

**Herdsmen activities on food production and distribution in Benue state, Nigeria**Agbuka, Helen Nkemjika<sup>1</sup> & Professor Fred O. Eze Ph.D.<sup>2</sup>**Abstract**

Food production and distribution are fundamental to the survival and economic stability of rural communities. However, in Benue state, food security is not assured due to insecurity occasioned by the activities of killer herdsmen. The study evaluated the effect of herdsmen activities on food production and distribution in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, it ascertained how crop destruction by herdsmen affected hunger level in Benue State; examined the effect of farmland destruction by herdsmen on unemployment in Benue State; and investigated how theft of produce by herdsmen affected crop storage in Benue State. The research adopted survey method of investigation where questionnaire was used. 3500 farmers from three local government areas, each representing the three Senatorial zones of the State were involved. A sample size of 359 farmers derived through Taro Yamane Formula served as respondents. Z-test analysis was employed to test the formulated hypotheses. The study found out that crop destruction by herdsmen increased hunger level in Benue State; that farmland destruction by herdsmen exacerbated unemployment in Benue State; and that produce theft by herdsmen negatively affected crop storage in Benue State. The study concluded that herdsmen activities in Benue State and some other areas of the country is not only causing insecurity and destruction of lives and property, it has brought about dire food insecurity in the state and the country. The study recommended among others that Benue State government should stop waiting for the federal government to bring security to their people. They should create some security initiatives of their own and independently take over the security of their State.

**Keywords:** Farmer–herder conflict; Food security; Agricultural production; Crop destruction; Rural unemployment; Agricultural insecurity; Benue State Nigeria.

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## **Introduction**

Agriculture is the next most important part of Nigeria's economy. Agriculture comprising of food crop and livestock production, is the bedrock of Nigeria's economy (ILO, 2017). It also caters for the employment of over 35% of the country's population (Adeloye, Torimiro & Oladejo, 2023). Agriculture has always been the dominant stay of Northern Nigeria. Onah, Asadu & Aduma (2019) noted in that direction that raising of livestock such as cow, cattle and sheep were previously predominant in the Northern part of Nigeria while the Southern and Middle Belt parts of the country were noted for cultivation of crops and plants.

Originally, the Fulani herdsmen who engaged in nomadic grazing of their cattle were relatively in harmonious coexistence with crop farmers who cultivated crops (Onah, Asadu & Aduma, 2019). There were in existence robust conflict resolution institutions and timely, transparent compensation mechanisms where skirmishes between farmers and herders occur (Ezeamama & Okolie, 2022). There were integrated state policies combining security, agricultural support system including inputs, storage, and transportation available to the farmers and these measures strengthened food production and supply chains (Otuisi, Ogisi & Emaziye, 2023).

Unfortunately, the decades of peaceful and harmonious co-existence cum agricultural business relationship between crop farmers, who cultivate crops and herdsmen, who raise cattle via nomadic practice, has gone sour, leading to the two groups opposing each other and engaging in intractable violent social conflict in the present day Nigerian society (Onah, Asadu & Aduma, 2019). Udegbonam (2017) called it a conflict occasioned by struggle for resource control and ownership.

This is the situation in Benue state of today. There is a social conflict occasioned by clashes between crop farmers and herders. Herders abandon designated grazing corridors and invade farms, bringing about destruction of farmlands and unimaginable damage and wastes of crops. It does not end there, these pastoralists would still engage in murderous activities killing indigenes and their animals and destroying their homes (Aduma, Chukwuemeka & Eneh, 2019). This violence allows interrupted cultivation, harvesting, and distribution of food across local markets bringing about shocks in food production and distribution. Benue state that use to pride itself as the food basket of the nation because of its unprecedented food production and distribution now seems displaced from their land and no longer able to produce food enough to feed itself neither can it distribute. There is insecurity in the state and Igoli et al (2022) note that insecurity usually magnifies economic loss, depresses agricultural investment, forces abandonment of farmlands, and inflates food prices due to reduced supply and market disruptions.

Based on the backdrop of this background therefore, this study seeks to examine herdsmen activities and how it affects food production and distribution in Benue state.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Food production and distribution are fundamental to the survival and economic stability of rural communities, serving as the backbone of livelihood and food security. Food production and distribution is maximally achieved in an atmosphere of peace and security. Security in the society allows for uninterrupted cultivation, harvesting, and distribution of food across local markets and regions. These bring about food security in a nation.

