

## Insecurity and Peasant Farmers Food Production in Delta State of Nigeria

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### Abstract

In recent times, insecurity has become a huge concern for an average Deltan, who now have to contend with reported violent cases, which has led to people losing their lives and suffering losses and damage. Due to the increase in herds and expansion of household needs, land has become a comparably competitive factor of production between herders and farmers in most agrarian communities in Delta State. The destruction of crops has been the bone of contention, which has resulted in violence display. This study adopted the Marxian Political Economy Theory. The theory holds that, political and historical events, according to the theory, are the result of social forces colliding and can be interpreted as a series of contradictions and their resolutions. Material possession and access are thought to be at the heart of the conflict. The theory was thus used to analyse the importance man attaches to material needs and how undefined grazing route has triggered a crisis between farmers and herders, both of which disagreed over rights to farmland and grazing route. The research design used for this study is the qualitative method. Data were thus gathered through secondary sources and presented in tables and analysed descriptively. Finding showed that the increased foodstuff prices in Delta State is as a result of decline in food production by peasant farmers. Because, many of these peasant farmers have lost interest in farming, which is the consequence of frequent attack by herdsmen over destruction of crops and violent attack which has led to the death of over 194 persons. This study concludes that the frequent conflict between farmers and herders has declined agricultural production, creating food shortages, unemployment, and general insecurity. On this note, the study recommended, among others, the prohibition of open grazing, then creating grazing fields and let the occupiers pay tax to the state government.

**Keywords:** Insecurity; Security; Farmers; Herdsmen; Farmland

### 1. Introduction

The survival of humanity is tied with the ability to have a secured environment and the ability to feed to stay alive. In this regard, security and food production are essential for every functional society. Insecurity is a state a state of uncertainty, lack, fear, unstable condition and atmosphere. Therefore, it will be challenging for a state to boost food production in an environment characterized by uncertainty, lack, anxiety and general tension. Insecurity has always been a concern to people and the government. One fundamental source of most problem of humanity is insecurity. insecurity has been defined to mean suspicion or that feeling of threat or peril that comes out from the reasoning when one feels unsafe and threatened [1]. It is this feeling that creates tension and anxiety. It, therefore, means that the absence of security is insecurity. Suffice to say that security entails the ability of an entity to be calm, peaceful, bold, confident and absent of all forms of fears, threats, danger and other elements that could disturb the serenity of the vicinity toward achieving goals and aspirations. Peasant and or peasantry society predates modern society. The conceptualisation differs from society to society. The peasant farmer is primarily concerned with household production

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and need. However, the peasant also exchanges surplus products and those not required for immediate consumption to enable them purchase items they do not produce. The proceeds from the sales of their products also enable them pay for services they receive from experts and professionals. The peasant and small-scale farmers will be used interchangeably to mean farmers who use more human labour in production against the mechanised farming system.

Peace and security are necessary to actualise one's goal and objective in the state. When there is peace and security, the farmers will be able to go to their farms. However, this has been difficult in recent times as the prevalence of insecurity by herdsmen has become a major challenge to the farming communities in Delta State. The state government and local community approaches through the Nigerian security personnel and community vigilantes in tackling this menace have not yielded positive results. Instead, the killing, raping and destruction of farmland has continued to rise, thus raising concerns about food production in the state. Considering the fact that peasant farmers account for over 95% of agricultural produce in the state, it thus raises concern because if not addressed, the rising food production shortage caused by the threat to the peasant will worsen the rising cost of food items and, consequently, create further food insecurity and hunger in the state.

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## **2. Conceptual clarification**

### **2.1. Insecurity**

Insecurity is a vast concept with broad connotations depending on the topic under investigation. Every human being desires security, even those that benefit from crisis require serenity within their environment. The exact opposite of security is insecurity and vice versa, which McDonald [2], described as the insecurity of security, that is to say, that security of life and property have been endangered by insecurity. In other words, there can only be security when there is an absence of insecurity. Security and insecurity are different sides of a coin. Insecurity concern in this research is conceived to mean that condition of being unsafe owing to lack of protection and associated danger and threat, which has consequently created a sense of fear and anxiety [3]. When there is fear, danger, anxiety and uncertainty in an area, both social and economic activities halt. Production and services are generally affected, creating a public disturbance and hindering development in the long run because the security settings have been altered. It is in this regard that United Nations Development Programme cited in Purity and Anigbuogu [4] conceived insecurity as the absence of security in an environment, where security means relative or absolute protection against danger and all activities that are capable of having a negative impact on the day-to-day activities of individuals and group within an environment.

