FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICTS AND FOOD INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The past few years have seen an upsurge in farmers and herders conflicts in Nigeria, especially in the North Central, North East, and South East regions of the nation, making Nigeria high in the index of unsafe nations around the globe. These conflicts have a terrible impact on the economy of the country, which is already suffering from food shortages and insecurity as well as constant price rises for food. As a result of the aforementioned, the paper focuses on investigating the root causes of farmers-herdsmen conflicts and how these conflicts affect the availability and cost of basic staple foods. A qualitative research approach was adopted, and data were gathered through a thorough desk literature review. The Thomas Malthus Resource Scarcity theory was adopted, which underpinned the conflagration between farmers and herders over competition for available limited resources such as grazing lands and water, etc. The paper makes the case that persistent farmers-herders conflicts have an impact on (i) food shortages and insecurity, as many farmers were compelled to flee their farms for safety. The contention is that in a crisis situation, agricultural activities would either cease to exist or cannot flourish; (ii) result in price increases for scarce foods; and (iii) inevitably lower people's standard of living. Furthermore, given the rise in tensions between farmers and herdsmen and the significant implications for the nation, the study recommends the Nigerian government enact stringent agricultural policies that support agricultural activities in order to ensure food security while also providing grazing lands for herders in their area.

Introduction

The past few years have seen an upsurge in farmers and herders conflicts in Nigeria, especially in the North Central, North East, and South East regions of the nation, making Nigeria high in the index of unsafe nations around the globe. As a result of these ongoing conflicts, the production and supply of basic foods have decreased, which has had a negative impact on the prices of foods and created scarcity. These developments have resulted in a decrease in the standard of living for Nigerian citizens, while the cost of living continues to rise uncontrollably. Sadly, many Nigerians can no longer afford their basic food needs, leaving

them vulnerable to hunger, malnutrition, and other health risks.

The Nigerian government has not kept quiet, all of her attempts to neutralise the threat have so far been ineffective. It is crucial to note that disputes between farmers and herders are not exclusive to Nigeria; they also affect other parts of the continent.

According to Mwanfupe (2015) farmers-herdsmen conflicts are equally prevalent in Sudan, Tanzania, Cameroon, and Kenya. He noted that similar incidents of farmers-herdsmen clashes are active in Burkina Faso and suggested the active role of the government in the containment of the situations. There is a need for the state to use political frameworks, such as proper policy formulation on habitats and budget allocation, in order to meet the land and infrastructure needs of rural and urban settlements.

In addendum, Nzeh (2015) posited that the threat of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria started when Fulani pastoralists crossed the country's neighbouring Cameroonian border in search of pasture and established themselves in Bornu and Adamawa State. Before the herders started to seek additional land to raise their cattle, he noted that both farmers and herdsmen had been living in a relative ecstasy of peace. Lamie (2019) linked the causes of farmers-herdsmen clashes in Nigeria to the inability of herdsmen to have access to open grazing areas. Scholars studying the sources and nature of this threat in Nigeria have been astounded by the recent, unceasing rise in farmers-herdsmen confrontations. The majority of these studies argued that conflicts between farmers and herdsmen are typically brought about by unfavourable climate changes, ethnic or religious sentiment,lack of grazing routes and reserves, and the herdsmen coercive annexation of farmland. These ultimately led to a rise in living expenses, economic sabotage, and difficulties with national integration, the uprooting of farmers and herdsmen, deaths of people and animals, a decline in agricultural output, and deaths of livestock. Thus, among the perceived problems caused by farmers-herdsmen clashes in Nigeria, the population becomes more susceptible to hunger, malnutrition, diseases, and other health risks (Lamie, 2019; Chinyeake&Nnaji, 2021; Aliyu et al., 2018; Aude, 2013; Eze, 2015; Abbas, 2012; and Akorede, 2018).

With the aforementioned in mind, the paper focuses on examining the rationale behind the conflicts between farmers and herders, how these conflicts contributed to food insecurity, and their impact on the socio-economic development of Nigeria from 2014 – 2021.