However, in Benue state food security is not assured. This is as a result of rampaging herdsmen activities that have assumed the level of terrorism. Herdsmen activities have emerged as a critical threat to farming communities in this state manifesting in crop destruction, theft of produce, farmland destruction, violent attacks, kidnappings, and forced displacement of farmers. These incidents have created an atmosphere of fear that discourages cultivation, reduces the amount of land under production, and disrupts transportation routes essential for distribution of food and produce from farms to markets and outside the state.

Other challenges that exacerbate herders' nefarious activities exist. There is no effective law enforcement of the anti-grazing law that was passed by the House of Assembly in 2018. This has made the anti-grazing law ineffective in all ramifications. There is also no community based early-warning system, lack of well managed grazing corridors that would reduce migratory pressures and resource competition between pastoralists and crop farmers, climate-sensitive land use planning, etc.

Governments both federal and state's failure to manage the conflict has led to its escalation. They rather choose to do nothing and suppress the conflict hence their little or no achievement in the resolution of the crises and the continued murderous activities of the herdsmen. This study therefore seeks to investigate how herdsmen activities affect food production and distribution in Benue state, Nigeria. Without proper investment on agriculture, the economy will collapse, hunger and starvation will creep into the society, poverty level will increase.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of the study is to evaluate the effect of herdsmen activities on food production and distribution in Benue State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- i. Ascertain the effect of crop destruction by herdsmen on hunger level in Benue State.
- ii. Examine the effect of farmland destruction on unemployment in Benue State.
- iii. Investigate the effect of theft of produce on crop storage in Benue State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised for the study.

- i. How has crop destruction by herdsmen affected hunger level in Benue State?
- ii. What is the effect of farmland destruction by herdsmen on unemployment in Benue State?
- iii. How has theft of produce by herdsmen affected crop storage in Benue State?

### **Statement of hypotheses**

- i. Crop destruction by herdsmen did not increase hunger level in Benue State.
- ii. Farmland destruction by herdsmen did not exacerbate unemployment in Benue State.
- iii. Produce theft by herdsmen did not affect crop storage in Benue State.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is theoretically and empirically significant and will benefit policy makers, government officials, security authorities, community leaders, future researchers and the general public.

Theoretically, the frustration aggression theory used in the study will bring out and explain the assumed reasons for perennial conflicts in Benue State and indeed other states in Nigeria. When herders continually bring their herds to feed on farmers' crops and destroy their farmlands, they can only naturally get frustrated and want to expel the herders out of their communities usually through aggression. And in a bid to revenge, the herdsmen come in their numbers with deadly weapons of destruction to kill and maim the members of the communities and steal and destroy their produce in the process.

Empirically, the study will expose the modus operandi of these herders making it easier for policy makers and governments to learn how to handle the issue and achieve results. The recommendations of the study will serve as recommended solutions to the problem.

## **Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the herdsmen activities on food production and distribution in Benue State, Nigeria. It examined how crop destruction by herdsmen affect hunger; how farmland destruction by herdsmen affect unemployment and how theft of produce by herdsmen affect crop storage in Benue State. The period under review was 2015 to 2024.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Herdsmen activities**

Herdsmen also referred to as pastoralist, are nomadic or semi-nomadic herders whose primary occupation is raising livestock (Iro, 1994). Nomadic herding is a practice that entails moving with cattle from one place to another in search of pasture (Adu, 2013). These herdsmen in Nigeria occupy some part of the drought stricken Sahel, and to escape from the ravaging effect of the drought as well as save their cattle from dying, they migrate southwards to some areas in the middle belt such as Plateau, Benue, Kogi and Nassarawa; while crossing the border of middle-belt and southern region, unfettered Fulani cattle cause great damages to farmland and crops which causes conflict, and confrontation with the indigenes, banditry, loss of lives and properties, food scarcity and increase in price of food.

The activities are largely characterised by mobility, use of land for grazing. Majekodum et al (2013) further argue that traditional pastoralism is being threatened by land encroachment and restricted grazing routes, leading to longer migration periods and increased vulnerability of livestock and herders. Adisa (2012) notes that competition over land and water resources has escalated into widespread conflict in many rural areas of Nigeria. Herdsmen activities have disrupted food production and distribution particularly in Benue State (Ajibefun 2018).

