



PERCEIVED ROLES OF FARMER-HEADER DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES AMONG FARMERS IN FARMER-HEADER CONFLICT IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed perceived roles of Farmer-Header Community Development Committees among farmers in Farmer-Header conflict in Imo State, Nigeria. It specifically examined the socio-economic characteristics of farmers in the study area, identified various Farmer-Header Development Committees, determined perceived causes of conflict between the farmers and the headers, ascertain the perceived roles played by the Farmer-Header Community Development Committees and finally identified the perceived constraints affecting the identified committees in playing their roles effectively. Data were collected with the use of questionnaire administered to 240 farmers in the three Agricultural Zones of Imo State. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean and likert type scale measuring instrument. The results indicated that 82% of the farmers were males. Most (91.9%) of the farmers belonged to one social organization or the other. One of the identified Farmer-Header Development Committees was that of Obowo Community Development Committee. Fear of carrying unauthorized guns by Headers (X=2.3) was identified a cause of Farmer-Header conflict. One major role perceived by the committees included reporting promptly to security agents like police of planned attacks from either the headers or farmers (82.5%). Lack of pre-information on proposed attack (X=2.3) was perceived as constraint that affected the committees roles. It was recommended, among others, that carrying unauthorized guns by headers should be banned.

KEYWORDS: Perceived Roles, Farmer-Header Conflict, Farmer-Header Development Committees and Imo State.

INTRODUCTION

Today' farmers are under unprecedented pressure. The world population is closing in on seven billion, and it is projected to reach nine billion by 2050 (Towery and Werblow (2010). Poverty eradication and food security have moved to the centre stage of the global development agenda. These are the greatest global challenges and their redress is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development in developing countries. Majority of African are small holder farmers and artisans, some three-quarters live in rural areas where they draw their livelihood from agriculture (Ogunleye and Oladeinde, 2013). Livestock is affected by climate change directly by extreme weather conditions such as heat stress and indirectly through reduction of fodder, water, desert encroachment in non desert lands, and the distribution of livestock diseases (IUCN, 2010). The increase in demand of crop land associated to the increased livestock population without any destocking strategies in the context of climate change and variability may lead to pasture degradation and the use of marginalized lands (Brook, 2006). Land recourses are very important to man as they provide people with living space raw materials for obtaining satisfaction for needs and constitute man's physical environment (Alawode, 2013). Agriculture also has been described as the backbone of many nations' economy including Nigeria. It is a source of food, fibre and other raw materials needed by the people but the place of agriculture in Nigeria and some states have been hampered by conflict between farmers and herders. Conflicts between farmers and

herders have been a common feature affecting economic livelihood in West Africa and Nigeria in general (Tonah, 2006, Okpiliya, *et al*, 2013). According to MDRAH (2012), about 200 conflicts have been recorded between crop farmers and herders occurring yearly. These conflicts involved most of the time the death of farmers, herders, government agricultural extension service agents, the destruction of crops or houses and the injury or killing of animals. The causes of these conflicts are natural resources scarcity and their inequitable access, cattle eaten up crops planted by farmers, herders invading farmers communities, women harassment, the non recognition of traditional rights, agricultural encroachments, inappropriate cattle management system, grazing land encroachments, obstructions of pastoral routes, crops damage and in some cases corruption (Adebayo and Olaniyi 2008; Ofuoku and isife, 2010; Olabode and Ajibade 2010; Benjaminsen *et al*, 2012). Conflict according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 8th Edition is defined as a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument. The Community Development Committees are fundamental machinery for ensuring total development and fostering community empowerment (Ofuoku, 2009). Community Development Committees are nongovernmental organization but receive patronage from the government as well as cooperative bodies operating in their communities and their activities are numerous as it included settlement of disputes, search for credible leaders, interventions in land matters and liaising

government in areas of help. Members of community development committees include representatives of age groups, improvement Union, women organization, the youths, opinion leaders and as well as community heads (Ofuoku, 2010). Nomadic cattle's rearing is common in Nigeria and the headers, who are mostly Muslims and speak Hausa language, move from the Northern part of Nigeria to the south. There have been several conflicts in the society and since conflict exist between the farmers and herders, this study therefore, assessed the perceived role of Farmer-Header Development Committees among farmers in farmer-herder conflict in Imo State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study include to;