Conceptual Clarification

Food Security

There has been an unparalleled explosion of interpretation surrounding the concepts of food security, food insecurity, and conflict. Despite the concept's importance and debate among scholars, it has not yet garnered a wildly distinctive and contentious connotation.

Food security is a situation that permits every person to have sufficient economic, social, and physical access to safe and nutritious food at all times. And such food should always meet the nutritional demands of active and healthy living conditions (FAO, 1996). World Food Submit (2009) confirmed the definition by identifying four major pillars as underlying parameters for measuring and guaranteeing food security in a state, vis-à-vis which are: (i) food availability; (ii) access to available foods; (iii) utilisation of available resources; and (iv) stability, which has to do with the ability of the populace to have access to an adequate food supply at a relatively stable, un-fluctuating, and affordable price.

Food security is defined as the availability of sufficient foods to meet people's dietary requirements for a healthy lifestyle at reasonable prices. In the Nigerian context, food security refers to the availability of high-quality food supplies to meet the population's per capita food needs.

Food Insecurity

Food security and food insecurity are diametrically opposed. Examining the state of food security in Nigeria,Campbell (1991) suggested four requisites necessary for measuring food security at individual and household levels: (i) availability of food; (ii) quality of available food types; (iii) physiological acceptability relating to feelings of food deprivation and choices; and (iv) social acceptability of consumption pattern, which

entails the manner of food acquisition, whether the purchasing power to buy food or having to beg for food.

According to Omonone and Agoi (2007) a shortfall in access to adequate food can be caused by instability in food production and an increase in the price of food commodities. Food insecurity can be seen as a situation in which a large population of people lacks adequate quality food intake for their growth and sustainability.

Conflict

According to Asanebi and Okafor (2019) conflict is the struggle or disagreement that arises when dreams, values, and aspirations for resources and power, amongst others, of individuals or groups thwart each other's objectives in attempting to achieve their purpose. Individuals or groups are not comfortable when their dreams, values, and aspirations are thwarted in life, as such individuals or groups can express aggressive behaviour as a result of frustration, which often leads to conflicts. They further posited that conflict is an inevitable and intrinsic part of human existence, responsible for the backward development of several nations and the fallout of thousands of global citizens.

Asanebi (2021) noted that conflict does not just occur in any society; humans are responsible for its occurrence in all the societies it has occurred in around the globe through their desires and pursuits for power, resources, goals, aspirations, dreams, identity, and values, amongst others. Individuals or groups in conflict can eliminate or undermine each other by any means possible.

Farmers-Herdsmen Clashes

The study therefore delves into the antecedents of farmers-herdsmen clashes. According to historical records, numerous violent encounters between farmers-herdsmen took place in various regions of the country in 1989 (Adegbago, 1991). Also, incidences of farmers-herdsmen clashes occurred in the early 1990s at Muri, a community in Taraba State, when indigenous people resented the appropriation of land for large-scale ranches (Williams, 1991). Before 2000, farmers and herdsmen lived in a state of peaceful coexistence and cooperation. This situation began to change as a result of unpredictability, the depletion of natural resources, and the socio-political manipulation of the two factions. As a result, physical altercations started to characterise their encounters (Muhammed, et al., 2015).

According to Erondu and Nwakanma (2018) clashes between farmers and herders in different parts of Nigeria have spanned decades and have escalated today into various dimensions, threatening the security of foods and the socio-economic development of the nation due to poor management of the crisis. The continuous clashes between farmers and herdsmen began because of farming, grazing land, and water. Farmers accused herdsmen of damaging their crops; herders failed to control their animals; and herdsmen retorted by claiming that farmers and host communities stole their cattle (Omawumi, 2016; Adeleke, 2018). The causes of the conflicts between farmers and herdsmen have remained a point of contention among academics and decision-makers in the nation. Experts, to some extent, believe that land-related issues are the main factor. Land issues therefore account for the highest percentage of conflict, followed by water, political issues, climate change, ecological problems, etc., which are no doubt other causes of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria.

The table below depicts a few fatalities associated with farmers-herdsmen clashes nationwide from 2014 to 2021.