#### **Crop Storage**

Efficient crop storage is a critical component of post-harvest management in agricultural systems. It ensures food security, minimizes losses and maintains the quality and nutritional value of crops until they are consumed or sold. FAO (2013) opines that post-harvest losses account for up to 30% of food produced in Nigeria with improper storage being the primary cause. Hodges et al (2011) noted that improving storage practice is not only for reducing waste but also increasing household income and food availability during the off seasons. We have traditional crop storage techniques and modern crop storage techniques. Olakojo and Akinlogotu (2004) observe that traditional granaries in southwestern Nigeria had high level of insect infestation, especially during the rainy season. Contrastly, Kimenju and De Groote (2010) found that modern, hermetic storage solution like Due Improved Crop Storage (PICS) bags reduce pest infestation in maize and cowpea storage. The World Food Programme (WFP) has implemented training programs on post-harvest handling and storage in the East and West Africa. USAID (2015) supported the distribution of hermetic storage bags to reduce losses in grain crops.

There are Silos which are structures for storing bulk materials. Silos are used for bulk storage of grains and other food products. It is important aspect of post-harvest technology. The aims of crops storage is provide between the harvest seasons and provide seed for subsequent planting, ordering distribution and supply of product throughout the year or a given period. Storage has helped farmers to run their farm at a profit.

#### **Hunger Level**

Aydogan (2021) define hunger as a life-threatening lack of food or short-term physical discomfort as a result of food shortage. WHO (2024) define hunger as an uncomfortable or a painful sensation caused by insufficient energy from diet. Hunger is synonymous with chronic undernourishment and is measured by the prevalence of

undernourishment. Hunger also is defined by United Nations as the period when we experience severe food insecurity - meaning that people go for entire days without eating due to lack of money, access to food or other resources. It is a state in which a person is unable to eat sufficient food for a continuous period (FAO, 2023).

Hunger and food insecurity in Nigeria is the outcome of a complex interplay of poverty, climate change, insecurity and socio-political instability. Hunger is caused by disrupted food system and poor access especially in conflict prone zone (FAO, 2023).

Hunger is defined as the discomfort or weakness caused by lack of food, coupled with the desire to eat (FAO, 2021) which encompasses not just hunger but also uncertainty in food availability access and proper nutrition. Barriet (2010) noted that hunger result from both chronic under nourishment and acute food crises has long term effect on child cognitive development, educational outcomes and economic productivity. Hunger is severe in Nigeria due to displacement and climate change, infrastructure, insecurity and land disputes have undermined food distribution network. Poverty and inequality remains the major driver of hunger within rural households' particularly vulnerable households. Agricultural policies on food production have failed due to lack of continuity, corruption and inadequate farmers support system (Akinyele 2009).

### **Unemployment**

Unemployment in general refers to the state of being jobless and actively seeking employment. It is a situation where individuals are unable to find suitable job (Cheppalaw, 2020). Unemployment is often used as a measure of health of the economy. Supporting the thought, Mlatsheni and Leibbrandit (2011) point out the extraordinary prevalence of unemployment and wordlessness as perhaps the single most important contributor to the persistence of social exclusion on a large and momentous scale. Unemployment is a signal of economic distress, but extremely low rate of unemployment may signal an overheated economy.