### **2.2. Peasant farmer**

Peasant farmer is used here to mean the small-scale farmers, whose production is first to feed his family and exchange that which cannot be consumed by his household so that the proceeds can be used to purchase what they do not produce. As small as they seem to be, these small-scale farmers are the primary producer of the agricultural sectors and the major agents toward achieving food security, which also is an aspect of development. They are found mainly in local areas of the country, and many a time, their security and condition of living are not giving top concern. However, much is expected from this neglected sector. The amount of food production is dependent on them, they are the major contributor to Agricultural Gross Domestic Product because the big firms are not only small in number but their produces are insufficient. According to Apata et al. [5], Nigeria's farming category includes small-scale farmers (peasants) the medium and large-scale farmers. The biggest, the large-scale farmer is few, and only constitutes a small percentage of the population of farmers. However, on the other way round, peasants account for about 94.37 percent of the farming population. As noted by Apata, this small unit farmers are responsible for 90% of local food and fiber produce in Nigeria. Therefore, they are automatically contributing to the Gross Domestic Product.

Peasant production is majorly to meet the consumption of their household; the household need determines the decision of what produce [6]. However, the peasant also produces some crops that are of no need to his household. Such products can be profit-driven since they serve no household needs. Therefore, such production is for sale. Peasant is commonly grouped to be a stratified class of its own, who ensures that her surplus production serves to meet the needs of another class of people who are the non-agricultural producer. In the view of Wolf [7] peasant production scale is small and the motive of production is for subsistence and not basically for reinvestment. Describing the nature of contemporary peasant, it has been noted [8], that peasant spent most of the funds available to him on consumer goods. Also, not much of his budget is spent on modern inputs instead it relies primarily on family labour input.

### 3. Theoretical Framework (Marxian political economy theory)

Marxism generally is a socioeconomic analysis method that employs a materialist interpretation of historical development, also known as historical materialism, to comprehend class relations and social conflict, as well as a dialectical viewpoint to view social transformation and conflict in the society. Political economy is made of two key words; oikos (home) and nomos (law/order). Marx conceived political economy as the historical process that demonstrates the nature of the relationship that exists in the ownership of means of production in the production cycles. The analysis of this theory here is based on Marxian dialectical materialism as conceptualised by Karl Marx in 1859 [9].

Dialectical-materialism by Karl Marx and Engels holds that political and historical events are the result of social forces clashing and can be interpreted as a series of contradictions and their resolutions. Material needs are thought to be the root of the conflict. The theory brings out the law of development of the material world in a dialectical way. According to Karl Marx [10], history as a process is not necessarily driven by the interaction of ideas in the society, as noted by Hegel. Instead, it is determined by the continuous struggle triggered by greed and material things such as money and power. Marx noted that conflict is inevitable in societies where resources are not equitably shared with their members. The material need is vital to the survival of humanity. Thus, an average individual feels threatened when his or her material need is not secured. This has become a major concern for the peasant farmers, who have had to contend with insecurity occasioned by conflicts with herders who also feel that the farming community is threatening their material needs. This is because material possession by man is a crucial concept of his consciousness of who he is in society. According to Okoro [11], the material condition is a crucial concern to man, where the material condition of a man is determined by what he owns and controls at a given time without fear of being disposed of it [12]

The dialectical materialism as it postulates thus reflects and explains the nature of insecurity being experienced by the peasant farmers in the Delta State. The security concern bothers the clash between herders and farmers in most agrarian communities in the state. The peasant farmers feel that their material objects (farmland) have been destroyed by the herders' cattle, who allow their herds to graze on farmland and crops. Similarly, the herders alleged that their agrarian communities rustle their cattle and see them as land encroachers. In other words, both groups (farmers and herders) are in continuous conflict over material condition. The disagreement over natural resources has thus created a security problem that much be addressed to avert food shortages in the state as the conflict has chased most farmers out of their farms over the recent act of killing, raping and kidnapping by some suspected herders. Irrespective of how this theory has proven instrumental in analysing the nature of insecurity facing the peasant farmers in Delta State, it has attracted some criticism from other Marxists who feel that the theory was more of Engel's conception than Marx's. He is also criticised for neglecting the role of ideas in the transformations of society and basing it on material possession.

