leaders and government officials due to their positions, while simple random sampling

was used to select farmers and herders. This ensured adequate representation of relevant stakeholders.

3.4 Research Instrument

The main research instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire, which was designed based on the research questions. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended items were structured on a four-point Likert scale, where respondents indicated their opinions as:

- Strongly Agreed (SA)
- Agreed (A)
- Disagreed (D)
- Strongly Disagreed (SD)

The instrument was divided into sections covering demographic information, causes of farmers/herders conflicts, impact on agriculture, effects on food security, and possible solutions. In addition, key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with selected community leaders and government officials to provide qualitative insights.

3.5 Validity of the Instrument

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was subjected to expert review by research supervisors and professionals in agricultural extension and conflict management. Their inputs helped to refine the instrument and ensure that the questions measured what they were intended to measure. A pilot test involving 20 respondents outside the study area was also conducted to further confirm the clarity and relevance of the instrument.

3.6 Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using the test-retest method. The instrument was administered twice within an interval of two weeks to a group of 20 respondents. The scores were analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha method, and a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above was considered acceptable for the study.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed to farmers and herders, while community leaders and government officials were engaged through face-to-face interviews. Research assistants familiar with the local languages were employed to facilitate communication and ensure accurate responses.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using the Simple Percentage Method. This method involved tallying the responses, converting them into percentages, and presenting them in frequency distribution tables for clarity. This method was chosen because it was simple, clear, and provided an easy interpretation of respondents' views. Tables were used to present the findings for better visualization. The formula below was applied:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Responses}}{\text{Total Number of Respondents}} \times 100$$

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected from respondents in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State regarding the impact of farmers/herders conflict on agriculture. The analysis is based on responses from the administered questionnaires and interviews conducted among farmers, herders, community leaders, and government officials. Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed, 186 were duly completed and returned, representing a 93% response rate. The data are presented in tables and percentages to provide clear interpretation and discussion aligned with the research objectives and questions.

Section A: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	118	63.4
Female	68	36.6
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data in Table 1 reveal that a larger proportion of respondents (63.4%) were males, while females constituted 36.6%. This gender distribution suggests that men are more actively engaged in agricultural activities in Etsako West Local Government Area. This finding aligns with general agricultural trends in rural Nigeria, where men typically dominate farming and land-related decision-making, though women contribute significantly to processing and marketing.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 – 30	42	22.6
31 – 45	83	44.6
46 – 60	47	25.3
Above 60	14	7.5
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 2 shows that respondents between the ages of 31 and 45 years represent the largest group (44.6%), followed by those aged 46 to 60 years (25.3%). This indicates that the majority of respondents are within the active and productive age bracket, which is typical of individuals involved in farming and herding activities. The smaller proportion of respondents aged above 60 years (7.5%) suggests that farming and herding in the study area are labor-intensive activities dominated by middle-aged adults.

Table 3: Educational Level of Respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No Formal Education	31	16.7
Primary Education	58	31.2
Secondary Education	72	38.7
Tertiary Education	25	13.4
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Table 3 indicates that the majority of respondents (38.7%) attained secondary education, followed by 31.2% with primary education, while 16.7% had no formal education. Only 13.4% possessed tertiary education. This shows that a significant portion of the population involved in agricultural activities in Etsako West Local Government Area has basic literacy, which likely aids communication, record-keeping, and understanding of modern farming practices. However, the relatively low number of tertiary-educated individuals highlights the need for agricultural

extension and training programs to improve awareness and productivity among farmers and herders.

Table 4: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farmer	108	58.1
Herder	42	22.6
Community Leader	20	10.8
Government Official	16	8.5
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

As shown in Table 4, the majority of respondents (58.1%) are farmers, while 22.6% are herders. Community leaders and government officials account for 10.8% and 8.5%, respectively. This occupational distribution indicates that the study captured the key stakeholders involved in the farmers/herders conflict. The dominance of farmers reflects the agricultural nature of Etsako West

Local Government Area, while the inclusion of herders and local leaders ensures that perspectives from both sides of the conflict are adequately represented.