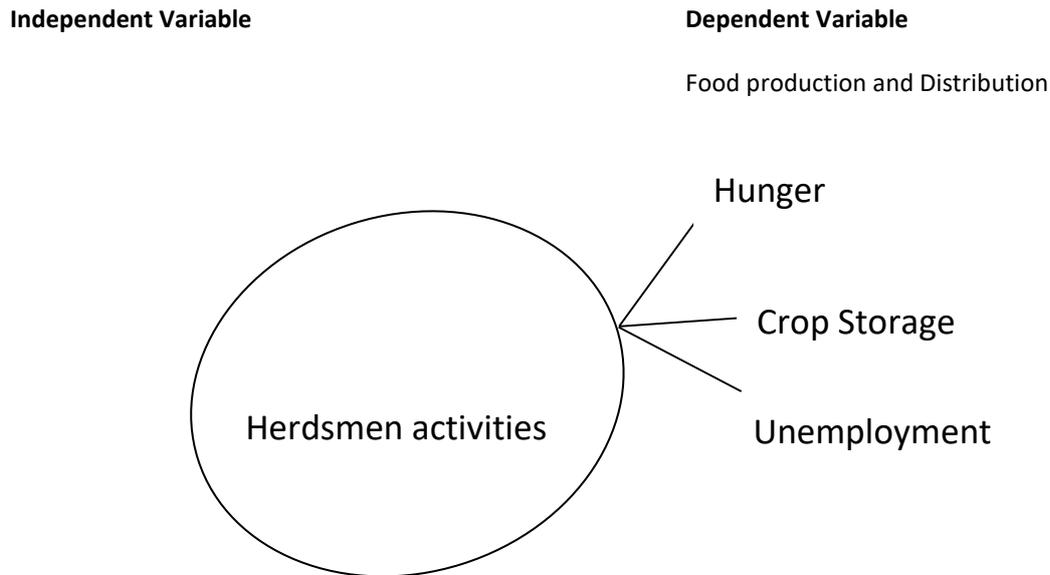
### **Food Production and Distribution**

Production involves the use of land, labour and capital to produce outputs that maximize utility or profit under given technological and resource constraints (Heady and Dillon 2021). It is the combination of various inputs, both material (such as metal, wood) and material (such as plan or knowledge) in order to create output.

Food production and distribution are crucial components of the global food system, involving the processes of transforming raw ingredients into consumable food products and then ensuring their availability to consumers. It is the backbone of any economic activity (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2009). Heize, Render and Munson (2020) see production as a key component of operations management, technology and system to create goods and services.

Distribution is the movement of goods from producers to final consumers. It encompasses logistics, warehousing, transportation and rail strategies. Balbu (2004) explain that distribution logistics involves planning, implementing and controlling efficient flow of goods, services and information. Production and distribution are interdependent component of a larger system. Poor communication between the two leads to inefficiencies. Christopher (2016) highlights the need for aligning production strategies with distribution responsiveness. Team system minimizes waste; while agile system responds quality to demand changes.

Fig. 2.1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Author's Conceptualization, 2025

### Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts frustration aggression theory as its theoretical framework. The theory of frustration and aggression propounded by Dollard et al (1939) sees aggression as a function of frustration and the occurrences of aggressive behaviour. It is an action with intent to harm physically or non-physically. However, the main thrust of the theory is that scarcity due to insufficient supply or unequal distribution of resources because of deprivation may ultimately lead to aggression (Abugu and Onuba 2015). Wolf (2001) noted that war over scarce natural resources is neither strategic nor rational. Practical application of this theory infers that Fulani herdsmen are usually frustrated because of weather events, which force them to migrate and as they migrate a series of challenges are encountered, which in turn brings further frustration. Deprivation of food for the Fulani herdsmen's cattle, has led to their frustration and aggression. Herdsmen then migrate to areas where there are crops farms to feed their cattle, regardless of any harm that this may cause the farm owners.

This is a great threat to the farmers and discourages them from practicing crop farming.

### Empirical Review

#### Herdsmen activities and crops storage

Oyebamiji et al (2022) examined the effect of herdsmen activities on crop production using cassava production in Ogun State. Through a sample survey of 103 crop farmers, the study found insignificant reductions in cassava yield due to herdsmen activities from 5t to 3t on average. Statistical testing (t-tests) confirmed significant differences in both yields and crop prices before and after herdsmen incursions.

Qadeloye, Torimiro & Oladejo (2020) investigated the impact of herdsmen on food production and distribution with the aims to determine the correlation between herdsmen grazing and crop production. Descriptive analysis

was used for the study. Findings showed significant associations ( $N = 0.595$ ,  $r = 0.446$ ) between grazing effect, farming experience, and production outcomes.

Adimula & Idowu (2022) examined the effect of herdsmen activities on food production and distribution in Kogi, Kwara and Nassarawa States using a descriptive survey design. Data was collected using structured questionnaire (150 respondents) using mean and standard deviation. Findings demonstrated historical coexistence but in recent conflicts - crop destruction rate were high (e.g., 72% in Kogi, 89.5% in Nassarawa). The conflicts have led to sharp declines in food production and rising food prices.