1. examine the socioeconomic characteristics of the farmers,
2. identify the various farmer-header community committees,
3. determine perceived causes of the conflict between the farmers and the headers,
4. ascertain perceived roles of the farmer-header community committees and
5. identify the constraints affecting the perceived roles of the farmer-header community committees

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Imo State. The state is located in the South Eastern part of Nigeria with a population of about 3,934,899 people made up of 2,032,286 males and 1,902,613 females (NPC, 2006). It is strategically located within the five South Eastern States and bordered on the East by Abia State, on the West by River Niger and Delta State, on the North by Anambra State, while the Rivers State lies to the South (MLS, 2002). The people are predominantly farmers as an average family engaged in the production of food crops like yam, cassava, cocoyam, rice and maize, and livestock like sheep, goat, rabbit, poultry birds and pig. Cash crops cultivated include palm produce, rubber, oil bean, pear, mango, and oranges.

Imo State is divided into twenty seven (27) Administrative units known as Local Government Areas (L.G.A.). The state is also sub-grouped into zones both for political and agricultural administrative purposes. These are Okigwe Zone, Orlu Zone and Owerri Zone. The settlement structure is still rural with over seventy percent (70%) of the people living in rural areas (ISGN, 2007). The state is culturally homogenous and predominantly inhabited by the Ibo ethnic group of Nigeria, where Igbo language is spoken with minimal difference in dialects. The people are predominantly Christians and English language is however the official language. A multiple stage sampling technique was used in selecting the sample size. Stage one (1): proportionate selection of two (2) L.G.As from six (6) L.G.As in Okigwe Zone, three (3) L.G.As from ten (10) L.G.As from Orlu Zone and three (3) L.G.As from eleven (11) L.G.As from Owerri Zone giving a total of eight (8) L.G.As. Stage two (2): 6 communities were selected from the 8 L.G.As making a total of twenty-four (24)

communities. Stage three: five (5) farmers were also selected from the forty eight (48) communities making a total of two hundred and forty (240) farmers. All the selections in stages two (2) and three (3) were done based on simple random techniques since they have same characteristics. The list of communities and farmers in the study area were collected from the community development officers and extension agents in the L.G.As respectively. The list served as the sampling frame.

The data collected were analysed using simple statistical tools such as mean, percentage, frequency distribution and likert scale type measuring instrument. Objectives 1, 2 and 4 were analysed using simple statistical tools like frequency, percentage and mean. A 3-point likert type rating scale was used to measure the mean. of 'strongly agree', 'agree' and 'not agree' for objective 3. Also a 3-point likert type of 'most serious', 'serious' and 'not serious' for objectives 5.

The mean score was obtained using the formula:

$$\bar{X} = \sum fx / n$$

Where \bar{X} = Mean score

\sum = Summation sign

f = total number of respondent (frequency)

x = nominal value of each category

n = sample size

The mean of the response options were gotten from $3 + 2 + 1/3 = 6/3 = 2$

Decision Rule:

Any mean score below 2.00 was negative while mean score above 2.00 was positive.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socioeconomic characteristic of the farmers

Table 1 shows distribution of farmers according to their socioeconomic characteristics. The result showed that majority (82%) were males while 18% were females. The result also showed that majority (59%) of the farmers practice farming alone, 75% were between the ages of 40 and 59 with a mean age of 47.6. Majority (90.2%) of the farmers attended either primary or secondary or tertiary education, this implied that most of the farmers can read and write while 77.6% were married. Extension contact with farmers was poor since only 40.2 % of the farmers agreed that they had contact with farmers once every three months. Majority (81%) of the farmers had between 11 and 30 years of farming experience while 91.9 % belonged to one social organizations or the other. Most (63.3%) of the farmers earn annual farm income of between #50,000 and #100,000 Naira. This implies poor farm annual income for the farmers. Majority (55.6%) of the farmers had a household of 5-8 people. According to Aderinto and Adisa (2006), social organisation areas are avenues where experience and information are shared among members. Also Akubuiro (2008), agreed that farmers with formal education are more receptive to new ideas than those who are illiterates.