Table 1.1

Date	Places	Casualties
April 5th, 2014	Galadima village in Northern Nigeria	Over 200 citizens and community leaders were slain, and the number of people who were gravely injured is unclear
February 18th, 2016	Okoloko village, Agatu LGA, Benue State	Five people died, and properties were destroyed.
March 5th, 2016	Alla, Akwu, Adagbo, Okoloko, Ogbaulu, Egba and Obagani communities all in Agatu Local Government Area, Benue State.	An estimated 500 people were killed, many wounded and displaced, and millions of Naira were destroyed
April 12th, 2017	Two villages in Gashaka Local Government Area, Taraba State were attacked	Approximately fifteen people perished.
April 21st, 2017	Lagun village in Iyana Offa, Atagba, Lapata and surrounding communities in Lagein Local Government Area, Oyo State	Numerous properties were catered to, one person was killed, and villages were pillaged at night.
June 22nd, 2018	Dowaya village, Adamawa State	Twenty-one villagers—all women and children—were slain.
May, 2018	Four villages of Lamurde, Bang, Bolk, Zumoso and Gon in Numan and Lamurde Local Government Area, Adamawa State	Death of 15 residents
June 6th, 2018	Ugondo, Turan and Gabo-Nenzw in Logo Local Government Area, Benue State	Many were displaced, and 59 people lost their lives
March 18th, 2019	Kajuru Local Government Area, Kaduna State	A retaliatory strike following the announcement made by Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, the former governor of Kaduna State, that

		130 people had been killed
January 26th- 27th, 2020	Unknown villages in Plateau State	Fulani Muslim herdsmen killed thirty-two villagers in two separate attacks
August 2nd - 5th, 2021	Bassa and Riyom Local Government Area of Bayelsa State	According to Plateau State Commissioner of Police, Edward Egbuka, 17 people were killed and 85 buildings burned down in Bassa and Riyom local governments of the state

Source:Aliyu, Amoge& Eunice (2018), andOlufemi (2021).

Orgy of Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Nigeria: The North Central in Focus

The North Central region is the food basket of the nation. The region is best known as the "egg layer," and it is brimming with agricultural products that feed the country. But persistent hostilities between farmers and herdsmen have seriously jeopardised farming operations, leading to food insecurity and an unstoppable increase in food prices across the country. In the Agatu Local Government Area of Benue State, eight major communities—Alla, Odugbentu, Akwu, Adagbo, Okolokolo, Ogbauli, Egba, and Obagni—were attacked in March 2016. The attack claimed the lives of about 500 people and left many more injured and displaced, in addition to destroying properties valued at millions of naira.

According to reports, Fulani herders attacked in retaliation for previously rustling their cows, resulting in the tragedy. There have also been conflicts between farmers and herders in Niger State. Six Nigerians lost their lives on November 17, 2016, during an attack on the Kukati community in the Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State (Vanguard, 2016).

Herdsmen attacked people in Plateau StateRiyom Local Government Area on March 5, 2014; the attack left at least ten people dead and numerous others critically injured. Also, according to Plateau State Commissioner of Police, Edward Egbuka, 17 people were killed and 85 buildings burned down in Bassa and Riyom local governments of the state after an attacked by herdsmen on the 2nd and 5th August, 2021.

A cursory analysis of the aforementioned findings indicates that Nigeria's socioeconomic development and national integration are at risk due to the threat posed by conflicts between farmers and herders. The scarcity of staple foods and the uncontrollably high rise in food prices are the most significant effects it has had on the current state of insecurity and have an ultimate negative impact on the standard of living of Nigerian citizens.