### **Herdsmen activities and hunger level**

Nwankwo (2024) analyzed farmers - herders conflict in Benue State using ethnographic method (interviews, observation, document analysis). It revealed that herders and farmers conflict impacted negatively to food production, agricultural disruption and by extension of food security.

Ogoh (2019) in the study carried out at university of Jos, Nigeria investigated how climate change has catalysed farmer - herder conflict in Plateau State and its effect on food production and distribution. Descriptive survey design was used with population of 850 respondents. The study discovered that herdsmen conflict with farmers focus on environmental and climate driven disruption of farming and herding inevitably affect food production and distribution. The study recommended that government should ensure and establish grazing reserves and ranching system to reduce direct interaction between livestock and crop land and compensate victims. Conflict resolution and institutional reforms should be adopted to mitigate herder - farmer tensions.

Yusufu (2021) explored the effect and the relationship between herders - crop farmers conflict and food security outcome in Benue State. Survey method was used; data for the work were collected through questionnaire and was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study revealed conflict dynamics to food availability, access and stability. Addressing these challenges, government should employ security and policy enforcement to protect crops and communities.

### **Herdsmen Activities and Unemployment**

Adewuyi & Odeh (2024) conducted rigorous empirical analysis on the impact of herders activities on food production and distribution in North - Eastern Nigeria using multiple regression. The result revealed that herdsmen activities have negative effect on food crop production in North-Eastern Nigeria. Majority of farmers were male, educated, cultivating between 1-5 hectares. The study recommended modern farming techniques and promoting high-yield plots. It will help to improve the quantity of food production and distribution and increase farmers income.

Frank and Asian (2024) qualitatively examined how herders - farmers conflict has compromised food production and distribution. The authors observed that climate change, cultural, religious, and ethnic conflicts aggravate the crisis. Crops destruction, violent clashes and human security threats contributing to food shortage and insecurity are the outcomes. They suggested revoking land occupied by herders, enforcing ranch - only grazing laws, and strengthening community security.

Bassey, Effiong & Ekwutosi (2021) conducted interview and observation across Middle-Belt States on the negative effect of herdsmen activities on food production and distribution. Descriptive survey research design was employed. The findings of the study revealed that herdsmen activities have negative effect on farmer's production. Farmers avoid cultivating on their farmland due to insecurity. It reduced farmers income (79.3%) eroding livelihoods; worsening unemployment through farmland invasion. It recommends enhance rural security (community policing, support displaced farmers with inputs, cash transfers; investing in conflict-sensitive land use policies (grazing reserves, grazing corridors).

### Gap in Empirical Review

From the empirical review, we can see that most of the studies were done outside Benue State as it relate to herdsmen / food security in Nigeria. From the review, none of the studies focused on herdsmen activities on food production and distribution in Benue State, Nigeria. This study therefore filled that gap.

### Methodology

#### Research Design

Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The research design was complemented with qualitative research method.

#### Area of the Study

The study was conducted in three local government areas of Benue State, namely Gwer local government area, Logo local government area and Agatu local government area.

#### Sources of Data

Data for the study was sourced mainly through primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire, while secondary data were collected through published literature.

#### Population of the Study

The population of the study includes all farmers in the three local government areas under study. The target population of the study was 3500.

**Table 3.1: Population Distribution of Farmers.**

| Local Government Areas      | Population  |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Gwer Local Government Area  | 1200        |
| Agatu Local Government Area | 1300        |
| Logo Local Government Area  | 1000        |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>3500</b> |

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

**Determination of Sample Size:** In determining the sample size the researcher used Taro Yamane Formula (1967) as follows:

$$\text{The Formula} = \frac{n}{1+N^2E^2}$$

Where N is the populations, 1 = Constant, E = Degree of error i.e., 0.05% or 0.05. The sample size is computed thus:

$$n = \frac{3500}{1 + 3500 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3500}{1 + 3500 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{3500}{1 + 8.75}$$

n =  $\frac{3500}{9.75}$   
n = 358.9  
n = 359 Approximately  
Therefore: Sample size is 359

**Sampling Technique**

Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents who were useful to this study. Thus, the 359 participants which were made of farmers had equal chances of being selected as respondents.

**Method of Data Collection**

The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. The questionnaire instrument was in a 5-point likert scale structured form. The questionnaire questions were drawn from the objectives, research questions and hypotheses developed for the study.