Insecurity in Delta State, 2017 – 2020.

**Table 1** Some Notable Insecurity Report in 2017

S/N	Nature of Violence	Causes	Casualty	Location	Year	Sources
1	Herdsmen and farmers clash	Disruption of crops by herds	Over 5 persons killed	Abraka (Ethiopia East) and Obiaruku (Ukwuani LGA)	January 9, 2017	[11]
2	Armed group	Attack on security personnel	2 policemen shot	Ughelli North	January 23, 2017.	[13]
3	Gun battle between police and herdsmen	Rampaging herdsmen	1 policeman and security guard shot	Ughelli South	January 23, 2017.	[14]
4	Herdsmen Vs. Police clash	Herdsmen	1 police killed, others missing	Ughelli North	February 7, 2017	[15]
5	Herdsmen clash with community	Disruption of crops by herds	6 persons killed	Omumu town in Ika LGA	March 6, 2017	[11]
6	Herdsmen	Disruption of crops by herds	3 were killed 6 others were seriously injured.	Emuhu, Ika Local government area	March 28, 2017	[11]

7	Herdsmen Vs. communities	Grazeable land	1 killed	Mosogar and Jesse communities in Ethiope East	April 10, 2017	[16]
8	Open fire by suspected herdsmen	Rampaging herdsmen	Many injured	Ebedei (Ukwuani LGA)	April 11, 2017	[16]
9	Herdsmen attack	Disruption of cross disagreement	1 beheaded	Urhuoka-Abraka	April 25, 2017	[17]
10	Looting of shops by suspected herders	Unknown	No less than N350,000 worth of rice and beans carted away	Umuachi-Ogo	May 3, 2017	[18]
11	Herders ambush police van	Unknown	4 killed, including a police officer	Abraka	May 9, 2017	[19]
12	Fulani herders	Ambushed by Fulani herdsmen	1 motorcycle rider and 6 killed	Ossissa	May 11, 2017	[20]
13	Herdsmen and farmers class	Shooters blocked the road and shot at victims	4 farmers killed	Ossissa	May 12, 2017	[19]
14	Herders/gunmen	Attempted kidnapping	Police gun down 4 suspected herdsmen over an attempt to kidnap travellers along Olomoro - Oyede road	Olomoro	May 14, 2017	[21]
15	Herders and farmers conflict	Disagreement overgrazing field	Some farmers kidnapped; food items requested as a ransom for their release	Patani town	June 3, 2017	[22]
16	Community clash with herdsmen	Destruction of farmland by herds	2 herdsmen were killed, 2 cattle killed, 6 others injured.	Kwale	June 2017	[23]
17	Farmers and herders conflict	Conflict overgrazing field between herders and community	1 herder killed, 1 seriously injured	Ughelli North	December 2017	[24]

Compiled by the researcher, 2021

**Table 2** Some Notable Reports of Insecurity in 2018

S/N	Nature of Violence	Causes	Casualty	Location	Year	Sources
1	Herdsmen and farmers conflict	Rampaging herders	1 killed, 1 middle-aged woman rapped	Onicha-Olona in Aniocha LGA	January 2018	[25]
2	Herders attack	Rampaging herders	Ex-IYC President and 6 others attacked and seriously injured	Unenurhie (Ughelli North)	February 8, 2018	[26]
3	Herders and farmers clash	Rampaging herders	Some farmers' Fingers, toes chopped off	Abraka	March 3, 2018	[27]