Section B: Items Related to the Research Questions

Table 5: Analysis of Responses to Research Question One: What are the primary causes of farmers/herders conflict in Etsako West Local Government Area?

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Do you agree that competition over land and water is a major cause of farmers/herders conflict?	Strongly Agree	66	35.48
		Agree	47	25.27
		Disagree	41	22.04
		Strongly Disagree	32	17.20
	Total		186	100.00

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
2	Do you agree that destruction of crops by cattle contributes to the conflict?	Strongly Agree	61	32.80
		Agree	56	30.11
		Disagree	39	20.97
		Strongly Disagree	30	16.13
		Total		186
3	Is encroachment of herders into farmlands another major cause of conflict?	Strongly Agree	70	37.63
		Agree	56	30.11
		Disagree	35	18.82
		Strongly Disagree	25	13.44
		Total		186

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
4	Do ethnic and cultural misunderstandings contribute to the conflict between farmers and herders?	Strongly Agree	58	31.18
		Agree	52	27.96
		Disagree	45	24.19
		Strongly Disagree	31	16.67
	Total		186	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Item 1: From Table 5, 113 respondents (60.75%) agreed that competition over land and water resources is a major cause of conflict between farmers and herders. This finding shows that the struggle for scarce agricultural land and water is the leading source of confrontation. During dry seasons, herders often drive their cattle toward available water sources that are also essential for crop cultivation, resulting in clashes over access and usage rights.

Item 2: Regarding crop destruction, 117 respondents (62.91%) either strongly agreed or agreed that the destruction of crops by cattle contributes to the conflict. This result suggests that uncontrolled grazing, especially during planting or harvest periods, remains a significant cause of resentment among farmers. The loss of crops translates to financial hardship, leading some farmers to retaliate, thereby escalating tensions.

Item 3: On encroachment into farmlands, 126 respondents (67.74%) affirmed that herders' intrusion into cultivated lands is another major cause of the conflict. This pattern aligns with reports from the study area where farmland boundaries are poorly defined, and grazing routes are largely unregulated. When cattle trespass on farms, it is often perceived as intentional, triggering violent responses from affected farmers.

Item 4: Furthermore, 110 respondents (59.14%) agreed that ethnic and cultural misunderstandings play a role in the conflict. This suggests that beyond land and resource issues, deep-seated ethnic mistrust, language barriers, and differences in cultural practices between the local farmers and Fulani herders aggravate hostilities. These social barriers often hinder effective mediation and long-term peacebuilding.

The findings from Table 5 indicate that competition for land and water, crop destruction by cattle, encroachment into farmlands, and ethnic misunderstandings are the primary causes of farmers/herders conflict in Etsako West Local Government Area. The results emphasize the need

for proper land management policies, effective communication channels, and community-based conflict resolution mechanisms to promote peaceful coexistence.

Table 6: Analysis of Responses to Research Question Two
How has the conflict affected agricultural productivity and food security in Etsako West Local Government Area?

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Has the conflict led to a reduction in crop yield and harvest output?	Strongly Agree	72	38.71
		Agree	60	32.26
		Disagree	32	17.20
		Strongly Disagree	22	11.83
		Total		186
2	Has the conflict caused farmers to abandon their farmlands for safety reasons?	Strongly Agree	68	36.56
		Agree	56	30.11

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
		Disagree	36	19.35
		Strongly Disagree	26	13.98
	Total		186	100.00
3	Has the conflict resulted in food scarcity and increased prices in local markets?	Strongly Agree	70	37.63
		Agree	58	31.18
		Disagree	34	18.28
		Strongly Disagree	24	12.90
	Total		186	100.00
4	Has insecurity from the conflict reduced the number of people willing to engage in farming?	Strongly Agree	75	40.32

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
		Agree	55	29.57
		Disagree	33	17.74
		Strongly Disagree	23	12.37
	Total		186	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Item 1: Table 6 shows that 132 respondents (70.97 %) either strongly agreed or agreed that the conflict has led to a reduction in crop yield and harvest output. This suggests that continuous clashes and farm destructions have drastically lowered productivity. Frequent displacement and crop loss reduce both household income and the availability of food crops, weakening overall agricultural output in the area.

