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Assessment of Farmers-Pastoralist Perception of Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) in Kebbi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Farmers' and pastoralists' perceptions of Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA) in Kebbi State, Nigeria, were investigated. The study is based on data gathered using a mixed method technique. Data was collected from 320 farmers and pastoralists in the research area using a well-structured questionnaire. Focus Group Discussions were also organized and held separately with farmers and pastoralist communities. The data was examined using descriptive statistics on SPSS and Microsoft Excel software, and the FGD data was transcribed.

The mean age of farmers was 35.24 and that of pastoralists was 40.46. Most farmers-pastoralist are married, and the majority do not have a formal education. The majority of

farmers-pastoralist have a household size of 6–10. The study further reveals that pastoralists have an average income per annum of N412,536.23 and farmers' average income per annum was N255,500.00. The study concluded that RUGA, if established in the study area, will boost crop and animal production, reduce cattle rustling, enhance access to education for both parties, and serve as a panacea to farmer-pastoralist conflict.

The study therefore recommended that formal education should be fostered through sensitization and that existing government-owned ranches and "burtalli" should be revamped.

Keywords: Farmers, Pastoralist, Perception, RUGA, Kebbi State

1. Introduction

The livestock sub-sector is an important and integral component of Nigeria's agriculture and is a major source of household wealth and food security (Ilu *et al.*, 2016) ^[8]. The general perception that pastoralists live in isolated communities wholly or partially dependent on livestock and livestock products is gradually being eroded. Pastoralists are increasingly integrated into modern activities and new livelihood and occupational patterns, with large segments of the pastoral communities practicing what is now referred to as urban pastoralism. While the traditional pastoral way of life and career patterns have been influenced by modernization, penetration of the market economy and commercialization, one aspect of pastoral life has persisted: mobility in search of water and grazing land. In the new context of globalization and economic interdependence, pastoralists' mobility has been enhanced through the increase in demand for their products (for example, meat, milk, milk products and hides) (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2017) ^[17].

In Nigeria, conflict has become a very widespread occurrence; manifesting in all spheres of human endeavors. Over the last decade, violent clashes between cattle herders and rural farmers across communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, have increased exponentially with a lot of factors adduced as its causes. Between June 2015 and January 2016, herdsman attacks culminated in the death of about 525 people (Enor, Magor and Ekpo, 2019) ^[5]; In 2018, more than 2,000 people were killed in farmers-herder conflicts. According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2020 ^[7], Nigeria was ranked number 3 out of 163 countries in a comprehensive study analyzing the impact of terrorism.

A study of major sources of conflicts between the Fulani pastoralists and farmers shows that land related issues, especially over grazing fields, account for the highest percentage of the conflicts (Isah, 2012) ^[9]. Kwaja & Ademola- Adelehin (2018) ^[10] noted that from Mali to South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo to Nigeria, climate variability, environmental degradation, and socio- political upheaval have shifted pastoralist migratory patterns and increased tensions between farmers and herders. Mercy Corps, 2015 reported that these changes have increased confrontations between these two livelihoods

groups, leading to violent conflict, deaths, forced displacement and migration, erosion of inter-communal relationships, as well as the destruction of agricultural and livestock outputs.

The concept of Rural Grazing Area was borne by the Federal Government of Nigeria to tackle the incessant clashes between farmers and pastoralist in the country. A presidential spokesperson, said 12 states have so far indicated interest in the programme (Ismail *et al.*, 2019). Governor of Kebbi State, who is the Vice Chairman of National Food Security Council, told newsmen in Birnin Kebbi that RUGA Settlements served as hamlets to the Fulanis for hundreds of years and did not constitute a new innovation aimed at bringing discord to other tribes in the country, (News Agency of Nigeria, 07 March 2019) ^[13]. Added that "The concept is aimed at settling Fulani nomads and other cattle rearers into a permanent abode to minimize migration from one place to another in a bid to eliminate conflicts between herdsman and farmers," NAN (07 March 2019) ^[13]. The Governor said that the main objective of settling Fulani nomads in one place, apart from ending conflicts with farmers, was to allow their livestock to produce adequate meat to satisfy the protein requirement of the country, (NAN, 07 March 2019) ^[13].