4	Farmers herdsman clash	Grazing on farmland	4 killed, many injured	Uwheru	March 17, 2018	[28]
5	Farmers and herdsman clash	Reprisal by herdsman	3 were killed, 1 raped, 3 injured. Farmland destroyed.	Ovwor community, Ughelli North	March 2018	[24]
6	Herdsman	Challenged over crops destruction	2 farmers killed; crops destroyed	Onocha-Olona, Aniocha - North LGA,	April 28, 2018	[11]
7	Herdsman	Disagreement over herds opening grazing on farmland	6 persons injured; property destroyed	UbuluUku, Aniocha South LGA	April 28, 2018	[11]
8	Herdersattack	Protest over continues raping of women and destruction of farmland	Disruption of activities	Ewu-Urhobo community, Ughelli South	November 5, 2018.	[29]
9	Udu, Enerhen, Sapele, Ughelli, Ozoro and Oghara	Cult groups across major cities in Delta State clash	16 killed, many injured, socio-economic activities paralyzed	Udu LGA, Enerhen, Sapele, Ughelli North LGA, Oghara and Ozoro	May 5, 2018	[30]
10	Bandits	Unknown	Monarch kidnapped; aides injured.	Ogodor Kingdom	June 3, 2018	[31]
11	Cult groups	Cultism on rampage	1 killed, school activities shutdown	Awai Campus of DELSU	June 15, 2018	[32]
12	Intra-communal crisis	Natural resources	21 houses set ablaze, six people missing,	Inyi, Ndokw East	August 2018	[33]
13	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	Women raped, some injured, farmland destroyed	Ewu-Urhobo community, Ughelli South	November 5, 2018.	[29]
14	Inter-communal conflict	Land dispute	9 killed, many injured	Aladja and Ogbe-Ijoh. Udu LGA	October 24, 2018	[34]
15	Communal clash	Main market ownership	2 killed	Ughelli	November 26, 2018	[35]
16	Cultism	Rival cult groups clash	1 killed; many other injured, as socio-economic activities were halted	Ughelli	November 26, 2018	[36]
17	Gunmen	Unknown	Oil worker kidnapped	Okpai, Ndokwa East	December 3, 2018	[37]
18	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	6 injured, 2 housewives raped	Uwheru	December, 2018	[38]

Compiled by the researcher, 2021

**Table 3** Some Notable Incidents of Insecurity in 2019

S/N	Nature of Violence	Causes	Casualty	Location	Year	Sources
1	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	1 fisherman was killed, 2 others injured	Agadama, Ughelli North	January 10, 2019	[39]
2	Protest	the killing of their herds' driver by the Revenue collector	1 shot, others injured	Agadama, Ughelli North	January 14, 2019	[39]
3	Herders kill cult members during initiation	A clash between herders and cultist	Suspected cult members killed	Abraka	January 26, 2019	[40]
4	Cultism	Rival cult groups clash	4 killed; eight injured	Ughelli	February 16, 2019	[41]
5	Herders/Bandit	Unknown	ASP killed	Umuachi-Afor community, Ndokwa East	January 31, 2019	[42]
6	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	2 killed, four others seriously injured.	Ndemili, Ndokwa West	February 12, 2019	[43]
7	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	4 farmers were killed, crops destroyed	Abraka	April 9, 2019	[44]
8	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	Farmer killed, another injured	Udo and Obulu-Uku	May 19, 2019	[45]
9	Cultism	Rival gang clash	2 stoned to death	Otu-Jeremi, Ughelli South	June 9, 2019	[46]
10	Herdsman protest	The killing of their herds' driver by the Revenue collector	Obstruction of travelers and public disturbance	Issele-Asaba junction	July 5, 2019	[47]
11	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	Building and vehicles destroyed	Issele-Uku	July 8, 2019	[48]
12	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	Many are killed, raped, many others missing, and farmlands are also destroyed	Aniocha and Oshimili local government areas	July 2019	[47]
13	Armed robbery	Robbery	1 killed	Udu	July 18, 2019	[49]
14	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	Villagers attacked and injured.	Abavo	August 19, 2019	[50]
15	Armed robbery	Robbers clash with the woman	Items worth N1.8 million were carted away	Amukpe, Sapele LGA	August 20, 2019	[51]
16	Cultism	Rival gang groups clash	1 killed; activities paralyzed	Warri South LGA	October 7, 2019	[52]
17	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	4 teachers and two children kidnapped	Azagba, Ndokwa East	October 14, 2019	[53]

