

HUMAN FATALITIES AND THE QUESTION OF SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA'S RANCHING SCHEMES

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Abstract

Farmer-herder relations have been embroiled in conflict particularly in north-central states of Nigeria because of several factors which include environmental/climate change, ethno-religious conflicts, political competition, bad governance, and influx of small arms into the country. For herders, they perceive that open grazing is becoming difficult and their means of livelihood threatened. On the other hand, farmers are of the view that Fulani cattle herders are destructive and encroach their farmlands with the aim of becoming the owners. These two groups have fought violently to project their views. Consequently, the human fatalities arising from these clashes are enormous with Amnesty International reporting that between 2016 and 2018, over 3600 people have been killed and thousands displaced. Yet, nearly 200 million Nigerians depend on both herders and farmers for food security. The Nigerian government has responded to this problem through the promulgation of laws and funding of grazing reserves. This article looks at the various ranching schemes since 1920s and assessed why they have failed to solve farmer-herder conflicts. Furthermore, special attention is given to the recently approved National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) which was meant to convert 177 grazing reserves out of a total of 415 spread across the country into national ranches. These ranches are designed to put an end to the clashes between herders and farmers as well as improve the ecosystem. The concern of this paper therefore is assessing the sustainability of the newly approved National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) by using historical research method to analyse failures of past government ranching schemes and how such pitfalls can be mitigated by using best practices that is resilient to climate change as done in New Zealand, India and across Europe.

Keywords: Farmers, Herders, conflict, NLTP, fatality, grazing.

Introduction

The pastoral Fulani have been involved in exchange and trade of livestock products and livestock for at least as long as historical records exist. For several hundred years before British rule came to northern Nigeria, the economy of the pastoral Fulani was bound up with that of the settled farming and trading Hausa, as migratory waves of pastoralists moved through and into the Hausa and Fulani states of northern Nigeria (Hopen 1958). Hausa-Fulani trading relations stem from the arrival of nomadic Fulbe-speakers in Hausaland, in the area between

the forest and savanna that marks northern Nigeria, during or before the fifteenth century (Baier 1980). Hausa long distance traders (*fatake*), trading livestock as well as many other goods, extended from urban centres such as Kano to link northwards with the Sahara and north Africa, east to Darfur and as far as the Nile, west to Timbuktu, southwest to Asante and south to the coast (Okediji 1972). However, until the time of the Fulani *Jihad* (Holy war) in the early 1800's, pastoral Fulani of north-west Nigeria (Sokoto) had less contact with and economic dependence on the Hausa. The Jihad led to a Fulani conquest of many of the Hausa states and brought closer integration, first between the two groups and later, between northern and southern Nigeria. There were reports from European travelers and missionaries of a large volume of cattle - estimates of 35,000 head - being traded from the Hausa-Fulani north to the market centre of Ilorin in present-day south-west Nigeria (Baier 1980, Okediji 1972). The commodities brought in return to the north by livestock traders were salt, natron (a livestock supplement) and kolanuts. Thus, trade dominated intergroup relations between Fulani herders and farmers during this period.

In the beginning of the 20th century, imposition of British rule on both southern and northern Nigeria altered the modes of cash crop production which led to urbanization and increased demographic pressure on arable lands. Invariable, there was decrease in the availability of pastureland began to the relationship between herders and farmers. The lack of apparent concern, until relatively late in the colonial period, about 'overstocking' and 'overgrazing' by Fulani pastoralists, and no associated efforts to enforce grazing policies pushed the herders into farmlands owned by farmers. Rather than set up ranches to curtail conflicts, the government taxed the Fulani herders and made money from the trade between the north and the south. For instance, the demand for meat in the agricultural south of the country expanded as real income among Nigerian farmers rose following the development of cocoa and palm oil as cash crops for export (Baier 1980). The growth of towns, particularly Lagos and Ibadan, also created higher demand for meat among urban consumers, while supply of meat to ships at Lagos saw a sharp rise during the First World War (Baier 1980). The number of registered Hausa traders in Lagos rose from nearly 2,000 to 4,500 between 1921 and 1931 with about half of these being cattle traders (Okediji 1972). The single greatest stimulus to the north-south livestock trade was undoubtedly the completion of the railway in 1911 from Lagos to Kano, the traditional northern centre of the livestock trade. By 1918, nearly 13,000 head of cattle reached Lagos by rail alone, with the same or greater number arriving on foot; by the 1930s the quantity of cattle reaching southern markets had increased fourfold (Baier 1980).

