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Displaced Farmers Perception of Resource-Use Conflicts as an Obstacle to Household Food Security and Food Safety in Abia State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
Conflicts occasioned by different land users have become common place now. When farmers are displaced from their ancestral home due to conflicts involving pastoralists, life becomes difficult and unbearable. This paper investigated displaced farmers perception of resource use conflicts as an obstacle to household food security and food safety. A total of 300 displaced farmers were selected for interview and data obtained were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Result showed that conflicts create food shortage (M=3.43), destroy food stocks (M=3.57), disrupt production processes (M=3.28), reduced farm investment (M=3.19), among others. Again, during conflict situations, food items are easily contaminated with mean score of 3.27, foods are handled with dirty hands (M=2.58), unsafe water could be used to prepare food (M=3.31), outbreak of food borne illness (M=2.92), poor quality of food eaten (M=3.31), among other reasons. It is recommended that adequate food be supplied to the displaced farmers in the form of aid, water supply be provided to displaced farmers and health facilities put in place to handle case of illness and to avoid spread of illnesses.
Keywords: conflict, displaced farmers, food security, food safety, food quality.

INTRODUCTION

Competition over scarce resources, particularly land and water, often causes or exacerbates communal conflict (Homer-Dixon, 1999; Ban, 2007) and these conflicts have the potential to escalate to civil war when either certain groups or powerful individuals are perceived to be supporting tacitly or otherwise, one communal group at the expense of the other (Kahl,2006).

In the process of utilizing these scarce resources for the diverse, complex and competing socio-economic activities of the people, conflicts over access and management of these resources often arise. These conflicts significantly vary in dimension and process depending on the groups involved (Famoriyo,1983). While some conflicts arise between similar resource users such as between one farming community and another, others occur between different resource users. Examples include conflict between pastoralists and crop farmers or between foresters and crop farmers. Similarly, conflicts may take different dimensions as some are non-volatile while others are volatile (Ehrlich,1975).

In the study area, land is the major cause of conflict because of the importance and attachment to land. Again, the world over, land remains an important natural capital for every nation and individuals, and because of this, it's not unusual that there is land conflict across the world, especially in developing nations where huge population depends on agriculture for their livelihood (Wehrmann 2008; Kairaba 2000). In most African countries, land conflict commonly arises at the countries' boarder level, district boarder, among ethnic groups, in the community over common land, between individuals over boundary (Mamo, 2006). The struggle for land is exacerbated by increase in population, resource scarcity and other factors like technological change, improved terms of trade for agriculture and demand for land for non-agricultural use (Deininger & Castagnini, 2005). Sjaastad, Derman & Odgaard (2007) also looked at exclusion and relative deprivation as major cause of conflict in Africa.

As the number of internally displaced persons continue to increase, attempts at mitigating this crisis becomes more challenging for troubled countries. Notably, global efforts at managing displacement have concentrated more on refugees than internally displaced persons, yet the internally displaced person's crisis equally constitutes a challenge to global civilization (Osagioduwa & Oluwakorede, 2016). Most of these people needed temporary food assistance until they can return to their homes or find new livelihoods. Contributing to meeting the food needs of refugees places an additional burden in recipient community where food security is already marginal often leading to acute food shortages.

In Africa, which has most of its population residing in rural areas, communal violence or conflicts has serious implication of access and availability of food, since agriculture is the main preoccupation of rural population. The production of crops and rearing of livestock is the main economic activity of the people. Therefore, communal conflicts have serious implication on food system. Often, warring communities or parties tactically resort to manipulation over access to food and livestock. Thus, food insecurity has become an effect of communal conflict (Messer and Cohen, 2004). Communal conflict is correlated to food security and under most circumstances depresses production and income from cash crops and livestock. This reduction in production and income has serious implication on food security with the capacity to reduce coping capacity of those depending on food resources for their livelihood.

Tonah (2006) is of the view that since the Sahelian drought of the 1970s and 1980s, and the accompanying migration of a huge number of pastoralists into the fringes of the humid forest zone of West Africa, there has been a massive increase of the incidence of farmers-herders conflict. Cases of farmers- herders conflict are widespread in Nigeria in recent times. For instance, in Densina Local Government of Adamawa State, 28 people were feared killed, about 2,500 farmers were displaced and rendered homeless in the hostility between cattle rearers and farmers in the host community in July 2005. Nweze (2005) stated that many farmers and herders have lost their lives and herds, while others have experienced dwindling productivity in their herds. This was supported

by Ajuwon (2004), as cited by Nweze (2005) in his observation that in Imo State for instance between 1996 and 2005, 19 people died and 42 people were injured in the farmers-herders' conflicts and the violence that often accompanied such conflict. The conflicts are a threat to peace and national stability. It also has implication for tribal co-existence, Nigeria being a multi-ethnic and a multi-tribal nation.

