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2022/2023 PhD Thesis Abstract

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RT: Assessment of Farm Household Food Security Status amidst Farmer Herder Conflict in Southern Nigeria

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AB: Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Studies have shown that United Nations Children's Emergency Fund estimates that 25 million Nigerians are currently food insecure due to factors that include unceasing conflicts. Struggle for land resources between herders and farmers has been a major concern, detrimental to food security. Hence, the study assessed farm household food security status amidst the farmer-herder conflict in southern Nigeria.

A quantitative research approach using a multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. A State that had witnessed the conflict was purposively selected from each of the three geopolitical zones in southern Nigeria: Ebonyi (SE), Edo (SS) and Oyo (SW). From the three agricultural zones in each selected State, two communities that had witnessed conflict (conflict stratum) and two that had not (non-conflict stratum) were purposively selected, while herder stratum was selected using the snowballing technique. A total of 979 respondents were randomly selected, comprising 627 for the conflict stratum, 314 for the non-conflict stratum, and 38 for the herder stratum. A validated questionnaire with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.97 and a 90% response rate. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics at 5% level of significance. Food security dimension proxies used were mean per capita household food expenditure, food consumption score, household dietary diversity score and coping strategy index.

Results showed the major triggers of the conflict in the conflict stratum were unauthorized grazing (100.00%), uncontrolled grazing (93.00%), and herders' demand for equal tenurial rights (89.20%), while the killing of livestock by host communities (86.40%) and attack on herders' settlements (85.00%) were perceived by the herders. The major consequences were death (loss of crops (51.70%), and farmer displacement (49.60%). Analysis of the food security dimensions showed that in conflict, non-conflict, and herder strata, food availability showed 91.77%, 60.81%, and 91.25% respectively; food accessibility showed 26.53%, 6.79%, and 46.36%; and food utilisation showed 34.61%, 21.66%, and 73.68%, as food insecure. Results further showed significant differences in food security dimensions of the three strata; food availability ($F(2, 878) = 111.85, p < 0.05$) and food access ($F(2, 878) = 37.75, p < 0.05$). There was a significant difference in the food security status between the conflict and non-conflict strata (food availability ($p < 0.05$), food access ($p < 0.05$)). The weighted mean score of the most adopted coping strategies was restricted consumption by adults (conflict = 1.82), limiting portions at mealtimes (non-conflict = 0.93) and eating less preferred and less expensive foods (herder = 1.66).

The study concluded that the conflict had a significant effect on household food security. It was recommended that to forestall unauthorized grazing, the communities lease their lands to herders with minimal government interference, as respondents lacked trust in government interventions. Farmers are encouraged to improve animal protein consumption, while herders are encouraged to diversify their diet.

Keywords: Coping strategy, Farmer-herder conflict, Food access, Food availability, Food stability, Food utilization, Household food security

Word Count: 492

Abbreviations: *RFN: Researcher's Full Name, RD: Researcher's Department, RS: Researcher's School, RE: Researcher's Email, RAE: Researcher's Alternate Email, RP: Researcher's Phone Contact, RT: Registered Title, MS: Main Supervisor, ME: Main Supervisor's E-mail Address, SP: Main Supervisor's Phone Contact, CS: Co-Supervisor, CE: Co-Supervisor's E-mail Address, CP: Co-Supervisor's Phone Contact, AB: Abstract*

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