It is worth noting that farmers and herders conceptualise violent conflict as a means to assert their claim over land. They both make use of physical attacks that involve the use of arms (guns) or other light weapons (e.g. cutlasses, knives, etc.) to kill, injure or intimidate others. In other words, Honderich's (2003) sees violent conflict as perceived legitimate action (either by the farmer or the herder) to defend their livelihoods and assert control over resources (particularly land) and for the defence of their legitimate rights to resources (in the case of farmers).

Crop destruction has largely remained the contentious issues between herders and farmers. Unsupervised cattle wander into farms and destroy crops, which farmers consider as intentional acts. This affects the process of farming, which is their main economic source of

livelihood. Farmers, on the other hand, claim that herders intentionally drive their cattle onto farmlands to graze food crops (especially maize, yam, millet, watermelon and plantain farms). Moreover, the presence of the *Yaligonji/Jerigoji* migrant Fulani is believed to intensify the destruction of crops. The *Yaligonji/Jerigoji* Fulani move with their cattle onto farmlands during the day and at night, which leads to the destruction of crops.

Herders further believe that spatial access to pasturelands and sources of water (rivers, streams, lakes, etc.) are not readily available. It is believed by the herders that farmers grow crops along the pathways that lead to pastureland and next to water sources, which make it difficult to access them and may cause the cattle to damage crops. Herders and cattle owners equally argued that they have always paid compensation for crop damages, yet farmers still attack them. Payment of compensation is important in that it can lead to either the escalation or resolution of conflicts caused by crop destruction. Disagreements that arise from the refusal or failure of herders and cattle owners to pay compensation can lead to violent conflicts. The perception of herders that farmers intentionally inflate the cost of destroyed crops in order to get huge compensation is completely opposed to farmers' perceptions of Fulani herders and cattle owners who they claim intentionally refuse to pay compensation.

Consequently, the human fatalities arising from these clashes are enormous with Amnesty International reporting that between 2016 and 2018, over 3600 people have been killed and thousands displaced. Yet, nearly 200 million Nigerians depend on both herders and farmers for food security. The Nigerian government has responded to this problem through the promulgation of laws and funding of grazing reserves. This article looks at the various ranching schemes since 1920s and assessed why they have failed to solve farmer-herder conflicts. Furthermore, special attention is given to the recently approved National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) which was meant to convert 177 grazing reserves out of a total of 415 spread across the country into national ranches. These ranches are designed to put an end to the clashes between herders and farmers as well as improve the ecosystem.

Overview of Ranching Schemes in Nigeria

Ranching schemes in Nigeria are designed by the government with the primary aim to solve the recurring crisis between farmers and herdsman; generate income from improved livestock production and sustain the ecosystem. Early ranching schemes occurred during the colonial period and operated as a private commercial venture. According to Dunbar (1970), the private firm which operated the only ranching scheme in colonial northern Nigeria was African Ranches Ltd., a subsidiary of a Liverpool firm which later became part of the United Africa Company and had a 16,000-acre ranch in western Bornu province from 1914 until 1923 when it was transferred to the colonial government. During this period, colonial records on Bornu province recorded less outbreak of conflicts between herders and farmers. However, the attempt by the British government in 1940 to separate the grazing land from the farm land, however, faltered because the Europeans imposed land use controls divorced from economic and demographic dynamics in the pastoral system (Frantz 1981). In the end, the Fulani Settlement Scheme was abandoned by the British colonial government.