Research Methods

Data were acquired using a desk literature study that was extensive and a qualitative research methodology. Secondary sources of data are included in the methodological approach, which is also eclectic in nature. Firstly, the article is descriptive in that it offers an examination of farmers-herders disputes in Nigeria. Secondly, it is comparative because it tries to link the safety and cost of food across the entire nation to farmers-herders conflicts in Northern Nigeria. The study also serves as an explanation by describing in depth the socio-economic effects of the country's conflicts between farmers and herdsmen. The approach is quantitative as well because it enables market surveys of the costs of some main

commodities in the nation from the years 2014 to 2021, which may be affected by the clashes.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, the paper adopts the Thomas Malthus Resource Scarcity theory, which was used to underpin the conflagration between farmers and herders in the country. The theory was developed primarily by an economist named Thomas Malthus. Thus, Thomas Malthus wrote in his book "An Essay on the Principles of Population" that population growth inevitably leads to food insecurity (shortages) and resource scarcity, which in turn leads to conflict (Thomas, 1798). Other scholars recently linked to the development of scarcity theory include Paul Collier (2005, 2007); Jeffrey Sachs (2005, 2007); Amartya Ben and a host of others. The theory posits that conflicts arise due to competition over limited resources, such as land, water, or food. Consequently, when resources become scarce, people may become more aggressive in their efforts to secure them.

The theory in its operational mode is relevant to the application of this study in that it provides a basic understanding of why there are frequent conflicts between farmers and herders across different parts of the nation. The theory underpins the raison d'être of incessant farmers-herders conflicts over competition over available limited resources, such as grazing lands. The main occupation of the herdsmen in Nigeria is cattle rearing and grazing, and grazing requires the use of massive or large quantities of land. While, the sole occupation of farmers is agricultural (foods and non-food crops) production, which also requires land. The theory therefore argues that the competition over availability of limited lands by herdsmen for grazing and fertile lands by farmers for cultivation leads to clashes of interest among them, which eventually metamorphosed into conflicts.

Socio-Economic Implication of Farmers-Herdsmen Conflicts in Nigeria

The violent aftermath of conflicts between farmers and herders has far-reaching implications for the nation. These conflicts jeopardise the country's political stability and integration, as well as its socioeconomic development, as evidenced by food shortages, insecurity, and uncontrollably high commodity prices. These effects include the frequent loss of lives and property, as well as rape, injuries to the parties involved, and harm to innocent Nigerians.

Vanguard (2016) reported that the Fulani herdsmen attack in the Kukaki community of Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State resulted in the deaths of six residents, several others wounded, and properties destroyed. The March 5th, 2016 herdsmen attack on eight communities in Agatu Local Government Area, Benue State, also resulted in the deaths of approximately 500 people, many of whom were injured and displaced.

Conflicts between farmers and herdsmen also resulted in the destruction of cattle, crops, and farmlands, which in turn led to, (i) food shortages and insecurity as many farmers were compelled to flee their farms for safety. The contention is that in a crisis situation, agricultural activities would either cease to exist or cannot flourish (ii) result in price increases for scarce foods, and (iii) inevitably lower people's standard of living. In other words, a rise in food prices that is out of control will cause people's standards of living to decline. Farmers-herdsmen clashes also affect the social life of host communities. The hostility, mistrust, and acrimony that have been sowed by these conflicts have also affected the political stability and integration of Nigeria by threatening the relationships between the Fulani ethnic group and ethnic groups in the North Central, North West, North East, South-South, and South-East regions.

The tables below clearly demonstrate the overall effects of farmers-herders conflict on socioeconomic development.

2.1 Table

Date	Location	Effects
21/02/2014	Galadima village, Gwer West Local Government Area, Benue State	35 persons killed, 8000 persons displaced
05/05/2016	Alla, Akwu, Adagbo, Okoloko, Odugbento, Ogbaulu, Egba&Obagni communities all in Agatu Local Government Area, Benue State	Death of an estimated 500 persons, villages burnt with properties worth millions of naira destroyed and many displaced
07/2018	Yandang community in Lau Local Government Area, Taraba State	About 35 people were killed and 50 villages razed down
18/03/2019	Kajuru Local Government Area, Kaduna State	A reprisal attacks against the killing of 130 people as announced byMallamNasir El-Rufai, former governor of Kaduna State
26 and 27/01/2020	Unknown villages in Plateau State	32 villagers were murdered in two different attacks by Muslim Fulani herdsmen
2 and 5/ 8/2021	Bassa and Riyom Local Government Area of Bayelsa State	According to Plateau State Commissioner of Police, Edward Egbuka, 17 people were killed and 85 buildings burned down in Bassa and Riyom local governments of the state

Source: Nkwede, et al (2008), Oli, et al (2014) &Olufemi (2021).