The result of the study would be useful for a further understanding of farmers-herders' conflicts in other states of Nigeria and other West African countries. For several decades, in Nigeria and in the study area, land conflicts between individuals and groups have been common with little concern either on settling it or on finding out the food safety and food security consequences. As these conflicts occur, people continue to lose their lands and become poorer due to reduced farming land size leading to hunger, food insecurity and more. This study therefore investigated the effects of resource use conflicts on food security and safety of displaced farmers.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Abia State because conflicts have occurred between crop farmers and Fulani nomads in two LGAs of the State. The state shares common boundaries to the north with Ebonyi State; to the south and southwest with Rivers State; and to the east and southeast with Cross River and Akwa Ibom States, respectively. To the West is Imo State, and to the Northwest is Anambra State. The state covers an area of about 5,243.7 sq.km which is approximately 5.8 percent of the total land area of Nigeria (NPC, 2006).

A three-stage sampling technique was adopted in the process of sample selection. The first stage was the purposive selection of two LGAs with conflict occurrence namely Umunneochi and Ugwunagbo. The second stage was the purposive selection of Isuochi and Lokpanta communities from Umunneochi Area, while Uturu was selected from Ugwunagbo Area. The third stage involved the proportionate selection of 105 crop farmers from a total of 1050 affected farmers from Isuochi community, and 69 crop farmers from a total of 695 crop farmers from Lokpanta and a selection of 126 affected crop farmers from a total of 1260 affected farmers from Uturu. This gave a total sample size of 300 crop farmers selected from the household lists of 3,005 crop farmers affected by the conflicts obtained and compiled by various agencies of the State (Office of the Governor on Peace and Conflict Resolution; Local Government and Chieftaincy affairs). The household heads were used as the sampling unit. The household heads included widows who fend for themselves and family. Again, mean was also computed for objectives 1 and 2 which looked at effects of conflicts on food security on a 4-point Likert-type rating scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree assigned values of 4,3,2,1. The values were added and divided by 4 to obtain a discriminating mean value of 2.5. Any value with mean equal to or greater than 2.5 was considered effects and vice versa.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Resource use conflicts as an obstacle to household food security

Table 1 shows that when communities in rural areas the world are affected by conflicts involving different land-users such as pastoralists and crop framers, the food security of the local residents is in jeopardy. Conflicts affect food security by creating severe food shortages as indicated by a mean (M) response of 3.43. This situation disrupts both upstream input market and downstream output markets which serves as a transport link between producers and consumers. Conflicts lead to destruction of food stocks (M= 3.57) giving rise to shortages\scarcity which affects demands for food. Reduces income earnings power of people (M= 3.330), disrupts production process (M= 3.60), disrupts marketing processes (M= 3.28), reduces food supply (M= 3.35) by hindering transportation, reduces investment and savings (M=3.19) and prevents the planting of crops (M=3.03). What the above means is that during conflicts, agricultural lands become inaccessible for years, harvest are destroyed, fields and plots cannot be cultivated, the rural population already displaced from their ancestral homes are prevented from farming thereby creating breech in agricultural and food production leading to food insecurity (Messer *et al.,* 2000).

On the other hand, agriculture may become for survival and reduces to subsistence by farmers who may wish to stay back at the risk of their lives. This affects negatively the food security situations of the household. Therefore, the disruption of the production process or displaced farmers inability to cultivate affects directly the commands they have over food of their household. This is because of abandonment of farms and homes for refuge seeking elsewhere. This decision to leave home or farm is the last, a farmer could take as it means losing control of every productive assets. From this point onwards, the displaced farmer (fleeing farmer) is at the mercy of others or even or by even food aid. Again, conflicts disturb the marketing process of produce by cutting off access to roads, disturbing transport and prohibit marketing transactions to take place.

Displaced household becomes food insecure because it cannot command food in the market. When food production, storage and distribution are imperiled, the supply of food to local markets will decrease, while the demand for food increases. This will push food prices upward-thereby impoverishing the displaced farmers. Conflicts therefore, reduce food availability, food access, stability and utilization which are core elements in food security. It also leads to poverty, high infant mortality, inequality and declining per capital incomes.