In 1954, Hamisu Kano who was one of the administrators in the Veterinary Department, foresaw the shortages of grazing land in Northern Nigeria. Supported by the colonial

government, he initiated the grazing reserve scheme from the abandoned government resettlement schemes (Fulani Settlement Scheme). Unfortunately, the resettlement schemes collapsed because the government had neither the financial nor the managerial ability to continue with the financially burdensome scheme, and the best alternative use of the land, the government thought, was to convert it into grazing reserves that were less financially committed. Following this failure, the government

Grazing reserve hatched in 1954 after a study of the Fulani production system contained in the "Fulani Amenities Proposal." The proposal suggested the creation of grazing reserves, the improvement of Fulani welfare, and the transformation of the herd management system. By 1964, the government had gazetted about 6.4 million hectares of the forest reserve, ninety-eight percent in the savanna. Sokoto Province had twenty-one percent of the land, followed by Kabba, Bauchi, Zaria, Ilorin, and Katsina, with 11-15 percent each (Awogbade 1982). The Wase, Zamfara, and Udubo reserves followed in succession.

In 1965, the Northern Nigerian Government incorporated the Fulani Amenities Proposal into the Grazing Reserve Law. Before the enactment of the Grazing Reserve Law of the Northern Nigeria, the pastoral Fulani relied on the goodwill of the farmers, who conferred upon themselves the lordliness of occupied and unoccupied land. Because interpersonal and kinship affiliations governed the dispensation of land, the Fulani worried about being evicted from the land when their relationship with the hosts become strained (Waters-Bayer and Taylor-Powell 1986). The planners, however, applied a top-down approach that excluded the Fulani from formulating and implementing this well-intentioned program. Accordingly, the Fulani gave less than the expected cooperation in the scheme (Laven 1991). The Nigerian Government's Grazing Reserve Act of 1964 was a response to the problem of alienation of grazing lands increasingly being faced by the pastoral population at the time. In a broader framework, the law was also taken as one of the policy measures to address some of the constraints confronting livestock development in Nigeria. Thus, grazing reserves were established not only to protect grazing lands from crop farming and provide easier access to them by pastoralists but also to encourage the sedenterization of nomadic/transhumant pastoralists through legally secure titles to grazing water and, in general, as one means of promoting livestock development.

In 1976, the Survey Department finished the survey for most of the land earmarked for grazing. The United States Agency for International Development gave the technical assistance. By 1980, Nigeria had established 2.3 million hectares of grazing reserves, although this figure represented only eleven percent of the planned size (Omaliko and others 1984; and Bako and Ingawa 1988). The government acquired less than five percent of the ten million hectares proposed as grazing land (N.L.P.D. record 1992). Of the forty-five planned dams, twenty-four have been completed. Five borehole have been sunk. Of the expected 722 roads, 150 have been built, showing a huge deficit. By 1980 2.3 million ha were acquired as grazing reserves by the northern state governments (Oxby, 1982), constituting 10% of the total 22 million ha envisaged under the Third National Plan (Ministry of Agriculture, 1981). High compensation levels for acquisition of grazing reserves recommended by the Federal Land Act of 1978 is indicated as a major cause for the low implementation in establishing grazing reserves. Further, only few of those established were formally gazetted leaving the original

objectives largely unfulfilled (Waters Bayer and Taylor-Powell, 1986). In some specific cases, none of the pastoral Fulani households settled on the reserves were previously nomadic having been residents around the crop farming villages prior to the establishment of the grazing reserves (see Kjenstad, 1988).

At the close of 1992, the government has identified over 300 areas with twenty-eight million hectares for grazing reserve development. About forty-five of these areas, covering some 600,000 hectares, have been gazetted. Eight of these reserves, totaling 225,000 hectares, are fully established. Already, 350 of the projected 950 pastoral families and 11,600 of the planned 46,000 cattle are using these reserves (N.L.P.D. record 1992). Apart from acquiring the land, the government regulates how the Fulani should use the grazing reserves.