Compiled by the researcher, 2021

**Table 4** Some Notable Incidents of Insecurity in 2020

S/N	Nature of Violence	Causes	Casualty/Implication	Location	Year	Sources
1	Gunmen/Armed robbers	Robbery	8 travelers killed	Bomadi-Ohoror road, Patani	January, 202	[54]
2	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	10 killed, building razed, farmland destroyed	Avwon, Uwheru, Agadama, Ohoror, & other communities in Ughelli LGA of Delta State	February 13, 2020	[55]
3	Unknown gunmen	Unknown	Property destroyed.	Umutu	March 17, 2020	[56]
4	Protest	A clash between youth and soldiers over Covid 19 lockdown	1 killed	Warri	April 2020	[54]
5	Kidnappers	Unknown	1 killed four abducted	Ibusa	May 2020	[57]
6	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	Over 100 farmers flee their camp due to violent attack	Ibusa	May 2020	[57]
7	Herdsman attack community	Farmers – herders' conflict	Grazing field and crop destruction	Okpanam community. Oshimili North LGA	June 7, 2020	[54]
8	SARS vs. Police clash	The alleged involvement of police in armed robbery	7 Police officers killed	Ughelli	June 17, 2020	[54]
9	Protest	Alleged police brutality	1 killed, property destroyed	Ughelli	2020	[54]
10	Protest Ozoro	Alleged police brutality	1 killed by police	Ozoro	August 2020	[54]
11	The intercommunal conflict between Oleh and Ozoro	Land dispute	12 were killed, many were injured. Property destroyed.	Isoko South/North	October 12, 2020.	[57]
12	Mentally unstable man	Unknown	1 security guard killed	Bomadi (inside catholic church)	October 12, 2020	[59]
13	Cult clash	Supremacy	3 killed	Abraka	October, 2020	[54]
14	Ritualist	Unknown	1 killed	Koko	November 21, 2020	[60]
15	Armed robbery	Socio-economic	Travelers dispossessed of their valuables	Ugbolu-Illah road	2020	[54]
16	Cultism	Rival cult clash n Aiye and Bangas rival cult gangs	Seven killed	Ughelli Town	November 2020	[54]
17	Cultism	Armed clashes between Aiye, Arrow Baga, Black Axe, Eiye,	15 persons were killed, many others robbed	Across Delta	December 2020	[54]

		and Mafia cult gangs				
18	Mob Action	Jungle justice	3 suspected armed robbers set ablaze	Warri	December 8, 2020	[54]
19	A communal clash	Land and boundary dispute	5 killed, 10 houses razed, many injured	Emede and Igbide	December 2020	[54]
20	Intercommunal conflict	Land and boundary dispute	Many killed, property set ablaze	Emede and Igbide	December 12, 2020	[54]
21	Armed group	Unknown	1 killed	Oleh, Isoko South	December 28, 2020	[54]

Compiled by the researcher, 2021

### 3.1. Natures and causes of insecurity in Delta State.

As presented in the above table, there were 17 violent incidences in Delta State in 2017. This resulted in over 46 persons being killed. Out of these 17 cases, farmers' and herder's conflicts accounted for 88% of violent nature, while 12% were related to armed robbery. In 2018 as shown in table 2, 18 violence cases were reported. Out of these, 56% of the cases reported are of the nature of farmers' and herders' conflict over grazing route/destruction of crops by herders. 17% were of the nature of cultism, just as another 17% was related to issue bordering on communal and intercommunal violence. However, kidnapping accounted for 6% of violent nature. These together resulted in the death of over 45 persons. In 2019, table 3 indicated that 17 notable violence incidences led to the death of over 26 persons. The conflict between farmers and herders accounted for 71% of reported cases, cultism accounted for 18%, while armed robbery accounted for 12%. In 2020, table 4 indicated that there were 21 reported cases of violence incidence manifested in different forms. These resulted in the death of over 77 persons. Armed robbery accounts for 24% of reported cases, the conflict between farmers and herders', communal and intercommunal conflict, cultism, and public protest all accounted for 14% of violence, respectively. In contrast, other factors like kidnapping, mob action, and ritual killing accounted for 19% of the nature of violence.

It is evidence thus, that the primary nature of insecurity in Delta State is the Farmers and Herders' conflict 2017 to 2020, indicated that the conflict is a common experience across Delta State. Dispute between the two groups centres on grazing fields, alleged crops destruction and herdsmen infiltration by criminal elements. According to Okoro (2018), land ownership disputes and alleged claim that all lands are owned by the federal government and belonging to all Nigerians have also been a reason for farmers' and herders' conflict. He also noted that most herders have a long history of violence, and this can be justified by their possession of firearms and are provoked to violence by a mere complaint of herds grazing on crops. The absence of a clear mapped cattle route is another leading cause of farmers' and herders' clashes. The absence has made both parties claim the available right to land, and the failure to reach understanding has resulted in crisis and violent killing [61]. According to [62], herders have intentionally allowed their herds to graze on farmers' vegetable leave and other crops, most of which are due for harvest. When the farmers complain, the herder seems unbothered. This alleged display of lack of concern has been the cause of the issue of attack and reprisal attack that results after. Also, most of the herds stray along communities, messing up the pathways. As noted by Ofuoku et al. [63], other reasons include reported cases of rape, contaminating of streams by herds, harassment of herdsmen by host communities' youths, and cattle rustling. It is on record that the Delta State Government in 2020, signed into law, "anti-open grazing law. But evidence across local government areas like Ughelli North, Ika South and North, Ndokwa East, Ukwuani LGAs indicate that cattle still graze in the open fields, which has continued to fuel the conflict between herders and communities in Delta State.