**Validity of the Instrument**

The contents of the questionnaire were validated by experts in the field of measurement and evaluation. The researcher therefore claimed the validity of the instrument.

**Reliability of the Instrument**

The researcher pre-tested (30) copies of the test instrument before the actual study. The response that was obtained from the pre-study was subjected to Cronbach Alpha's internal consistency test by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). That indicated that the items on the questionnaire were internally consistent and reliable.

**Method of Data Analysis**

The data collected for the study was analyzed through the use of mean score. The z-test analysis technique was applied in testing the hypotheses.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Data Presentation**

In this section, all the data generated through the use of questionnaire for the study was presented in tables and percentages for easy comprehension and understanding. A total of 359 copies of questionnaire was distributed but 300 was well filled and used for the analysis.

**Data Analysis**

**Research Question One:** How has crop destruction by herdsmen affected hunger level in Benue State?

**Table 4.1:** How crop destruction by herdsmen has affected hunger level in Benue State.

| S/N | Statement  | SA                 | A             | UD           | D           | SD          | Mean | Decision |
|-----|--|--------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|------|----------|
| 1   | Crop destruction by herdsmen eroded farmers income bringing about hunger.                        | 118<br>(39.3<br>%) | 94<br>31.3%   | 20<br>(6.7%) | 47<br>31.3% | 21<br>70%   | 3.80 | Accepted |
| 2   | Herdsmen activities destroyed crops thereby increasing hunger level of indigenes of Benue state. | 104<br>34.7%       | 90<br>(30.0%) | 20<br>6.7%   | 52<br>17.3% | 34<br>11.3% | 3.60 | Accepted |

|                   |  |              |              |            |              |             |             |          |
|-------------------|--|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 3                 | Herdsman destruction of crops brought about hike in food commodities increasing hunger level in the process.                               | 68<br>22.7%  | 124<br>41.3% | 7<br>2.3%) | 73<br>24.3%) | 28<br>9.3%  | 3.44        | Accepted |
| 4                 | Herdsman destruction of crops brought about scarcity of raw materials reducing income of farmers and hiking hunger level in the state.     | 93<br>3.10%  | 100<br>33.3% | -          | 80<br>26.7%  | 27<br>9.0%  | 3.51        | Accepted |
| 5                 | Herdsman destruction of crops reduced agricultural produce for export, reducing income of farmers and raising hunger level in the process. | 116<br>38.7% | 99<br>33.0%  | -          | 14<br>4.7%   | 71<br>21.7% | 3.87        | Accepted |
| <b>Grand Mean</b> |  |              |              |            |              |             | <b>3.64</b> |          |

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

Table 4.1 is the indicative responses on how crop destruction by herdsman has affected hunger level in Benue State with mean score of above 3.0. From the table, we can see that all the items in the table were accepted. The grand mean score of 3.64 is a strong indication that the respondents affirmed that crop destruction by herdsman affected hunger level in Benue State.

**Research Question Two:** What is the effect of farmland destruction by herdsman on unemployment in Benue State?

Table 4.2: Effect of farmland destruction by herdsman on unemployment in Benue State.

| S/N               | Options   | SA           | A            | UD         | D           | SD         | Mean        | Decision |
|-------------------|---|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|----------|
| 1                 | Herdsman activities brought about destruction of farmland bringing unemployment in its wake.                    | 134<br>44.7% | 137<br>45.7% | 14<br>4.7% | 15<br>5.0%  | -          | 4.25        | Accepted |
| 2                 | Destruction of farmland brought about low crop export bringing about unemployment.                              | 96<br>32%    | 120<br>40%   | -          | 68<br>22.7% | 16<br>5.3% | 3.51        | Accepted |
| 3                 | Activities of herdsman included destruction of animal husbandry bringing about unemployment for those affected. | 102<br>34%   | 121<br>40.3% | 14<br>4.7% | 56<br>18.7% | 7<br>2.3%  | 3.85        | Accepted |
| 4                 | Farmland destruction by herdsman brought about scarcity of raw materials bringing about unemployment.           | 118<br>39.3% | 112<br>37.3% | 14<br>4.7% | 37<br>12.3% | 19<br>6.3% | 3.91        | Accepted |
| 5                 | Farmland destruction reduced farming activities bringing about unemployment.                                    | 58<br>19.3%  | 180<br>60%   | 20<br>6.7% | 28<br>9.3%  | 14<br>4.7% | 3.80        | Accepted |
| <b>Grand Mean</b> |   |              |              |            |             |            | <b>3.91</b> |          |

**Source: Field Survey, 2025**

Table 4.2 is indicative responses on the effect of farmland destruction by herdsman on unemployment in Benue State with mean score of above 3.0. With regards to the items, the respondents all agreed that farmland destruction by herdsman affected unemployment in Benue State with a grand mean of 3.91.