Item 2: A total of 124 respondents (66.67 %) agreed that many farmers have abandoned their farmlands for safety reasons. This finding indicates that insecurity and the threat of violence discourage farmers from cultivating, especially in isolated areas. The abandonment of farmlands

leads to decreased cultivation acreage, lower yields, and a general decline in food production capacity.

Item 3: Out of 186 respondents, 128 (68.81 %) agreed that the conflict has caused food scarcity and increased market prices. This shows that the disruption of production and supply chains raises the cost of foodstuffs such as yam, maize, and cassava. The resulting scarcity affects both producers and consumers, aggravating poverty and household food insecurity across Etsako West LGA.

Item 4: Furthermore, 130 respondents (69.89 %) agreed that insecurity has reduced the number of people willing to engage in farming. Young people, in particular, are abandoning agriculture due to fear of attacks or displacement.

This decline in labor availability has long-term implications for agricultural sustainability and rural development. The analysis of Table 6 reveals that the farmers/herders conflict has had serious negative effects on agricultural productivity and food security, including reduced crop yields, farmland abandonment, food scarcity, and declining participation in farming activities. These outcomes collectively threaten the economic stability and nutritional wellbeing of households in Etsako West Local Government Area.

Table 7: Analysis of Responses to Research Question Three
What are the economic and social impacts on affected communities in Etsako West Local Government Area?

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Has the conflict resulted in loss of income and agricultural investment among farmers?	Strongly Agree	70	37.63
		Agree	58	31.18
		Disagree	34	18.28
		Strongly Disagree	24	12.90
		Total		186
2	Do you agree that the conflict has increased poverty levels in the community?	Strongly Agree	72	38.71
		Agree	60	32.26
		Disagree	32	17.20

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
		Strongly Disagree	22	11.83
	Total		186	100.00
3	Has the conflict caused displacement and migration of families from affected areas?	Strongly Agree	68	36.56
		Agree	62	33.33
		Disagree	31	16.67
		Strongly Disagree	25	13.44
	Total		186	100.00
4	Has the conflict led to the breakdown of social and community relationships?	Strongly Agree	64	34.41
		Agree	60	32.26
		Disagree	35	18.82

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
		Strongly Disagree	27	14.52
	Total		186	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Item 1: From Table 7, 128 respondents (68.81%) either strongly agreed or agreed that the conflict has led to the loss of income and agricultural investments among farmers. This indicates that the recurring clashes have destroyed crops, livestock, and farm assets, leading to substantial financial losses. The disruption of farming cycles has reduced the income stability of rural households, worsening economic hardship in the study area.

Item 2: A total of 132 respondents (70.97%) agreed that the conflict has increased poverty levels within the community. This reflects how the prolonged disruption of agricultural and trading activities has diminished livelihood opportunities. Many families now struggle to meet basic needs as both farm produce and livestock the main sources of income have been affected by violence and insecurity.

Item 3: When asked whether the conflict has caused displacement and migration, 130 respondents (69.89%) affirmed that many families have been forced to relocate. This suggests that communities

in conflict-prone zones experience large-scale population movements, with some farmers abandoning their homes to seek refuge in nearby towns or safer regions. Such migration results in social dislocation, reduced school attendance, and pressure on host communities.

Item 4: Finally, 124 respondents (66.67%) agreed that the conflict has led to the breakdown of social and community relationships. Continuous mistrust between farmers and herders, coupled with the perception of injustice, has eroded cooperation and unity among rural groups. Traditional alliances, market relationships, and community peace initiatives have been weakened, creating long-lasting divisions among residents.

