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EFFECTS OF COMMUNAL CONFLICTS ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION
INDICES OF FARMERS IN BENUE AND NASARAWA STATES, NORTH-CENTRAL,
NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of peace and stability is an absolute prerequisite for sustainable agricultural and overall economic prosperity. The study examined the effects of communal conflicts on agricultural production indices of farmers in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to; describe the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers; determine types and frequency of occurrence of communal conflicts, and; examine the effect of communal conflicts on the activities of farmers in the study area. A multi stage purposive sampling technique was used to obtain a sample size of 391 farmers. Information was elicited using questionnaires, interview schedule and Focus Group Discussion and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The major findings showed that the dominant types of communal conflicts in the area were farmers herders conflicts (75.70%), land disputes (51.15%), boundary disputes (29.66%) and ethnic conflicts (26.34%) and the mean frequency of occurrence of communal conflicts in the study area in the last two years was 17.5 times. Most of the agricultural production indices of farmers like crop output ($z=3.24$, $p=0.001$), cultivated land ($z=3.92$, $p=0.000$), fertilizer usage ($z=1.75$, $p=0.081$), pesticide usage ($z=2.31$, $p=0.021$), credit usage ($z=8.18$, $p=0.000$) labour usage ($z=2.10$, $p=0.037$) and farm income ($z=5.032$, $p=0.000$) were affected during occurrence of conflicts in the study area. The study recommended among others the enforcement of land control measures by the government that would tackle the causes and occurrence of communal conflicts in communities in the country.

Keywords: Conflicts, Agricultural Production, Farmers

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of peace and stability is an absolute prerequisite for sustainable agricultural and overall economic prosperity (FAO, 2006). Kimenyi et al. (2014) identified some common challenges experienced by all segments of the crop, livestock, fisheries and agricultural service value chains during periods of conflicts in Nigeria as reduction in the output of crops; reduced human mobility; reduced access to inputs and markets; increased theft of cash, products and equipment; increased prices for transportation, inputs and products and; reduced fishing activities.

Furthermore, Adebajo et al. (2015) affirmed that communal conflicts had negative impact on crop production in core conflict areas as youth of active labour force diverted attention to conflict rather than concentrating on farming, while the few timid older ones ran out of the community for their dear lives and abandoned their farms uncared for. The low crop production performance in core conflict area could be added to proportion of work-time lost to conflict and farmers' inadequate access to needed agricultural information that could have increased agricultural production output. Communal conflicts have become endemic in Nigeria particularly in States like Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Taraba, Adamawa, Kaduna, Zamfara, Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo and Cross Rivers amongst others. Many lives have been lost as well as livestock and crops

worth millions of Naira including disruption of essential services in the areas (Turkur, 2014; Zirra and Garba, 2006). It is against this background that the study examined the extent to which communal conflicts affect the agricultural production indices of farmers in Benue and Nasarawa States, North-Central, Nigeria. Specifically, this study:

- i. describes the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents in the study area;
- ii. determines the types and frequency of occurrence of communal conflicts in the study area, and;
- iii. examines the effects of communal conflicts on the activities of farmers in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

North Central Nigeria consists of the seven States situated geographically in the middle belt region of the country, spanning from the west, around the confluence of the River Niger and the River Benue. It is located between latitude $6^{\circ}30'$ to $11^{\circ}20'$ North of the equator and longitude $2^{\circ}30'$ to $10^{\circ}30'$ East of the Greenwich meridian. More than 77 percent of the people are rural dwellers and are mostly farmers. The region itself is rich in natural land features, and boasts of some of Nigeria's most exciting scenery (Shuaib and Aliu, 1997).

Purposive sampling was adopted to select two States (Benue and Nasarawa) from the seven States in North-central Nigeria where communal conflicts occur frequently. The population of the

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study comprised of farm families in Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria. Seven (7) LGAs that have recorded high incidence of communal conflicts over the years were purposively selected (4 out of 23 LGAs from Benue State and three out of 13 LGAs from Nasarawa State). Eleven (11) extension blocks were purposively selected from the LGAs (eight (8) extension blocks from Benue State and three (3) extension blocks from Nasarawa State). Twenty-four (24) extension cells that have experienced recurrent communal conflicts were randomly selected (15 cells from Benue State and 9 cells from Nasarawa State). From the list of farm families from each of the cells, 393 farmers (279 farmers from Benue State and 114 farmers from Nasarawa State) were selected through proportionate and random selection using the Taro Yamane formula for determination of sample size.

Primary data were collected with the use

and Focus Group Discussion which elicited information from the farmers and analysed using both descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and mean) and inferential statistics (Z-test and Factor analysis).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Selected socio-economic characteristics of farmers in conflict-prone areas of the study

Analysis of data in Table I showed that most (68.54%) of the farmers in conflict-prone areas of the study were male and within the youthful mean age of about 40 years and majority (88.49%) were married. Generally, most (68.27%) of the farmers were educated having attained one form of formal education or the other. The farmers were involved in farming (83.80%) as the major occupation while the mean farm size of farmers in areas prone to communal conflicts was 3.9

of a structured questionnaire, interview schedule/lectures.