### 3.2. Effect of insecurity on peasant farmers' food production in Delta State

This crisis and resultant violence have continued to affect food production and food security since food security involves having sustainable physical and or economic access to sufficient safe, nutritious, and socially acceptable food for a healthy life to live a productive life. When farmers cannot farm to produce, such a scenario will amount to food shortage and hunger, poverty, and unproductive life. Recently, in Ughelli, Ashaka, Aniocha and Oshimili local government areas, Umutu, Kwale and especially Uwheru in Ughelli North Local Government areas, there is food production shortage, leading to hunger, as farmers and communities have been chased out of their communities by herdsmen [47, 28]. In an environment where there is insecurity, socio-economic life and development will be affected. Consequently, most people are scared of going to farm, and some relocate while others take to a different profession, which has brought about low agricultural yields. The pastoralist has also suffered damages due to rustlers' activities and live-in fear. The



conflict between the two groups has reduced their incomes, made business more complicated, and affected food production and security as it reduced crop production [64]

There are reports from at least one local government in the state of attack and or reprisal attack between the two groups. The consequence of this conflict has resulted in the following scenario:

**Loss of life:** Between 2017 and 2020, hundreds of people lost their lives owing to insecurity; as can be seen from Tables 1 to 4, over 194 people were killed in violent incidents, many others unreported. Most of these killing results from a misunderstanding between the two parties, owing to the destruction of crops [63]

**Destruction of houses.** The herdsmen and farmers' conflicts have led to setting houses and other properties ablaze. This was the case at Ossissa and Uwheru [11, 38], in which herders attacked people and property, which resulted in several killings and destruction of properties, including houses.

**Displacement of peasant farmers.** The continuous conflict between farmers-herders has had an adverse effect on peasant farmers who appeared to be most vulnerable in a period of violence. The vulnerability is not mere inability to resist attack from suspected criminal herders, but the absence of possession of firearms, unlike the herders who are notoriously going around with dangerous weapons in their possession. Consequently, their presence in the community has become an issue of concern to peasant farmers as they will have to stay away from their farmland. In the Ibusa area of Delta State, over 100 peasant farmers were forced to abandon their camps and run for safety when suspected herders whom they disagreed with over the destruction of their crops went on a rampage. In the process, lives were lost and property destroyed. Therefore, the people had no option but to leave their respective camps and communities [57]

**Destruction of crops and farmlands.** The issue of grazing on farmland has been the root cause of the lingering crisis between the farmers and herds. Pastoralism is as old as other farming activities and farmers-herders have coexisted for ages. Often, when disagreement ensues, they are resolved without resorting to violence. However, recent events have changed the narrative to become two negative sides, in which almost all differences result in violent attacks and counter-attacks. Most herders fail to get approval and be assigned by community authority. Therefore, they often allow their cattle to be stray and, in the process, they graze on farmland, but when they are cautioned, many get angered and resort to a violent response. This has resulted in peasant farmers losing their entire farmland and being out of means of livelihood (farming). According to Okoro [11], in South-South states alone, crops worth millions are lost annually due to herds grazing on crops and destroying the produce. Adetakun et al. in Okoro [11] noted that the peasant farmer is the major victim of the reoccurring clash between the two parties. Because the peasant farmer has had to suffer the destruction of his crops, when the farmer challenges the destroyer of her crops, he/she is either killed, raped, or violently injured. This has consequently made many poorer, as they have to borrow money to buy crops, they use to produce to feed themselves. The experience of the farmers has now become a source of discouragement for many youths who have an interest in agriculture, especially those in the rural area. The Destruction of crops has consequently reduced crop production, income generated and gross domestic product. The state is thus exposed to food production shortages crisis, unemployment, and poverty. The destruction of crops has an adverse effect on food production because it is the largest of the four agriculture sectors in Nigeria. For instance, livestock constitutes 8.1% of the Nigerian agriculture sector, forestry 1.1%, finishing 3.2%, and crop production account for 87.6%. Between 2013 to 2019, agriculture's least contribution to GDP was 24% [65]