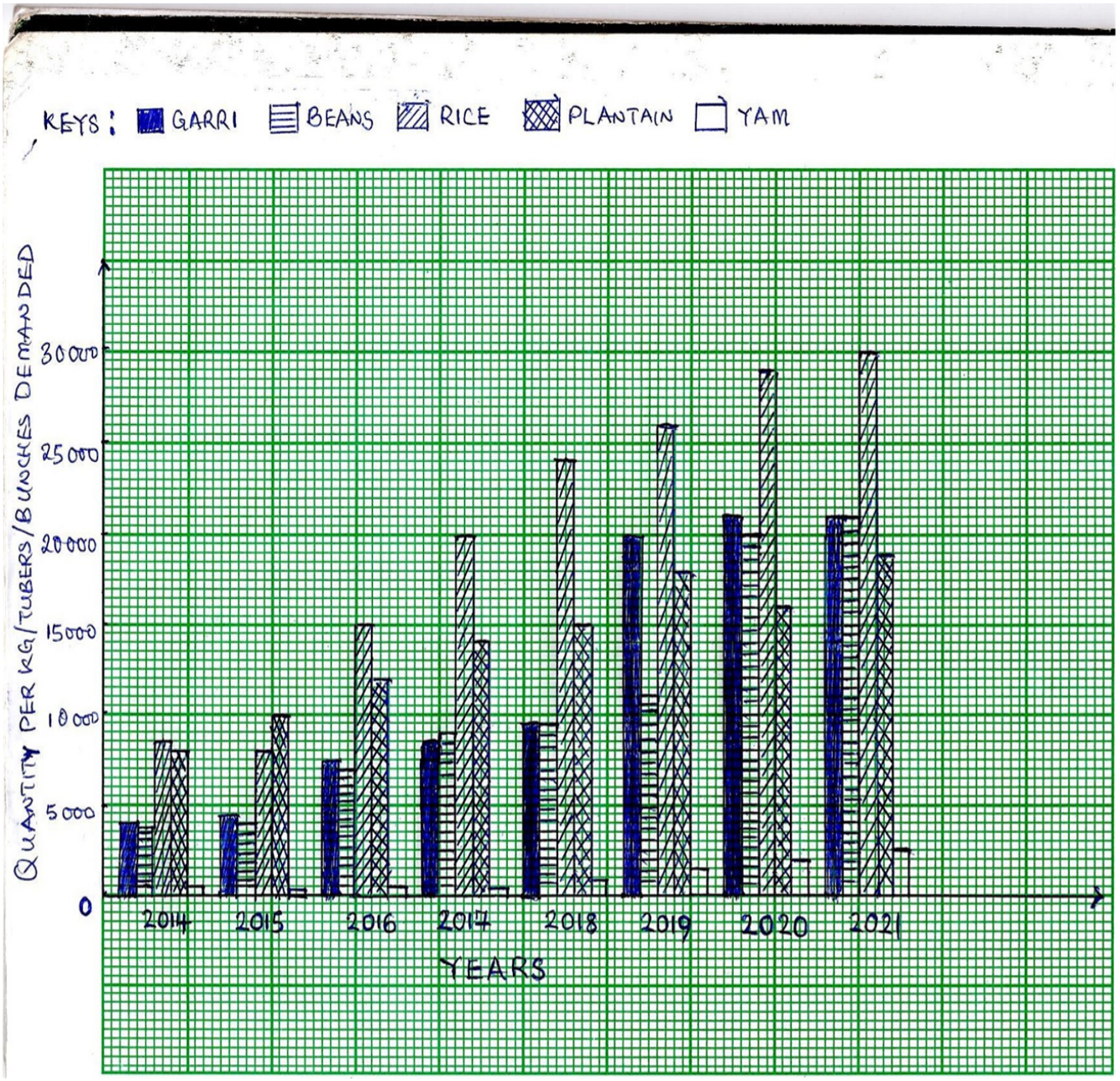
A few of the villages and local governments area that the herdsmen raided are depicted in the above table, which also details the destruction of numerous valuables valued at millions of naira, the deaths of 749 people, and the display of over 8050people. Furthermore, the table interpretation suggests that farmers-herders' conflicts have the potential to spark religious and ethnic war in the country if not properly addressed on time.

