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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF EKITI STATE AGRO-MARSHAL CORPS ON FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICT REDUCTION IN EKITI STATE

Charles Ayodele OLUWASANMI ^{1,*} and Adedeji Matthew ADEDAYO ²

¹ Department of Political Science and International Diplomacy, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria.

² Department of Peace and Security Studies, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria.

* Corresponding Author

ORCID Details

Adedeji Matthew ADEDAYO: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8140-4933>

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ABSTRACT

Farmers-herders conflict remains a significant threat to agricultural productivity, rural livelihoods, and community security in Nigeria. In response to persistent agrarian insecurity, the Ekiti State Government established the Agro-Marshall Corps to support the enforcement of grazing regulations, protect farmlands, and mitigate conflicts between farmers and herders. This study assessed the impact of the Corps on farmers-herders conflict reduction in Ekiti State. Specifically, it examined the causes and patterns of the conflict, assessed the roles of the Corps in enforcing grazing laws and promoting agricultural security, evaluated the extent of its contribution to conflict reduction, identified operational challenges, and proposed strategies for improving its effectiveness. The study adopted a mixed-methods survey design. Data were collected from 100 purposively selected respondents comprising farmers, herders, rural community members, and Agro-Marshall personnel through structured questionnaires and qualitative engagements. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative responses were thematically interpreted and used to complement the survey findings. The findings revealed that competition over land and grazing resources, unclear grazing routes, farmland encroachment, climate-related migration, and weak enforcement of regulations were major drivers of conflict. The Corps was perceived to contribute positively to grazing-law enforcement, livestock-movement regulation, farmers' confidence, and conflict monitoring. Specifically, 80% of respondents agreed that its activities had reduced conflict frequency, while 90% acknowledged its mediation and conflict-resolution efforts as contributing to peaceful coexistence. However, inadequate funding, insufficient personnel and equipment, and weak institutional and community collaboration constrained its effectiveness. The study concludes that the Agro-Marshall Corps represents a useful state-level security intervention, but its long-term effectiveness depends on improved resources, community engagement, institutional coordination, and attention to the structural causes of agrarian conflict.

Keywords: Agro-Marshall Corps, Farmers-Herders Conflict, Agricultural Security, Conflict Reduction, Rural Security, Ekiti State

1 INTRODUCTION

Farmers-herders conflict has become a critical global challenge, affecting food security, rural livelihoods, and community stability. Across many regions of the world, particularly in agrarian societies, competition over land, water, and grazing resources has intensified due to climate change, population growth, and expanding agricultural frontiers (FAO, 2020). In countries such as India, Pakistan, Brazil, and Ethiopia, confrontations between settled farmers and transhumant pastoralists have resulted in loss of lives, destruction of farmlands, and displacement of rural populations (Rutt et al., 2021). As global resource scarcity worsens, many governments have begun to adopt hybrid security models that combine state policing, community security units, and specialized agro-security agencies to protect rural landscapes and foster peaceful coexistence. Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa, has been facing an insecurity problem for several years (Adedayo, Adabembe, Belo, Ojo, Oyelami, Ayoola, Idowu, Badmus, & Ola, 2026). The problem of insecurity in Nigeria, particularly in the South-West geopolitical zone, invites this research work. The inability of the Nigerian government to provide adequate security for its citizens, coupled with the rise of various forms of criminality, has led to a significant decline in economic growth and development (Akinlade, Adedayo & Hussain, 2025).

In Africa, the farmers-herders conflict is particularly pronounced due to changing rainfall patterns, advancing desertification, and shrinking grazing reserves (Banjade & Mwangi, 2018). The conflict has escalated in countries such as Kenya, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Cameroon, where pastoral movements intersect with densely populated farming communities. These clashes often lead to fatalities, cattle rustling, crop destruction, and long-term economic losses, undermining regional food systems and rural development (Okoli & Ogayi, 2018). In response, several African states have established agro-security task forces and community ranger systems aimed at regulating pastoral movements and improving early-warning conflict mechanisms.

The situation in West Africa has become even more complex due to cross-border migration, porous international boundaries, and the spread of sophisticated weapons across pastoral corridors (ECOWAS, 2020). Violent confrontations between farmers and herders have risen sharply in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, and Togo, mirroring the patterns observed in the Sahel. Despite regional frameworks such as the ECOWAS Transhumance Protocol, implementation gaps persist, and national governments struggle to balance pastoral mobility with the safety of farming communities (Tonah, 2017). As a result, several West African countries have begun exploring state-community hybrid security formations similar to the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps to enhance rural security.

In Nigeria, the farmers-herders conflict has become one of the most persistent internal security issues, contributing significantly to food insecurity, rural displacement, and socio-economic instability (International Crisis Group, 2021). The conflict has escalated due to desertification in the north, increased migration of herders to the southern forest belts, proliferation of small arms, and inadequate implementation of grazing and land-use policies. Clashes have been most severe in Benue, Plateau, Kaduna, Oyo, Ondo, and Ekiti States, where farmers frequently report destruction of crops, invasion of farmlands, and threats from armed herders. The limitations of conventional security agencies in protecting remote farming communities prompted some state governments to establish agro-security outfits, including the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps. Numerous claims have been made that the government or its agents have killed people arbitrarily and illegally (Adedayo, Adabembe, Ugwu, Isaiah, & Ojo, 2024).