Table 1: Effects of Crop Farmers/Pastoralists Conflicts on Food Security

Perceived effects on food security	Mean	SD
Conflicts creates food shortages	3.43	0.672
Leads to destruction of food stocks	3.57	0.509
Reduces income earning power of farmers	3.30	0.853
Disruption of food production process	3.60	0.517
Burning of crops/destruction of plots	2.76	1.155
Disturbs the marketing process of produce	3.28	0.608
Leads to unfavorable market prices	3.21	0.758
Decreases food supply to local market	3.35	0.695
Crops cannot be planted in farms	3.03	1.054
Crops planted may not be weeded for fear of attack	3.13	0.790
Crops planted may not be harvested	2.50	0.744
Reduces agriculture to subsistence/survival production	2.90	0.916
Harvested crops may be destroyed	2.83	0.952
No promotion of savings/investment	3.19	1.029

Field survey data, 2018

Resource-use Conflicts as an Obstacle to Food Safety

During emergency situations, such as conflicts and or civil strife, food may become difficult to obtain. Crops may be destroyed both in field and in store, animals are stolen/killed, food supplies disrupted and people may be forced to flee to areas of safety with no access to food. With a discriminating mean (M) index of 2.50, Table 2 shows that the safety of whatever food there is may be affected, resulting in a greater risk of epidemics of food borne disease. During conflicts, food items are easy contaminated (M=3.27) making them unclean, unsafe and unfit for human consumption. The contamination could be by pathogens, bacteria and other diseases organisms.

Food items for consumption may be over exposed to room temperature (M-3.37) killing the vital nutrient in food such food item useful for building the immune system and allowing the growth of bacteria of take place. Displaced farmers could easily handle foods with dirty hands (M=2.58), use of unsafe and unclean water to prepare food (M=3.33), food could be prepared poorly due to fear (M=2.54) and hand washing is essential for promotion of good health and long life. Displaced farmers who handle food with unclean hands may risk being sick due to contact with microbes causing illness. When the hands are not washed and food is handled, they become unsafe for consumption. Again, use of unclean water for food preparation makes food items not safe for eating. This happens when water supply is limited or even scarce and the available could be used or

rationed to serve plenty purposes. When those food items are cooked with fear and in a hurry because of feeling of attacks, certain dangerous microbes survive the heating process and may cause illness when eaten.

Other obstacles involve poor storage of food items (M=3.13) both prepared and unprepared. Food items need to be stored well and kept out of bad condition pending their use. Properly stored food items are safe for consumption, unlike poorly stored foods. Proper storage prevents contamination and growth of bacteria and other organisms on food items. Conflict situation do not permit / support the proper storage of food items because the foods could easily be stolen by other displaced farmers or attacked by enemies. Lack of proper cleaning of food items (M=3.70), lack or care of equipment, materials and food utensils (M=3.0) and neglect of personal hygiene (M==3.00) all effects of resource use conflicts on food safety of displaced farmers. The safety of food is affected by the cleanliness or lack of it. The utensils / equipment used for preparation when cleaned affect the safety of the foods for consumption. Personal hygiene of the displaced farmers also affects the safety and quality of the food items. The outbreaks of food borne illness (M=2.92) affect food safety and leads to poor quality. Conflict situation exposes foods and households to serious danger.

Table 2: Effects of resource use conflicts on food safety

Perceived effects	Mean	SD
During conflicts		
Food items could be easily contaminated	3.27	`0.816
Food could be over exposed to room temperature	3.37	0.720
Food items could be handled with dirty hands	2.58	1.087
Unsafe water could be used to prepare food	3.37	0.828
Food could be prepared poorly due to fear	2.54	0.604
Poor storage of food items	3.13	0.764
Lack of proper cleaning of food items	3.70	0.635
Lack of care of equipment / materials / food utensils	3.09	0.626
Neglect of personal hygiene and hand washing	3.00	0.644
Outbreak of food borne illness due to contamination	2.92	0.903
Presence of poor quality of foods	3.31	0.484

Field survey data, 2018

CONCLUSION

Conflicts have serious implication for food security and food safety as seen in the study. They lead to shortages, scarcity and total crop failure, lead to destruction of food stocks. During conflicts, food items could be easily contaminated, food could be over exposed to room temperature and spoil. Food items could be handled with dirty hands, unsafe water could be used to prepare food, food could be prepared poorly due to fear, poor storage of food items, lack of proper cleaning of food items, and lack of care of equipment/material/food cooking utensils.

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