3.1 Table

Market survey of some Staple Food Prices from 2014 to 2021

Year Amount N									**Quantities**	**Markets/places**
Items	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**		
Garri	4000	4500	7500	8500	9500	20000	21000	21000	50kg	Agatu, Market Benue State
Beans	3700	4000	7000	9000	9500	11000	20000	21000	50kg	Okwagbe Market, Delta State
Rice	85000	8000	15000	20000	24000	26000	29000	30000	50kg	Igbete Market, Enugu State
Plantain	8000	10000	12000	14000	15000	18000	16000	19000	1 dozen	Kaiama Market, Bayelsa State
Yam	300	400	500	800	1500	1500	1800	25000	1 tuber	Zarama Market, Bayelsa State

Sources: Author field work, 2022.



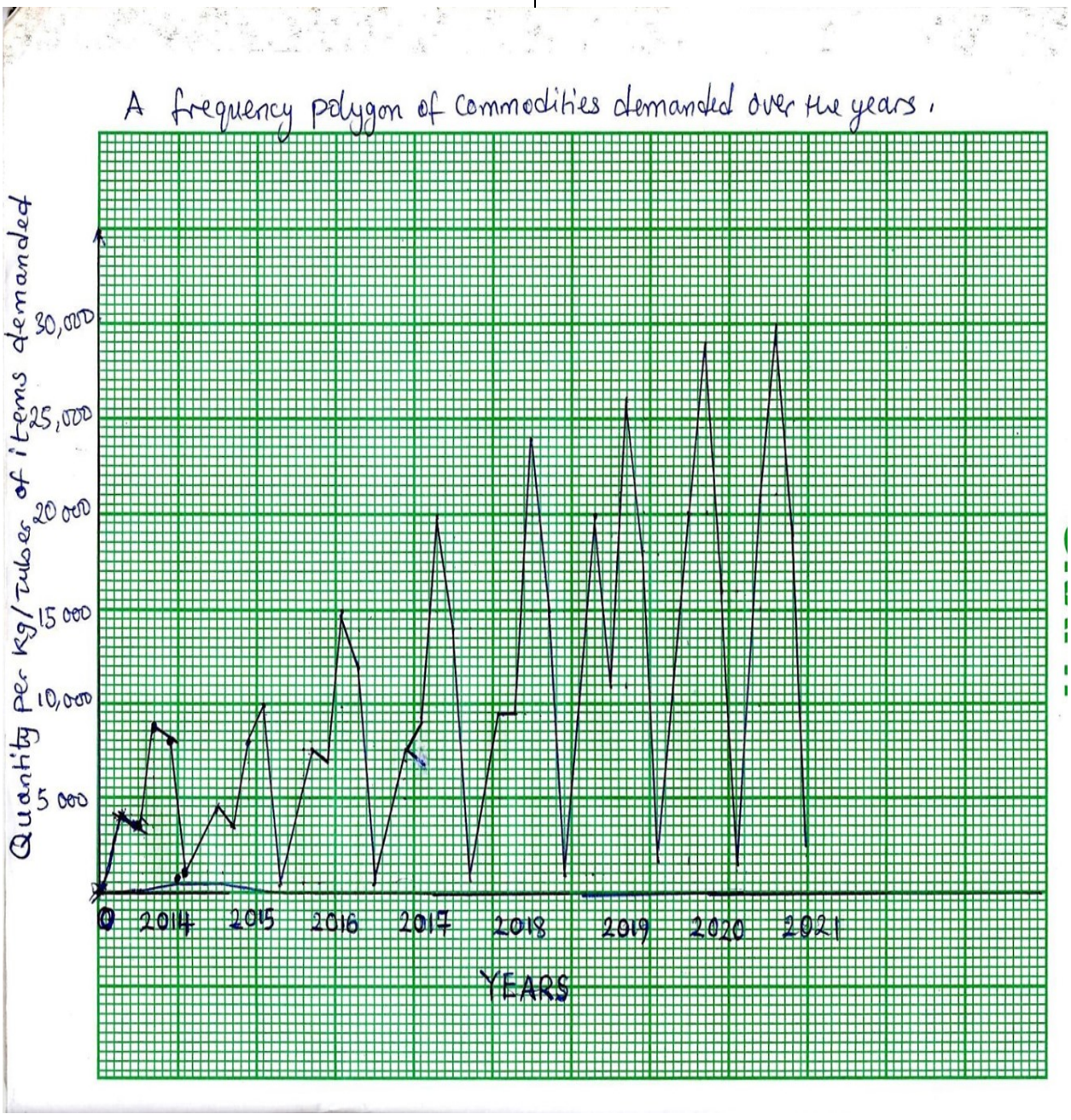
Source: *Compiled by the Author, 2022.*

Table 3.1 and the graph chart above show a market survey of five staple foods in selected markets in Nigeria, covering the period from 2014 to 2021. The graph and table show that food prices have been rising steadily in Nigeria. Different factors may have contributed to the county's uncontrollable increase in food prices, but farmers-herders clashes are undoubtedly a major factor.

The data from the graph chart shows Nigerian currency fluctuations. For example, in 2014, twenty-four thousand five hundred naira (N24,500) could afford a 50-kg bag of garri, a 50-kg bag of beans, a 50-kg bag of rice, one dozen plantains, and a tuber of yam. But in 2021, the same goods would cost ninety-three thousand five hundred naira (N93,500). The graph chart also shows the percentage increase

in food prices, the depreciation of the naira, and the high rate of inflation in the country's economy between 2014 and 2021. The aforementioned factors are all associated with the socioeconomic consequences of the persistent disputes between farmers and herders.

As stated earlier, from 2014–2015, there was a 24% increase in food prices in Nigeria: 150% from 2015–2016, 101% from 2016–2017, 68% from 2017–2018, 177% from 2018–2019, 113% from 2019–2020, 57% from 2020–2021, and an overall 690% from 2014–2021, indicating a high inflation rate. The above information is also represented in the frequency polygon shown below.