Broadly speaking, neither pastoralists nor neighbouring farmers have been appreciative of these developments because they have not been accompanied by improvements at the herd level. All the amenities are as accessible to people off the reserves as those on. Some of the facilities are not very practical. Hence, tensions easily rise around grazing reserves where an indigenous population's land has been excised without due compensation. Farmers become antagonistic to projects and try to harass the settled pastoralists. Their antagonism surfaces in an increase in court cases relating to crop damage and disputes over land deemed to be within the reserve. In Kachia in the early 1980s, crop damage rather than land disputes predominated (Waters-Bayers and Taylor-Powell, 1986), but recently other types of cases are being brought to court (Kjenstad, 1988).

Moretimore and Wilson (1965) have observed that as early as the 1960s the farmers in northern Nigeria have cultivated up to 83.5 percent of the land. Moretimore (1971) shows that around Katsina, with 119 people per 135 square kilometers, farmers plow 66-75 percent of the land, while the remaining bushland is extensively grazed, if grass grows. In the outlying areas of Kano City, where the population density reaches 235 per square kilometer--a density comparable to that of Southeast Asia--farmers have occupied most of the vacant lands. A research has shown that for all classes of land use, except uncultivated land, grazing has intensified in Nigeria. For the uncultivated land, primary grazing-sites are diminishing because sedentary farmers inhabit the land. With an increase in population, grazing changes from surplus, to subsistence, and to survival methods of land exploitation (Awogbade 1980).

Assessing the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP)

As indicated earlier, grazing reserve was established in different parts of the country to avert future crisis or discord between herders and farmers but by the end of 1999, grazing reserves established in the country had collapsed. This was compounded by poor funding of grazing reserves. Aluko (2017) argued that the dramatic fall of allocated amount for the provision and maintenance of grazing reserves across the country from 2011 to 2014 account for of the major reasons for the clashes of the herdsmen and farmers in the country. The allocation to the National Grazing Reserves and Pasture Development Programme dropped from N310 million in 2011 for its to just N100 million in 2014 (Aluko, 2017). In another study, Philip (2014) found out that the ethno-religious identity of the actors engaged in cattle conflicts is quite significant. This argument was supported with the cases of reported clashes across Northern Nigeria, especially in Benue, Kaduna, Plateau, Kogi, Niger, and Nasarawa. These

locations are mainly populated by the 'Middle Beltans', whose religious identity is often contrasted with that of Fulani Muslims.

Other scholars believe that the primary factor driving conflict between herders and farmers is climate change (Cabolt, 2017). Climate change is believed to force migration further south, lead to freshwater scarcity especially in the Lake Chad region is changing the pattern of relationship between herders and farmers. Today, the Lake Chad has dried up by 90% leaving 30 million people in communities across Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon to fight over scarcity of water and arable lands. There are evidences that herders and farmers have clashed over resources in countries served by the Lake Chad with the most reported cases coming from Benue, Taraba, Adamawa, Plateau and Nasarawa States in Nigeria.

The Nigerian government is aware about the conflict between herders and farmers. For instance the government reported that in 2016 alone, a total of 897 communities were affected by the herders-farmers crisis and this also affected 21,756 households, resulting in the damage of 13,050 buildings and 1,144 schools, as well as 164 primary healthcare centres in Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Taraba and Nasarawa. In response to this crisis, the government started consulting stakeholders in different states on how best to tackle the farmers-herdsmen conflict. Following the consultative meetings, the Federal Government unveiled the National Livestock Transformation Plan, which aimed to address the crises especially in the most affected states.

The National Livestock Transformation Plan covers a ten year period, from 2018-2027. With the new livestock transformation plan which will be piloted in Adamawa, Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba and Zamfara states, the country hopes to address the critical issues limiting the growth of the livestock industry. The proposed programme is designed, based on six pillars, with estimated direct and indirect costs of N90.43 billion and N261 million, respectively. The six pillars are economic investment, conflict resolution, law and order, humanitarian relief, information, education and strategic communication and crosscutting issues. The document also states that the budgeted amount will help increase the country's yield of cattle milk per day through breed improvement of local herds.

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