The RUGA settlement initiative has been criticized from the moment it was announced. The Southern and Middle Belt Leaders Forum alleged that the RUGA settlement initiative was a subtle attempt to "colonize the rest of Nigeria under the guise of promoting cattle rearing" (DailyTrust, 2019) ^[1]. It said cattle-rearing is a "private business" that should not have the involvement of the government, arguing that a "government interested in the unity of the country should not dabble in such a business which tends to promote one ethnic group over another" (DailyTrust, 2019) ^[1]. Recently, a considerable literature has grown up around the theme of Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) that the reasons for RUGA policy rejection stem from a fear of ethnic dominance and suspicion among Nigerian stakeholders. Ruga policies, to a large extent, have a negative impact on peaceful coexistence and a sense of trust among ethnic groups, and reallocate ancestral lands to demographically pressured herding groups from the north through the RUGA settlement (Ebisi & Olisa, 2020; Emmanuel, 2020; Ekpo & Tobi, 2019) ^[2, 4, 3]. The task here is to assess farmers-pastoralist perception of RUGA in Kebbi State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of this study are to;

1. describe the socio-economic characteristics of farmers-pastoralist
2. determine farmers-pastoralist perception of RUGA

2. Materials and Methods

The study used a mixed-methods approach to assess farmers-pastoralist perception of RUGA in Kebbi State. First, one (1) Local Government Area (LGAs) with sizeable number of Farmers-Pastoralist communities from each of the Five (5) livestock zones in Kebbi State was selected namely were Gwandu, Kalgo, Bagudo, Yauri and Fakai LGAs. Second, purposive sampling was used in selecting One (1) farming community and One (1) pastoralist community from each of the five (5) LGAs identified to give a total of ten (10) farmers-pastoralist communities. Third, thirty-six (36) farmers and thirty-six (36) pastoralists were purposively selected to arrive at one hundred and

eighty (180) respondents each for farmers and pastoralist and a total of three hundred and sixty respondents (360) to serve as sample size for the research.

Two Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were separately conducted for farming and pastoralist community at Jinga and Runtuwon Doruwai. Eight (8) members of each community were selected to participate in the FGD session comprising of youths and elderly. In conducting of FGDs, it enables the researcher to probe sensible questions and have access to understanding the real-life situation and their experiences during the frequent reoccurrence of the conflict between the farmers and Fulani herdsman. The essence of the qualitative data collection is to describe, capture and further communicate the respondent's own experiences of a given situation in his or her own words (Patton, 2002) ^[14].

3. Results and discussion

Socio-economic characteristics of farmers-pastoralist

Table 1 shows that the mean age of pastoralists is 40.46 while farmers have a mean age of 35.24 respectively. This implies that the majority of respondents were active and likely to be more productive if given adequate levels of resources and signifies that farmers-pastoralist have the potential to maximize their farm resources. Fakayode *et al.*, (2015) ^[6] posited that youthful and productive age will promote efficiency in agricultural production and enhance food security. 43.48% and 37.50% of interviewed farmers and pastoralist have the highest percentage of household size ranging from 6-10, respectively. This implies that there will be more people to serve as family labour in the farm. 100% of pastoralist are married while 90.70% of farmers residence are married and just 4 representing 9.30% are single. This shows that Marriage is an important aspect of the life of farmers-pastoralist and every individual who attains the right age is expected to marry.

Table 1 further shows that 80% of the farmers had Arabic education. Similarly, for pastoralists 94.20% had Arabic education. Only a minimal percentage of farmers-pastoralist have attended formal education. The study also indicates that the largest number of farmers-pastoralist surveyed had lived in the study area for 21 years and above. Table 1 further shows that the mean income/annum of pastoralists was N412,536.23 while farmers have a mean income/annum of N255,500.00. This corroborates the work of Ubandoma, (2014) ^[16] which states that most farmers in Northern zone of Sokoto State had an annual income of above N33,000.

Table 1: Distribution of farmers-pastoralist according to their socio-economic characteristics

Age	Pastoralist N 138		Farmers N160	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
20-24	7	5.07	17	6.60
25-29	10	7.25	31	14.67
30-34	24	17.39	39	21.49
35-39	28	20.29	23	15.04
40-44	18	13.04	22	16.08
45-49	29	21.01	5	4.20
50 >	22	15.94	23	21.92
Total	138	100.00	160	100.00
Mean	40.46		35.24	
Household Size				
1-5	36	26.09	58	36.25
6-10	60	43.48	60	37.50
11-15	20	14.49	34	21.25
16-20	3	2.17	4	2.50