Source: *Compiled by the Author, 2022.*

Conclusion

The study examined farmers-herders conflicts and food insecurity in Nigeria from 2014-2021. Thus, the study adopted Thomas Malthus Resource Scarcity theory and contends that land issues account for the highest percentage of conflict, followed by struggles for water, political issues, climate change, ecological problems, etc., which are no doubt other causes of farmers-herders conflicts in Nigeria.

Farmer-Fulani conflicts have had a significant and alarming impact on Nigeria's economy and security, reducing the supply and production of staple foods, increasing insecurity, and, as a result, raising food prices and scarcity. This inevitably raises living costs, depresses the standard of living for Nigerians, and exacerbates the country's already dire security situation.

Recommendations

Given the rise in tensions between farmers and herdsmen and the significant implications for the nation, the study recommends the Nigerian government enact stringent agricultural policies that support agricultural activities in order to ensure food security while also providing grazing lands for herders in their area.

Religious, political, educated elite, community, and legal luminaries of Nigerian ethnic groups should urge herdsmen and farmers to undergo a course of reorientation on how to value and respect human life and also teach them peaceful ways to express their grievances and settle disputes rather than using violence which has disastrous effects on Nigerians and the nation. The Nigerian government should maintain an apolitical stance in Fulani-herdsmen conflicts. To avoid seeming to favour or incite fear in any particular group, the Nigerian government should also approach the issue more pro-actively and objectively rather than with an ethnic mindset. However, anyone who incites the conflict between farmers and herders will face severe punishment, including the death penalty.

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