TABLE 1. Distribution of farmers according to their Socio-economic characteristics

Socio-economic characteristics	frequency	percentage	mean(x)
Sex			
Male	198	82.0	
Female	42	18.0	
Age			
20 – 29	4	1.6	
30 -39	44	18.3	
40 – 49	78	32.5	47.6
50 – 59	102	42.5	
60 – and above	12	5.1	
Educational level			
No formal education	21	9.8	
primary	68	28.0	
secondary	97	40.2	
tertiary	53	22.0	
Marital Status			
Single	4	3.5	
Married	172	77.6	
Separated	12	6.2	
Divorced	4	3.4	
Widowed	48	8.9	
Extension Contact (3 months)			
Yes	95	40.2	
No	155	59.8	
Main Occupation			
Farming	142	59.0	
Farming and Other business	98	41.0	
Experience as farmers			
1 – 10	32	37.5	
11 -20	102	42.0	19.4
21 – 30	94	39.0	
31 – Above	12	3.5	
Social Organization			
Yes	214	91.1	
No	26	8.9	
Household Size			
1 – 4	36	23.2	
5 – 8	141	55.6	7.3
9 – 12	47	19.5	
13-abve	16	6.6	
Annual Farm Income (Naira)			
50,000-100,000	152	63.3	
101000-150000	46	19.1	
151000-200000	23	9.1	108,725.0
201000-250000	10	5.0	
251000-300000	6	2.2	
301000 and above	3	1.3	

Source: Field Survey. 2015.

2: Identification of named farmer-herder community development committees in the state.

Table 2 shows the distribution of farmers according to named Farmer-Herder Community Development Committees available in the study area. The result showed that most farmers had knowledge of various farmer-herder community development committees. Majority (72.1%) of the farmers were aware of Isunjaba farmer-herder committee while 69.6% were aware of Umuaka farmer-herder committee. Only 60% were aware of Umuna farmer-herder committee while 71.7% were aware of

Ihiagwa farmer-herder committee. The result also showed that 69.2% were aware of Okpala farmer-herder committee. Most (70.4%) were aware of Mbaise farmer-herder committee, 77.5% were aware of Isiala Mbano farmer-herder committee while 73.8% were aware of Obowo farmer-herder committee. Ekong (2003), agreed that existence of Community Development Committees should exist in every locality or community. Umeh (2013), also opined that awareness of any the existence of any organization is key factor for farmers' acceptability of its roles

TABLE 2. Distribution of farmers according to farmer-herder community development committees in the State

Farmer- herder (FH) CDCs	frequency	percentage	frequency	percentage
Isunjaba F-H Community Development Committees	173	72.1	67	27.9
Umuaka F-H Community Development Committees	167	69.6	73	30.4
Umuna Orlu F-H Community Development Committees	144	60.0	96	40.0
Ihiagwa F-H Community Development Committees	172	71.7	63	28.3
Okpala F-H Community Development Committees	166	69.2	74	30.8
Mbaise F-H Community Development Committees	169	70.4	71	29.6
Isiala Mbano F-H Community Development Committees	186	77.5	54	22.5
Obowo F-H Community Development Committees	177	73.8	63	26.3

Source: Field survey data, 2016.

** Multiple responses

Perceived causes of conflict between farmers and herders

Table 3 below shows distribution of the farmers according to perceived causes of conflict between farmers and herders. The result identified some of the causes as uncontrollable movement of herders from North to Southwards (X=2.2), fear of carrying unauthorized guns by herder (X= 2.3), and non recognition of traditional rights or culture the people by herders (X=2.4). Others included neglect on the part of government in addressing issues (X=2.1), obstruction of pastoral routes by farmers or host communities (X=2.2) and grazing on local people's farm by cattle (X=2.1). Also stealing and killing of cattle by local communities (X=2.1), invading of farmers' communities and killing of local people by herders (X=2.0), harassment and raping of women by

herders (X=2.2). Inappropriate cattle management system by having pastoral routes (X=2.2) was not identified as a cause of conflict between farmers and headers. This support the works of Ofuoku (2009) and Chikaire *et al* (2017), who said that most frequent causes of conflict between farmers and herders, is the destruction and eating up of crops in farming seasons and pre-harvest period by cattle. Nweze (2005) stated that many farmers and herders have lost their lives and herds, while others have experienced dwindling productivity, malnutrition, loss of farm settlement and low productivity in their herds. It result supported the work of Ekong (2003) when he says that causes of conflict is mostly caused by insatiable nature of human wants and competition for scarce resources.