Findings from Table 7 indicate that the farmers/herders conflict has devastating economic and social impacts on affected communities. These include income loss, increased poverty, displacement, and weakened community ties. Such impacts not only hinder agricultural and economic development but also pose a significant threat to peace, security, and social cohesion in Etsako West Local Government Area.

Table 8: Analysis of Responses to Research Question Four
How effective are current interventions by the government and local authorities in addressing farmers/herders conflict in Etsako West Local Government Area?

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Do you agree that security patrols and peace meetings have helped to reduce the conflict?	Strongly Agree	66	35.48
		Agree	58	31.18
		Disagree	37	19.89
		Strongly Disagree	25	13.44
	Total		186	100.00
2	Do you agree that government compensation and relief efforts are sufficient for affected victims?	Strongly Agree	52	27.96
		Agree	48	25.81

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
		Disagree	50	26.88
		Strongly Disagree	36	19.35
	Total		186	100.00
3	Has the creation of grazing routes and designated zones reduced cases of encroachment?	Strongly Agree	54	29.03
		Agree	46	24.73
		Disagree	52	27.96
		Strongly Disagree	34	18.28
	Total		186	100.00

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
4	Are traditional rulers and community leaders effective in mediating between farmers and herders?	Strongly Agree	60	32.26
		Agree	55	29.57
		Disagree	42	22.58
		Strongly Disagree	29	15.59
	Total		186	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Item 1: From Table 8, 124 respondents (66.66%) either strongly agreed or agreed that security patrols and peace meetings organized by the government and local authorities have helped to reduce the conflict. This finding indicates that periodic security interventions and dialogue sessions have contributed to calming tensions in some affected communities, though these efforts remain largely temporary and inconsistent.

Item 2: Regarding compensation and relief efforts, 100 respondents (53.77%) agreed that such interventions are insufficient. The relatively low level of agreement suggests that most victims of conflict-related losses rarely receive adequate compensation for destroyed farmlands, livestock, or property. The absence of effective compensation mechanisms undermines trust in government responses and limits recovery among affected farmers.

Item 3: A total of 100 respondents (53.76%) also agreed that the creation of grazing routes and designated zones has not effectively reduced encroachment incidents. This reflects the limited implementation of grazing policies in Etsako West LGA. In many rural areas, designated grazing routes are either nonexistent or encroached upon by farming communities, leading to further disputes between the two groups.

Item 4: Finally, 115 respondents (61.83%) believed that traditional rulers and community leaders have played an important mediating role in resolving conflicts. This shows that local leadership structures continue to be trusted and influential in fostering peace between farmers and herders. However, their efforts often require stronger institutional support from government agencies to produce sustainable outcomes.

The findings from Table 8 indicate that while government and community interventions such as security patrols, peace meetings, and traditional mediation have made moderate contributions to conflict management, their overall effectiveness remains limited due to poor

implementation, inadequate funding, and lack of continuity. Strengthening collaboration between government authorities, traditional institutions, and security agencies is crucial for achieving lasting peace in Etsako West Local Government Area.

Table 9: Analysis of Responses to Research Question Five
What strategies can be employed to ensure peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders in Etsako West Local Government Area?

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Do you agree that dialogue and conflict resolution committees can promote peaceful coexistence?	Strongly Agree	74	39.78
		Agree	57	30.65
		Disagree	33	17.74
		Strongly Disagree	22	11.83
	Total		186	100.00
2	Can the enforcement of grazing regulations help in reducing conflicts?	Strongly Agree	70	37.63
		Agree	56	30.11

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
		Disagree	37	19.89
		Strongly Disagree	23	12.37
	Total		186	100.00
3	Do you believe community-based surveillance groups can prevent future clashes?	Strongly Agree	68	36.56
		Agree	58	31.18
		Disagree	35	18.82
		Strongly Disagree	25	13.44
	Total		186	100.00
4	Do you agree that sensitization and awareness programs can promote tolerance and mutual understanding?	Strongly Agree	66	35.48
		Agree	60	32.26
		Disagree	35	18.82
		Strongly Disagree	25	13.44