**Unemployment.** The continuous violent attack by suspected herders has driven most people out of farming in rural communities. The consequence of this is unemployment and movement to cities searching for non-existing white-collar jobs. Though Nigeria's economy relies mostly on crude oil production, agriculture remains a crucial part in economic affairs and employs over 36% of the labour force and contributes 22% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as of first quarter 2020. Over 80% of the agriculture workforce are peasant farmers, also known as smallholder farmers or small-scale farmers. They account for 90% of Nigeria's agricultural production [65]. Also, peasant farmers contribution to agriculture GDP have been altered because many are out of farm. This has increased the margin of unemployed people. In Delta State, the unemployment rate is currently 31.14%.

**Distrust.** The continuous conflict between farmers and herders has created much distrust among the two groups. Though most herders are of Fulani origin, that does not correspond to the majority being herders. Even among the herders, not all are known for violence, but given the criminality of some individual pastoralists, there is much mistrust for anyone known and seen as being of the Fulani origin [66].

**Threat to food security.** A major aspect of food security is food production. Food security is in peril with the current threat that criminal herders pose to food production. This has been the outcome of the increasing food inflation and

food scarcity. Relatively, the National Bureau of Statistics noted that food inflation as of June 2021 stood at 21.85% [67]. Due to the increased farmers and herders' conflict, food production has been affected as farmers are forced to abandon their farms for fear of being killed, raped, kidnapped, or violently attacked by suspected killer herdsmen. This abandonment of their farm has led to Nigeria's widening deficit in agricultural trade, which rose from N549.3 billion in 2018 to N689.7 billion in 2019. Thus, an increase of 25.55% in agriculture deficit trade [65].

Following the spread of killer herders beyond Delta State, the peasant farmers' food production has continued to drop. Some crops that fall into the categories of food crops, cash crops, and plantation crops commonly produced locally are now inadequate to meet the consumers' needs. Thus, they are now mostly imported, negatively affecting the import and export trade. For instance, between 2016 to 2019, Nigeria's export of agricultural produce stood at N803 billion, while importation was N3.35 trillion [68]. The implication of this is manifested in Nigeria; Nigerians spent over N22.8 trillion on purchasing foodstuffs alone in just 2019. In the same period, export declined by 11%. All these indicate that all is not well with the Nigerian agriculture sector. Though this is not to say that the situation has been rosy before the worsening of farmers' and herders' conflict, the activities have continued to worsen the chances of improving the sector.

### 3.3. Way forward

The achievement of adequate peasant farmers food production requires immediate response from the state government. Considering the escalating nature of the conflict between farmers and herdsmen, it is imperative for the Delta State Government to invite the head of herders' association in the state and farming communities for a round table peace meeting to resolve the hatred these two groups have against one another. Most importantly, the State Government should put into practice the anti-open grazing law by ensuring that the policy is backed with the political will to enforce it. Similarly, the state government should create grazing fields and tax the occupiers according to the number of herds.

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## 4. Conclusion

Insecurity has displaced people and forced many out of occupation. Insecurity has generally made life and doing business difficult, as it has not only increased the cost of production and made a business difficult, but it has also affected the general level of growth and development. The farmers and herders conflict in Delta State and Nigeria generally centred around disagreement over grazing field. The peasant farmers have been most affected based on the number killed, farms destroyed, houses burned down, among others losses. The peasant farmers across Delta State have had to farm on their farmland with fear. This has been one of the reasons that have given rise to an increase in foodstuffs because the peasant farmers, who are the primary food producer, no longer enjoy the safety they once enjoyed in their farmland which made them go to their farms individually and at the appropriate time without fear of possible attack. The failure of the Delta State government to prosecute herdsmen in possession of dangerous weapons, which they use to cause violence has been the morale booster for criminal among the them to continue the usage of such weapons for violence. Thus, leaving the peasant farmers in hunger, extreme poverty and danger of general food production shortage in the entire state.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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There is no conflict of interest in respect of this manuscript.

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