**Research Question Three:** How has theft of produce by herdsmen affected crop storage in Benue State?

Table 4.3: How theft of produce affected crop storage in Benue State.

| S/N               |  | SA           | A            | UD         | D           | SD          | Mean        | Decision |
|-------------------|--|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 1                 | Theft of produce by herdsmen reduced storage of crops in Benue State.      | 118<br>39.3% | 97<br>32.3%  | 16<br>5.3% | 45<br>15.0  | 24<br>8.0%  | 3.80        | Accepted |
| 2                 | Theft of produce reduced quantity of crop export in Benue State.           | 118<br>39.8% | 94<br>31.3%  | 20<br>6.7% | 47<br>15.7% | 21<br>7%    | 3.80        | Accepted |
| 3                 | Theft of produce reduced raw materials availability in Benue State.        | 104<br>34.7% | 90<br>30%    | 20<br>6.7% | 52<br>17.3% | 34<br>11.3% | 3.60        | Accepted |
| 4                 | Theft of produce affected crop storage and consequently income of farmers. | 68<br>22.7%  | 124<br>41.3% | 7<br>2.3%  | 73<br>24.3  | 28<br>9.3%  | 3.43        | Accepted |
| 5                 | Theft of produce brought about food scarcity.                              | 93<br>31%    | 100<br>33.3% | -          | 80<br>26.7% | 27<br>9%    | 3.51        | Accepted |
| <b>Grand Mean</b> |  |              |              |            |             |             | <b>3.57</b> |          |

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4.3 is indicative responses on how theft of produce affected crop storage in Benue State with mean score of above 3.0.

The items listed in the table were found to be positive in all standards. The grand mean score of 3.57 affirmed that theft of produce affected crop storage negatively in Benue State.

**Test of Hypotheses**

The hypotheses were tested using z-normal distribution (z-test).

**Test of Hypothesis One**

**Restatement of Hypothesis One**

Ho: Crop destruction by herdsmen did not increase hunger level in Benue State.

Table 4.4: Normalizes z-score for mean responses

| S/N |  | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation | z-score | Z <sub>0.05</sub> | Decision rule for hypothesis |
|-----|--|-----|------|----------------|---------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1   | Herdsmen destruction of crops eroded farmers income bringing about hunger. | 300 | 3.9  | 0.359          | 33.38   | 2.33              | Accepted                     |

Source: Author’s compilation SPSS 23.0 Output

From table 4.4, the z-score for the responses to the questionnaire items are computed and juxtaposed with the z-table value of  $\pm 2.33$  at 2% significance level. The analysis indicates that the proposition that crop destruction by herdsmen increased hunger level in Benue State is significantly high is accepted at 2% significance level as the computed, z value of 33.38 exceeds the table value of  $\pm 2.33$ .

**Decision:** As seen from Table 4.4 and the subsequent analysis of result, the computed Z-scores for the statements exceeded the table z value of  $\pm 2.33$ . at 2% significance level. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept that crop destruction by herdsmen increased hunger level in Benue State.

### Hypothesis Two

#### Restatement of Hypothesis Two

Ho: Farmland destruction by herdsmen did not exacerbate unemployment in Benue State.

**Table 4.5: Normalizes z-score for mean responses**

| S/N |   | N   | Mean  | Std. Deviation | z-score | Z <sub>0.05</sub> | Decision rule for hypothesis |
|-----|---|-----|-------|----------------|---------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1   | Destruction of farmland by herders brought about destruction of farmland bringing about unemployment. | 300 | 3.775 | 0.6924         | 36.30   | 2.33              | Accepted                     |

Source: Author's compilation SPSS 23.0 Output

From table 4.5, the z-score for the responses to the questionnaire items are computed and juxtaposed with the z-table value of  $\pm 2.33$  at 2% significance level. The analysis indicates that the proposition that farmland destruction by herdsmen exacerbated unemployment in Benue State was accepted at 2% significance level as the computed z value of 36.30 exceeded the table value of  $\pm 2.33$ .