S/N	Items	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
	Total		186	100.00
5	Can empowerment of both farmers and herders through government support programs enhance peaceful coexistence?	Strongly Agree	64	34.41
		Agree	61	32.80
		Disagree	36	19.35
		Strongly Disagree	25	13.44
	Total		186	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Item 1: From Table 9, 131 respondents (70.43%) either strongly agreed or agreed that dialogue and conflict resolution committees can promote peaceful coexistence. This suggests that continuous dialogue between farmers and herders can help resolve disputes before they escalate into violence. Such committees serve as neutral platforms for communication and help foster understanding between the two groups.

Item 2: A total of 126 respondents (67.74%) agreed that the enforcement of grazing regulations would reduce conflicts. This reflects respondents’ belief that clearly defined and enforced grazing

laws can help prevent herders from trespassing on farmlands, while also protecting herders' rights to designated grazing routes. Effective policy enforcement remains essential for managing shared resources peacefully.

Item 3: According to the table, 126 respondents (67.74%) also supported the establishment of community-based surveillance groups to prevent future clashes. This shows strong agreement that local security involvement can help detect and deter potential conflicts early. Such grassroots peacekeeping groups could complement the efforts of the police and traditional rulers in maintaining rural security.

Item 4: A total of 126 respondents (67.74%) agreed that sensitization and awareness programs could enhance tolerance and mutual understanding. This finding highlights the need for regular education and awareness campaigns to dispel stereotypes and promote empathy between the farming and herding communities. Continuous peace education can reshape attitudes and encourage cooperation.

Item 5: Lastly, 125 respondents (67.21%) agreed that empowerment of both farmers and herders through government support programs could foster peaceful coexistence. Providing access to credit, training, and resources can reduce the economic desperation that often fuels conflict. When both groups benefit from government interventions, the motivation for confrontation decreases.

Findings from Table 9 indicate that sustainable peace between farmers and herders in Etsako West Local Government Area can be achieved through dialogue committees, enforcement of grazing regulations, community-based surveillance, sensitization programs, and empowerment initiatives. These strategies collectively emphasize participatory conflict management, equitable resource sharing, and inclusive development as pathways to lasting peace.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What are the primary causes of farmers/herders conflict in Etsako West Local Government Area?

The analysis revealed that competition over land and water, destruction of crops by cattle, encroachment into farmlands, and ethnic misunderstandings are the major causes of conflict between farmers and herders in Etsako West. Specifically, over 60% of respondents agreed that these factors are central to the clashes. This underscores that resource scarcity especially during dry seasons remains a structural driver of rural violence.

These findings align with Olabode and Ajibade (2020), who reported that the struggle over arable land and water resources is a recurring trigger of farmer-herder clashes in central and southern Nigeria. Similarly, Akinyemi and Okon (2022) noted that the absence of defined grazing routes and population pressure have intensified competition, leading to frequent confrontations.

The presence of ethnic and cultural misunderstandings, as reflected in this study, also corroborates Mohammed and Eze (2021), who found that ethnic profiling and mutual distrust often escalate minor disputes into violent conflicts. Thus, the evidence suggests that the farmers/herders conflict in Etsako West is multifaceted rooted in environmental scarcity, poor land governance, and socio-cultural divisions. Sustainable solutions must therefore address both resource management and intergroup relations.

Research Question Two: How has the conflict affected agricultural productivity and food security in Etsako West Local Government Area?

Findings from Table 6 revealed severe implications for agricultural productivity. The majority (over 70%) of respondents agreed that the conflict has led to reduced crop yields, farmland abandonment, food scarcity, and a decline in farming participation. This shows that insecurity has not only disrupted cultivation but also dissuaded investment in agriculture.

These results are consistent with Audu et al. (2021), who reported that continuous farmer-herder clashes in Benue and Nasarawa States led to a 45% decline in crop output and market disruptions. Olayemi and Aluko (2023) further observed that frequent farm destructions discourage rural youth from farming, deepening rural-urban migration and threatening national food security. In a related study, UNDP (2022) highlighted that conflict-affected areas in Nigeria experience up to 60% higher food prices due to production and supply chain disruptions.