TABLE 3: Distribution of Farmers According to perceived Causes of Conflict between the Farmers and Herders

Causes of conflict between farmers and herders	Strongly agree (3)	Agreed (2)	Not agreed (1)	Mean (X)
Grazing on local people's farm by cattle	86(258)	95(190)	59(59)	2.1
Sexual harassment and raping of women by herders	102(306)	88(176)	50(50)	2.2
Invading of farmers' communities by herders and killing local people	74(222)	100(100)	66(66)	2.0
Stealing and killing of cattle by local Communities	56(168)	142(28)	42(420)	2.1
Inappropriate cattle management system. Example, lack of maintaining the pastoral routes by herders	78(234)	132(264)	30(30)	2.2
Neglect of government in addressing the issues of conflict and killing of host communities of farmers by Herders	78(234)	114(228)	48(48)	2.1
Obstructions of pastoral routes by farmers (host communities)	90(270)	119(238)	31(31)	2.2
Uncontrollable movement of herders from North to Southwards	78(234)	132(264)	30(30)	2.2
Non recognition of traditional rights or culture of the people by herders	99(297)	101(202)	40(0)	2.4
Contamination of streams, rivers and farm land by cattle dung's	97(231)	103(206)	40(40)	2.2
Fear of carrying unauthorized guns by Herders	90(270)	128(256)	22(22)	2.3

Source: Field survey data, 2016.

Perceived roles of farmer-header community development committees in farmer-header conflict

Table 4 shows distribution of the farmers according to perceived roles of Farmer-Herder Community Development Committees in Farmer-Herder conflict. The result showed that the farmers agreed with 60% and above in all the criteria used in assessing them in the perceived roles farmer-herder community development committees. Such roles included ensuring peaceful coexistence among farmers and headers by having regular meetings with the farmers and headers (86.2%), encouraging strong leadership among farmers and headers (82.5%), assisting in allocating land for grazing in communities (pastoral

routes) (61.2%), and legitimizing headsmen entry into communities by traditional rulers e.g. Ezes (60.0%). Reporting promptly to security agents like police of planned attacks from either farmers or headers (82.5). Others included taking findings of previous conflicts to government early enough for immediate attention and settlement (82.0%). This result supports that of Ofuoku (2009), which listed the work of community development committees as planning and overseeing the settlement of the aggrieved parties, improve community living, bringing the attention of government to the situations. Also Slaymaker, *et al* (2005), identified the need for community development committees as they provide avenues for

closer relationship and early identification of problems with a view of nipping them off from the bud. Ekong (2003), agreed that resolution of conflict, is an integral

part of the functions of community development committees.

TABLE 4: Distribution of the farmers according to perceived roles of farmer-herder community development committees in farmer-herder conflict

Perceived roles of farmer- herder community development committees in farmer-herder conflict.	frequency	percentage	frequency	percentage
Ensuring peaceful coexistence among farmers and herders by having regular meetings	207	86.2	33	13.8
Develop strategies, coordinate and implement an integrated approach to farmer-herder conflict with the use of dialogue	192	80.3	47	19.7
Encouraging strong leadership among farmers and herders	198	82.5	42	17.5
Reporting promptly to security agents like police of planned attacks from either farmers or herders	198	82.5	42	17.5
Assisting in allocating lands from communities where herders can graze. (example, pastoral routes)	147	61.2	93	38.8
Advising herders and farmers to have leaders who will represent them in case of problems	164	68.3	76	31.7
Taking findings of previous conflict to the government that instituted them for necessary actions to avoid future occurrences	196	82.0	43	18.0
Design ways of aiding/assisting farmers and herders in case of destructions resulting from fight among them	182	75.8	58	24.2
Legitimizing herders entry into communities by herders with local leaders or Ezes	145	60.00	95	40.0
Settlement of conflict among farmers and herders	187	76.7	56	23.3
Advice the herders especially the non Ibo speaking ones to have interpreters as to communicate effectively with the local people	171	71.3	69	28.7

Source: Field survey data, 2016.