**Decision:** As seen from Table 4.5 and the subsequent analysis of result, the computed Z-scores (36.30) for the statements exceeded the table z value of  $\pm 2.33$  at 2% significance level. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept that farmland destruction by herdsmen exacerbated unemployment in Benue State.

### Hypothesis Three

#### Restatement of Hypothesis three

Ho: Produce theft by herdsmen did not negatively affect crop storage in Benue State.

**Table 4.6: Normalizes z-score for mean responses**

| S/N |  | N   | Mean | Std. Deviation | z-score | Z <sub>0.05</sub> | Decision rule for hypothesis |
|-----|--|-----|------|----------------|---------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 1   | Theft of produce reduced storage of crops bringing about poverty in Benue State. | 300 | 3.85 | 0.480          | 33.07   | 2.33              | Accepted                     |

Source: Author's compilation SPSS 22.0 Output

From table 4.6, the z-score for the responses to the questionnaire items are computed and juxtaposed with the z-table value of  $\pm 2.33$  at 2% significance level. The analysis indicates that the proposition that produce theft by herdsmen negatively affected crop storage in Benue State is accepted at 2% significance level as the computed z value of 33.07 exceeded the table value of  $\pm 2.33$ .

**Decision:** As seen from Table 4.6 and the subsequent analysis of result, the computed Z-scores (33.07) for the statements exceeded the table z value of  $\pm 2.33$  at 2% significance level. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept that produce theft by herdsmen negatively affected crop storage in Benue State.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The result of hypothesis one showed that crop destruction by herdsmen increased hunger level in Benue State. This is where z value of 36.30 exceeded the table value of  $\pm 2.33$ . This result is in agreement with table 4.1 where the respondents affirm that herdsmen activities which include destruction of crops, farmlands, animal husbandry, etc increased hunger tremendously in the state. The result is also in agreement with Oladejo (2020) who affirms that Fulani grazing affect food crop production.

The result of hypothesis two revealed that farmland destruction by herdsmen exacerbated unemployment in Benue State. This is evident from the fact that the computed Z-scores (36.30) for the statements exceeded the table z value of  $\pm 2.33$  at 2% significance level. The finding is supported by data obtained in table 4.2 where the respondents insisted that activities of herdsmen brought about low crop export, destruction of animal husbandry, scarcity of raw materials, etc all of which bring about unemployment and poverty. This finding is supported by the previous finding of Adimula and Idowu (2022) who affirm that herders activities disengaged farmers bringing about unemployment.

Lastly, the result of hypothesis three indicated that produce theft by herdsmen negatively affected crop storage in Benue State. This is where z value of 33.07 exceeded the table value of  $\pm 2.33$ . The finding further affirms the opinion of the respondents in table 4.3 where the respondents agree that theft of produce by herdsmen reduced quantity of crop export, reduced raw materials for industries, reduced crop storage, and brought about food scarcity. This finding is in agreement with Adewuyi and Odeh (2024) who postulate that herdsmen activities negatively affect crop production and storage.

## **Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Summary of Findings**

- i. The findings revealed that crop destruction by herdsmen increased hunger level in Benue State.
- ii. The study found out that farmland destruction by herdsmen exacerbated unemployment in Benue State.
- iii. The study discovered that produce theft by herdsmen negatively affected crop storage in Benue State.

### **Conclusion**

Herdsmen activities in Benue State and some other areas of the country is not only causing insecurity and destruction of lives and property, it has brought about dire food insecurity in the State and the country. Farmland and crop destruction by herders has increased hunger level and exacerbated unemployment level in Benue State. Their wanton theft of produce stored and preserved for future use has negatively affected food storage thereby threatening food security in the State and the country.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Benue State government should stop waiting for the federal government to bring security to their people. They should create some security initiatives of their own and independently take over the security of their State.
- ii. Farm settlements with maximum security should be created by Benue State government. This should be deliberate in order to create employment for farmers whose farms have been destroyed by herdsmen and in the process rendered unemployed.
- iii. Government of Benue State should build silos for produce storage where herders and other thieves cannot have access to. This will guarantee food security in the State and the country.

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