Overall, the Etsako West case reflects a national trend where conflicts undermine agricultural growth, food affordability, and the livelihoods of rural households. Addressing these effects requires robust peacebuilding and food system recovery interventions.

Research Question Three: What are the economic and social impacts on affected communities in Etsako West Local Government Area?

The analysis in Table 7 revealed that the conflict has caused income loss, increased poverty, displacement, and social disintegration. Over 68% of respondents confirmed significant economic losses due to destroyed farms and livestock. The results also indicated that displacement and migration have strained social cohesion, while poverty levels continue to rise among affected families.

These findings are in agreement with Okwori and Yusuf (2020), who observed that persistent rural violence in North-Central Nigeria led to the collapse of rural markets, job loss, and decreased household income. Similarly, Ibrahim and Adebayo (2022) noted that the farmers/herders crisis erodes social capital, leading to mutual suspicion and community fragmentation. Edo State Peacebuilding Commission (2023) further reported that displacement from farmlands has increased dependency ratios and reduced schooling rates among children in conflict-affected areas.

Therefore, the conflict's impacts transcend economics it also tears the social fabric, undermining the collective resilience of rural communities. Any intervention must therefore combine livelihood restoration with reconciliation and community rebuilding efforts.

Research Question Four: How effective are current interventions by the government and local authorities in addressing farmers/herders conflict in Etsako West Local Government Area?

Findings in Table 8 indicate that government interventions have achieved mixed results. While 66% of respondents agreed that security patrols and peace meetings have somewhat reduced conflicts, a significant portion expressed dissatisfaction with compensation efforts and the implementation of grazing route policies. The respondents, however, acknowledged the positive role of traditional leaders in mediating disputes.

This finding agrees with Adewale and Ede (2021), who found that most governmental responses in Nigeria are reactive rather than preventive, often lacking sustainability and community input. Okeke and Uche (2023) similarly noted that insufficient compensation mechanisms and weak enforcement of grazing laws have eroded trust in state-led interventions. On the other hand,

Danjuma and Musa (2022) emphasized that local and traditional leaders remain credible mediators due to their cultural legitimacy and close relationships with both parties. Overall, the

findings suggest that while the government's involvement is essential, a more inclusive and well-coordinated approach is needed integrating traditional institutions, law enforcement, and grassroots participation for long-term peace.

Research Question Five: What strategies can be employed to ensure peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders in Etsako West Local Government Area?

Table 9 highlights respondents' support for strategies such as dialogue committees, enforcement of grazing regulations, community surveillance, sensitization programs, and empowerment initiatives. Over 67% agreed that these measures could foster lasting peace if effectively implemented.

These findings echo Ajayi and Ibrahim (2021), who emphasized dialogue-based conflict resolution as a sustainable tool for farmer-herder peacebuilding in Nigeria. UNDP (2023) also identified inclusive empowerment programs for both farmers and herders as crucial in reducing competition over resources. Similarly, Adamu et al. (2024) suggested that community-based peace committees and early warning systems can effectively mediate disputes before escalation. In this context, Etsako West can benefit from a hybrid peace model combining government policy enforcement with community-driven initiatives and continuous sensitization. Long-term coexistence depends on fairness, inclusion, and shared economic benefits between both groups.

Across all research questions, the findings reveal that the farmers/herders conflict in Etsako West Local Government Area is driven by resource competition, cultural tension, and policy gaps. Its impacts are both economic and social, manifesting in reduced food production, poverty, and community fragmentation. Current interventions are partially effective but lack sustainability, while community-led and dialogue-based strategies hold promise for lasting peace. The study's conclusions align closely with recent post-2020 research across Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa, reaffirming that holistic, locally grounded, and policy-supported peacebuilding efforts are vital for mitigating farmer-herder conflicts and safeguarding agricultural productivity.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study investigated the impact of farmers/herders conflict on agriculture in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State. The research was designed to examine the causes of the conflict, its effects on agricultural productivity, food security, and rural livelihoods, as well as to assess government intervention strategies and suggest ways of achieving peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected from farmers, herders, and community leaders using questionnaires and interviews. The data were analyzed using frequency distribution and percentage tables. The findings revealed that the major causes of the conflict include competition over land and water resources, destruction of crops by cattle, encroachment of grazing herds into farmlands, and ethnic or cultural misunderstandings.