** Multiple responses

ABLE 5: Distribution of the farmers according to the perceived constraints affecting the farmer-herder community development committees in the study area

Perceived constraints affecting the Farmer-Herder Community Development Committees	Most Serious (3)	Serious (2)	Not serious (1)	Mean (x)
Ignorance /negligence from government in rendering necessary assistance to farmer-herder committees	84(252)	139(278)	17((17)	2.2
Lack of effective communication (language barrier)	75(150)	159(318)	6(6)	2.2
Lack of finance on the part of farmer-herder community development committees for carrying out their functions	63(189)	167(334)	10(10)	2..2
Finance on the part of farmer-herder committees in sitting regularly for meetings	59((177)	158(316)	22(22)	2.1
Lack of pre-information to the farmer-header committees on the time of attack by the herders	88(264)	138(276)	14(14)	2.3
Lack of regular meetings of the three parties (farmers, herders and committees) involved	84(252)	139(278)	17(17)	2.2
Negative attitudes of local communities to farmer- herders committees	59(177)	146(292)	35(35)	2.1
Biased members of farmer-herder community development committees in handling the situations	78(234)	141(281)	21(21)	2.2
Lack of putting into use past conflict experience reports on the part of farmer-herder committees	88(264)	143(286)	9(9)	2.3
Religion (Christian/ Muslim), ethnicity (race) and cultural (language) barrier	99(297)	130(260)	11(11)	2.4
Poor level of education among the herders	89(267)	107(214)	63(63)	2.3
Lack of education among the farmers	64(128)	113(226)	64(64)	1.7
Poor leadership among the three parties (farmers, herders and farmer-herder committees)	69(207)	128(256)	43(43)	2.2
Problem of leadership among herders because they are nomadic in nature	83(249)	112(224)	45(45)	2.2
Delay in the time of reaction among the security agents in case of planned attack by herders or farmers	90((270)	105(210)	45(45)	2.2

Source: Field survey data, 2016. ** Multiple responses

Perceived constraints affecting the farmer-header community development committees

Table 5 shows the distribution of the farmers according to the perceived constraints affecting farmer-herder community development committees in the study area. The result identified negative attitude of local communities towards headers and committee members (X=2.1), lack of finance on the part of the Farmer-Herder Community Development Committees in sitting regularly for meetings (X=2.1), lack of pre-information to the farmer-header committees on when headers will attack (X=2.3) and poor leadership problems among the three parties (farmers, headers and farmer-header committees) (X=2.2) were perceived as constraints by farmers in the study area. It also identified lack of putting into use past experience conflict reports on the part of farmer-header committees (X=2.3), poor levels of education among the herders (X=2.3), delay in time of reaction among security agents in case of planned attack by either the farmers or the herders (X=2.2) and ignorance/negligence from government in rendering necessary assistance to the farmer-header committees (X=2.2) as constraints affecting the farmer-herder community development committees in carrying out their work. Also included as constraint was religion (Christian/Muslim), ethnicity and cultural barriers (X=2.4). This result supported that of Mansuri and Rao (2004), who agreed that poor leadership, lack of pre-information to security agents on eminent attacks are part of the constraints acting the performance of Community Development Committees. Levels of education on the part of farmers (X=1.7) and was not consider a problem.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of the agricultural sector of any nation cannot be neglected. There is need for those involved in effective crop and animal production to work as a team since it eliminates conflict among the stakeholders. To achieve this, farmers and headers should avoid issues that may give rise to conflicts. In case of conflicts, farmer-header community development committees are needed to avoid low farm annual income as recorded in this study. This study clearly showed that most of the farmers were aware of many farmer-header community development committees that existed in the area. Conflicts existed between the farmers and the headsmen since most of the headers are illiterates, carried unauthorized guns and lacked effective communication in the area of language barrier. Farmer-header community development committees played vital advisory roles; including acting as link between the headsmen and farmers as well as the Government. Major constraints affecting the effective performance of these farmer-header development committees were also identified. It therefore recommended that level of education especially among the headsmen be improved through nomadic education. Security agents should be at alert in case pre-information on eminent attack by famers or headsmen reached them. Also headsmen should not be allowed to carry unauthorized guns to avoid fear of intimidations and sexual harassment or raping of women.

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