

Farmer-Herdsmen Conflicts: A Factor Analysis of Socio-economic Conflict Variables among Arable Crop Farmers in North Central Nigeria

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ABSTRACT The persistence of farmer-herdsmen conflicts portend grave socioeconomic consequences. Although there is no clear consensus on which group experiences greater hardships, the plight of arable crop farmers, who constitute the bulk of Nigeria's agricultural production population, continues to attract research attention. The study investigates the variables associated with farmer-herdsmen conflicts from the perspectives of farmers in Kwara State, Nigeria. Using a four-stage random sampling technique to select 300 farmers in communities contiguous with herdsmen's stock routes, data were collected with the aid of structured questionnaire and subjected to factor analysis and descriptive statistical procedures. Data analysis revealed that respondents generally experienced 'losses' in nine out of ten identified material and non-material resources, and 'gains' in three. Factor analysis showed that socioeconomic, production, institutional, and situational factors among farmers, with Eigen values of 2.6412, 1.6103, 1.2456, and 1.0348 respectively, accounted for their conflict with herdsmen. Awareness of and compliance with designated stock routes (situational variables), having coefficients -0.741 and -0.662 respectively were particularly crucial farmer variables of conflict. The paper recommends regular review of stock routes and educational campaigns to increase their awareness and compliance rates among conflict actors. Farmer-herdsmen conflict resolution initiatives should also incorporate a careful consideration of all conflict factors from the perspectives of the actors.