21 >	19	13.77	4	2.50
Total	138	100.00	160	100.00
Marital Status				
Married	1	100	156	90.70
Single	-	-	4	9.30
Total	138	100	160	100.00
Educational Status				
Arabic Education	130	94.20	128	80.00
Primary Education	6	4.35	14	8.75
Secondary Education	2	1.45	12	7.50
None of the above	-	-	6	3.75
Total	138	100	160	100.00
Years Spent in Community				
11-15	8	5.80	-	-
16-20	5	3.62	2	1.25
21>	125	90.58	158	98.75
Total	138	100.00	160	100.00
Income/Annum(N)				
<300001	78	56.52	62	38.75
300001-600000	34	24.64	21	13.13
600001-900000	15	10.87	37	23.13
900001-1200000	5	3.62	18	11.25
1200001-1500000	4	2.90	13	8.13
1800001>	2	1.45	9	5.63
Total	138	100	160	100.00
Mean	N412.536.23		N255,500	

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Relative Importance Index (RII) of farmers-pastoralist perception of RUGA

Results shown in table 4.15 indicates that, RUGA can boost crop/animal production has the highest mean with RII= 4.66. This suggests that movement with livestock in search of pasture, fodder and water exposes the livestock and pastoralist through risk that can be avoided with proper management. Which if properly implemented will curb cattle rustling with RII= 4.62. Rural communities have witnessed delayed growth in sustainable development. The incessant feuds between herders and farmers in Nigeria presage uncertainties of food security, safety of lives and property and sustainable development in the country and beyond. RUGA means rural development with RII= 4.54, If RUGA sees the light of the day, it will turn the fortunes of both parties with RII= 4.51, and RUGA is long over-due with RII= 4.50. Most farmers-pastoralist for the research have favourable perception that RUGA is long over-due and if it eventually gets implemented will turn over the face of pastoralism completely. This agrees with the research by Mudashir *et al.*, (2019)^[12] highlighting that Ruga will create security for pastoral families and curtail cattle rustling, as well as provide a palliative as an alternative to peace and security of lives and properties in Nigeria.

A farmer during FGD stated that; *We believe all will benefit. But as it stands, we as farmers do not have enough land to farm and the government provides little to no support with fertilizers to aid farming efforts. Almost every farming season, we hear of certain number of subsidized fertilizer trucks sent to each local government for distribution but we don't get any. The whole of this community gets only 5bags of fertilizer which is very poor and will not even be enough for my own farm.*

During an organised FGD session with the pastoralist, one stated; *Both farmers and pastoralist will benefit*

from RUGA since, we will all live in peace and everyone will feel the impact. Farmers and Pastoralist enjoy relative peace during the dry season but ones the first rain drops, everyone becomes protective of their territory. Another pastoralist laments; Everyone interested in livestock production will benefit directly from RUGA and must not necessarily be Fulani. It is not all herders that you see are Fulanis, we have many ethnic groups that are predominantly nomads and pastoralist that usually don't venture deep into the south but because of the fact that they are looking for the same thing as the Fulanis, they now move deep down south. So, when the farmers see damages done to their farms by herders, they automatically assume that Fulani herdsmen are responsible when in reality may not be Fulani.

RUGA is a way forward in increasing crop/livestock productivity with RII= 4.44, RUGA is a good initiative geared towards sustainable agriculture in the country with RII= 4.44, When RUGA is fully operational, it will enhance access to education of both parties with RII= 4.44, RUGA favours one occupation over the other with RII= 2.64, Farmers sees RUGA as a means by government to grab their lands with RII= 2.19, and RUGA promotes ethnicity with RII= 2.18. The study agrees with Sayedi and Ndagi, 2019 that Ruga settlements plan will improve the quality of meat/milk production; increase income generation to people of the area; create job opportunities for most unemployed youths in the area; and will increase income generation to people of the area.

During an FGD session, a farmer listed; *fear of government collecting their farmlands and convert for pastoral use via RUGA. If that is the case, compensation should be duly provided to ensure the farmer gets a new farming land. Insisting, we are all from same root of a tree. As a farmer, we rear different livestock. After harvest, we sell the produce and purchase livestock for fattening of which in most cases, we give to the pastoralist to maintain.*

Survival is threatened as long as food security is threatened. Thus, needless to state that tackling the menace of insecurity, especially as compounded by the constant clashes between herdsmen and farmers, in Nigeria requires urgency to prevent a complete breakdown of social order. If we agree that threatening of food security is tantamount to threatening the survival of the people in Nigeria, then it would be right to assume that those who constitute a bane to sustainable agricultural practices, either covertly or overtly are potentially threatening the collective survival of the country as a nation. The misconception that only a particular tribe engages in pastoralism is fast becoming a myth and people should begin to view pastoralism as a business rather than a family affair.