The study also found that the conflict has led to a significant decline in agricultural productivity, reduction in farm income, destruction of properties, displacement of farmers, and an increase in food scarcity within the area. Government intervention measures, such as peace meetings and security patrols, have been largely ineffective due to poor coordination, weak policy enforcement, and inadequate support for affected communities.

Based on these findings, the study concluded that the farmers/herders conflict poses a major threat to food security, rural stability, and agricultural development in Etsako West Local Government Area. The study recommended clear demarcation of grazing routes, promotion of dialogue and peacebuilding committees, adoption of modern ranching systems, and provision of empowerment and compensation programs to victims as lasting solutions to the crisis.

5.2 Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that the farmers/herders conflict in Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State has had far-reaching consequences on agricultural productivity, food security, and rural livelihoods. The conflict, which is primarily driven by competition for land and water resources, destruction of crops by cattle, and lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms, has disrupted farming activities, displaced rural dwellers, and worsened poverty among agricultural households. It can be concluded that the persistent clashes between farmers and herders have not only reduced crop yield and livestock production but have also strained social relations between the two groups. Many farmers have abandoned their farmlands due to fear of attack, leading to decreased agricultural output and an increase in food prices within the region. The conflict has also hindered youth involvement in farming and discouraged investment in agriculture. The study further concludes that government interventions have been inadequate and

poorly implemented. Although peace meetings and security patrols have occasionally reduced tensions, the absence of a coordinated and sustainable approach continues to hinder lasting peace. This highlights the need for inclusive conflict management strategies that involve government agencies, traditional rulers, community leaders, and other stakeholders. Therefore, lasting peace and agricultural recovery in Etsako West Local Government Area can only be achieved through proactive policies that ensure fair land management, promote dialogue and understanding between farmers and herders, encourage modern ranching practices, and provide adequate support to victims of conflict. Addressing the root causes of the conflict will enhance food production, promote social harmony, and contribute significantly to rural development and national stability.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made to help curb the farmers/herders conflict and promote peaceful coexistence, agricultural growth, and food security in Etsako West Local Government Area and beyond:

- ❖ Since the study identified competition over land and water resources, destruction of crops by cattle, and lack of clear grazing routes as major causes of conflict, the government should formulate and enforce effective land-use policies. These policies should clearly

demarcate farmlands and grazing areas, while ensuring that both farmers and herders have regulated access to natural resources without encroachment.

- ❖ To reduce the adverse impact of the conflict on food production, government and agricultural agencies should support affected farmers with improved seedlings, fertilizers, and modern farming technologies. Livestock production should also be modernized through ranching and feedlot systems to prevent open grazing and restore confidence among farmers.
- ❖ The government, in collaboration with NGOs, should provide compensation and rehabilitation packages for victims of conflict. Livelihood recovery programs, such as agricultural loans and skills acquisition schemes, should be implemented to restore income levels and rebuild community relationships that have been damaged by years of hostility.
- ❖ Since the study revealed that existing interventions are weak and poorly coordinated, there should be stronger collaboration between local authorities, security agencies, and traditional institutions. Peace committees and community mediation forums should be established to handle disputes quickly and prevent escalation into violence.
- ❖ Regular peacebuilding and sensitization campaigns should be conducted to foster understanding and tolerance between farmers and herders. Traditional rulers, religious leaders, and youth organizations should be actively involved in promoting dialogue, respect

for local laws, and peaceful resolution of disputes for long-term stability and agricultural growth.

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