< 19		0.25	
20-29	42	10.74	
30-39	116	29.66	
40-49	161	41.17	40
50-59	62	15.85	
>60	9	2.3	
Total	391	100	
Sex			
Male	268	68.54	
Female	123	31.45	
Total	391	100	
Marital status			
Single	43	10.99	
Married	346	88.49	
Others	2	0.51	
Total	391	100	
Educational status			
No Formal Education	124	31.71	
Primary	85	21.73	
Secondary	61	15.6	
Tertiary	73	18.67	
Degree	40	10.23	
Others	8	2.04	
Total	391	100	
Major occupation			
Farming	327	83.63	
Trading	26	6.64	
Artisan	5	1.27	

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Civil Servant	32	8.18	Table I. Socioeconomic characteristics of farmers in conflict 3.9 areas of the stud Variable Frequency Percent Mean
Others	1	0.25	
Total	391	100	
Farm size (ha)	321	82.09	
6-10	56	14.32	
2-10	14	3.58	

Age (Years)



Total	391	100
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Source: Field survey, 2017

Types of communal conflicts in the study area

According to Table 2, the most (75.70%) dominant type of communal conflict prevalent in the area was farmers-herders conflicts with other conflicts like land disputes (51.15%), boundary disputes (29.66%) and ethnic conflicts (26.34%) also of common occurrence. The result suggest that resource-based conflicts involving farmers and herders over struggle to control land resources was the commonest type of communal conflicts in the

study area. This result agrees with the findings of Adisa (2011), Olayoku (2014), Mercy Corps (2015) and International Crisis Group (2017) that violent conflicts involving nomadic herders from northern Nigeria and sedentary agrarian communities of North-Central Nigeria have become common occurrences and has escalated in recent years spreading southward thereby, threatening the country's security and stability.

Table 2. Types of communal conflicts in the study area

Nature of conflicts	Frequency	Percent
Political	72	18.41
Religious	2	0.51
Ethnicity	103	26.34
Farmer-Pastoralist	296	75.7
Boundary dispute	116	29.66
Land Dispute	200	51.15
Fishing Disputes	42	10.74
Chieftaincy Tussle	23	5.88

Source: Field survey, 2017

*Multiple responses

of occurrence of communal conflicts in the study Adamawa and Nasarawa States. This makes area in the last two years was 17.5 times. This livelihood activities difficult at both the immediate result conforms to findings

of Doorly (2016) and locality as well as the larger

Frequency of occurrence of communal conflicts in the study area

As shown in Table 3, the mean frequency societies that are Haldun and Odukoya (2016) who observed that in dependent on the produce from these communities. recent years, more than five hundred incidents of

communal conflicts were recorded with the first half of 2016 witnessing series of conflicts across several States in Nigeria including Benue, Enugu,

Table 3. Frequency of occurrence of communal conflicts in the study area

Occurrence	Frequency	Percent	Mean
01-19	234	59.84	17.52
20-39	132	33.75	
40-59	18	4.6	
60-79	5	1.27	
>80	2	0.51	
Total	391		

Source: Field survey, 2017

Effects of communal conflicts on agricultural production indices of farmers before and during occurrence of communal conflicts in the study area

The result presented in Table 4 on the mean difference between agricultural production indices of farmers before and during communal conflicts in

the study area indicated that there were significant differences in crop output ($z=3.24$, $p=0.001$), cultivated land ($z=3.92$, $p=0.000$), fertilizer usage ($z=1.75$, $p=0.081$), pesticide usage ($z=2.31$, $p=0.021$), credit usage ($z=8.18$, $p=0.000$) labour usage ($z=2.10$, $p=0.037$) and farm income ($z=5.032$, $p=0.000$). With higher mean values obtained in favour of agricultural production indices before conflicts, these findings further demonstrated



that conflict occurrence in the study area had negative consequences on agricultural production activities of farmers.

This result is consistent with the findings of Oboh and Hyande (2006), Kimenyi et al. (2014), Adebajo et al. (2015) and Chikaire et al. (2016) that communal conflicts had a very serious effect on agricultural output, prices of produce, marketing and distribution of agricultural products, agricultural extension activities, agricultural credit opportunities, transportation costs, labour supply and farm income of farmers. Thus, farmers were reluctant in adopting the recommended agronomic practices introduced to them by extension workers because of the fear of destruction of farms and displacement from their communities.

Table 4. Effect of communal conflicts on agricultural production indices of farmers before and during occurrence of communal conflicts in the study area

	Mean	SD	z	p-value	Decision	Variable
Livestock Size	747.23	14176.97	1.041	0.299	NS	
Fertilizer usage	2100.98	23740.49	1.75	0.081*	S	
Pesticide usage	14.41	123.25	2.31	0.021**	S	
Improved seeds usage	-214.28	5060.1	-0.837	0.403	NS	
Credit usage	93 183.33	225246.79	8.18	0.000* **	S	
Labour usage	2132.1	20146.13	2.1	0.037* *	S	
Farm income	460771.24	1810535.4	5.032	0.000***	S	
Crop output	13299.51	81 145.33	3.24	0.001***	S	
Cultivated land	3.572	18.02	3.92	0.000* **	S	

Note: ** and *** shows significance at 10%, 5% and 1% respectively

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study revealed that the dominant types of communal conflicts prevalent in the study area were farmers-herders conflicts, land and boundary disputes. The underlying causes of the conflicts were ethnic, cultural, infrastructural, population pressure, social, institutional, resource control and economic factors. Most of the agricultural production indices of farmers were affected during 2 years of occurrence of communal conflicts in the study area. It was recommended that Government should adopt policies that would tackle the causes and occurrence of communal conflicts in communities in the country. These policies may involve enforcement of effective land administration measures to make land available for legitimate productive activities as well as provision of the necessary infrastructure needed for the peaceful coexistence of community members.

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