RUGA initiative is a double sword approach with RII= 2.02, RUGA will expose pastoralist to attacks by farmers with RII= 1.91, RUGA initiative is a political move towards colonizing other ethnic groups with RII= 1.75, RUGA initiative brews political conflict with RII= 1.74. Both farmers and Pastoralist are at disadvantage, RUGA initiative is a waste of time and effort, and RUGA is not the solution to conflict between farmers-pastoralist, with RII=1.50, 1.50

and 1.36 respectively. Taken together, these results suggest that Government owned ranches have previously been in existence all over the country and has not brewed political conflict as at when functional. Government can easily resuscitate existing ranches to meet best global standards

which have been moribund to serve same purpose purported under the RUGA. The findings also support the idea that farmers-pastoralists have indicated that RUGA is of public interest and would have a visible development to their communities if implemented.

Table 2: Relative Importance Index (RII) of farmers-pastoralist perception of RUGA

S. No	Perception of RUGA (Statements)	RII	$(RII - \frac{---}{RII})$	$(RII - \frac{---}{RII})^2$	Ranking
1	RUGA can boost crop/animal production	4.66	1.53	2.33	1 st
2	The idea of RUGA is a panacea to conflict that long existed between farmer and pastoralist	4.62	1.49	2.21	2 nd
3	RUGA reduces cattle rustling	4.61	1.48	2.19	3 rd
4	RUGA means rural development	4.54	1.41	1.98	4 th
5	If RUGA sees the light of the day, it will turn the fortunes of both parties	4.51	1.38	1.90	5 th
6	RUGA is long over-due	4.50	1.37	1.89	6 th
7	RUGA is a way forward in increasing crop/livestock productivity	4.44	1.31	1.72	7 th
8	RUGA is a good initiative geared towards sustainable agriculture in the country	4.44	1.31	1.72	8 th
9	When RUGA is fully operational, it will enhance access to education of both parties	4.44	1.31	1.72	9 th
10	RUGA favours one occupation over the other	2.64	-0.49	0.24	10 th
11	Farmers sees RUGA as a means by government to grab their lands	2.19	-0.94	0.87	11 th
12	RUGA promotes ethnicity	2.18	-0.95	0.90	12 th
13	RUGA initiative is a double sword approach	2.02	-1.11	1.24	13 th
14	RUGA will expose pastoralist to attacks by farmers	1.91	-1.22	1.48	14 th
15	RUGA initiative is a political move towards colonizing other ethnic groups	1.75	-1.38	1.91	15 th
16	RUGA initiative brews political conflict	1.74	-1.39	1.92	16 th
17	Both farmers and Pastoralist are at disadvantage	1.50	-1.63	2.67	17 th
18	RUGA initiative is a waste of time and effort	1.50	-1.63	2.65	18 th
19	RUGA is not the solution to conflict between farmers-pastoralist	1.36	-1.77	3.12	19 th
Total		59.56		34.66	
RII Mean = 3.13					
Source: Field Survey, 2021					

4. Conclusion

The importance of peaceful coexistence between farmers-pastoralist cannot be overemphasized. This is because if we are to be food secure in Nigeria, then a mutual understanding needs to be reached between farmers-pastoralist. Convincingly, the research established that farmers-pastoralist have a positive perception regarding RUGA. They also understand that RUGA will boost crop/animal production, reduce cattle rustling and farmers-pastoralist sees RUGA as a panacea to conflict that long existed between farmers and pastoralist.

Based on the findings of this study, farmers-pastoralist disagree with the statement RUGA initiative is a waste of time and effort and they do not agree RUGA will expose pastoralist to attacks by farmers

5. Recommendations

- Formal education for both pastoralists and farmers should be fostered through sensitization using individual and mass communication via the aid of extension agents and radio programmes, respectively. Furthermore, to improve performance, nomadic education and vocational training schools should be strengthened.
- The federal and state governments must be sincere and committed to enacting and enforcing laws that limit pastoralist activities, particularly open grazing. In order for the new framework to have national ownership, there must be a consultative process in which all stakeholders' views are heard.
- Existing ranches and "burtalli" should be revamped by the government. For this to happen, there must be a concerted plan to educate and mobilize conflicting parties to grasp the ecosystem and agricultural

resources available in their communities. This opens the door to group interdependence and complementarity in the efficient utilization of resources for communal benefit and equitable access. As a result, the location and space must be used for the general good, with appropriate regulation of activities, behaviour, and conduct. This scenario is only possible if pastoralist adhere to agreed-upon routes and farmers avoid growing farm products across them through tight government policy regulation and compliance.

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