In South-West Nigeria, the farmers-herders conflict has taken new dimensions, with cases of kidnappings, farm invasions, and violent attacks recorded in Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti States (Adewale, 2021). The geopolitical position of the region, rich in forests, cocoa farms, plantations, and food crop belts, makes it a pull factor for migrating pastoralists. The inability of federal security agencies to effectively patrol vast rural areas triggered the creation of complementary agro-security units, including Amotekun Corps and its specialized Agro-Marshall arm in Ekiti State. These groups are designed to protect farmlands, prevent unauthorized grazing, mediate disputes, and support early detection of conflict triggers.

Ekiti State, whose economy relies heavily on agriculture, has experienced recurring clashes between farmers and herders over farmland destruction, cattle encroachment, and threats to rural safety (Ojo & Dada, 2020). Many local farmers have reported massive economic losses resulting from the destruction of cassava, yam, maize, and vegetable farms by migrating cattle herds. These incidents have reduced agricultural productivity, discouraged rural investments, and heightened tension between farming communities and pastoralists. In response, the Ekiti State Government established the Agro-Marshall Corps under the Ministry of Agriculture to specifically safeguard farmlands, enforce anti-open grazing laws, and restore confidence among food producers.

Despite the visibility of the Agro-Marshall Corps in rural patrols, surveillance, intelligence gathering, and enforcement of the anti-grazing law, empirical studies assessing its impact remain scarce. Most existing research in Ekiti State has focused broadly on farmer-herder conflicts, climate change, and land-use dynamics, with limited scholarly exploration of specialized agro-security agencies and their conflict mitigation outcomes (Fasina, 2021). There is limited evidence

on whether the Agro-Marshall Corps has significantly reduced conflict incidence, improved farmland safety, or strengthened rural socio-economic stability. This gap necessitates systematic inquiry into the effectiveness, limitations, and operational relevance of the Corps in addressing farmers-herders conflicts in Ekiti State.

Therefore, this study is timely and important, as it seeks to examine the impact of the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps on reducing farmers-herders conflict and improving agricultural security in the state. By filling existing knowledge gaps, the study provides insights that can inform agricultural policies, rural security frameworks, and conflict prevention strategies within and beyond Ekiti State.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Farmers-herders conflict has continued to pose a major threat to agricultural productivity, rural livelihood, and community safety in Ekiti State despite existing security interventions. Studies such as Adebayo (2020) and Olaleye and Ajayi (2021) have shown that the persistence of open grazing, farmland destruction, and competition over land resources remain key triggers of violent confrontations between farmers and pastoralists in southwestern Nigeria. Although the Ekiti State Anti-Open Grazing Law (2016) was enacted to mitigate these challenges, the frequency of conflict incidents suggests a gap between policy formulation and effective enforcement. This situation has created an urgent need to examine the institutional mechanisms established by the state, particularly the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps, which was created to enforce grazing regulations and safeguard farmlands.

Existing literature on farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria focuses largely on national security implications, socio-economic consequences, and conflict drivers (Ofuoku, 2019; Fabiyi & Otunuga, 2020), with limited attention to state-level specialized security outfits like the Agro-Marshall Corps. Most studies concentrate on the role of conventional security agencies such as the police, Amotekun, and civil defence corps (Owolabi, 2022), thereby creating a research gap concerning community-based or agrarian-focused security institutions. Very few scholars have assessed how specialized agrarian security units contribute to conflict reduction, early warning, enforcement of anti-grazing legislation, and peacebuilding in rural farming communities. This gap limits our understanding of the practical effectiveness of the Agro-Marshall Corps in addressing localized agricultural insecurity.

Additionally, anecdotal evidence indicates that despite the creation of the Agro-Marshall Corps, farmers in many Ekiti communities still report incidents of illegal grazing, night grazing, and crop destruction, leading to loss of livelihoods and rising tension (Akinlade, 2022). This raises questions regarding the operational strength, coverage, responsiveness, and deterrence capacity of the Corps. There is also limited empirical evaluation of how farmers perceive the Corps regarding trust, legitimacy, and effectiveness in resolving or preventing conflict. These issues constitute practical problems that require systematic investigation to determine whether the Corps is fulfilling its mandate or whether structural, logistical, or institutional constraints may be undermining its operations.

Furthermore, no known empirical study has specifically assessed the impact of the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps on reducing farmers-herders conflict in Ekiti State. Most available works treat the conflict from a national perspective without isolating the unique socio-political and security environment of Ekiti State. This absence of localized, evidence-based research represents a major academic and policy gap. Therefore, assessing the effectiveness, challenges, and community perceptions of the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps is essential for informing policy decisions, strengthening agricultural security mechanisms, and enhancing peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders in the state.

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Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to assess the impact of the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps on farmers-herders conflict reduction in Ekiti State.

The specific objectives are to:

- Identify the major causes and patterns of farmers-herders conflicts in Ekiti State.
- Examine the roles of the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps in enforcing grazing laws and promoting agricultural security.
- Assess the extent to which the activities of the Agro-Marshall Corps have contributed to reducing farmers-herders conflicts.
- Identify the challenges affecting the operational effectiveness of the Agro-Marshall Corps.
- Propose strategies for improving the role and performance of the Corps in mitigating farmers-herders conflicts.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Farmers-Herders Conflict

Farmers-herders conflict refers to the persistent clashes between crop farmers and pastoral herders over land, water, and grazing resources, arising from competing livelihood systems. In Nigeria, this conflict results from increasing pressure on land, climate-induced migration, and weak governance institutions regulating land and grazing (Adebayo, 2021). Scholars emphasize that the conflict is multidimensional, involving economic, environmental, cultural, and security factors that aggravate tensions in agrarian communities (Okoli & Nwoko, 2020). The conflict also manifests as violent attacks, destruction of farmlands, cattle rustling, and reprisal actions, often escalating into communal crises. According to Bello (2017), the shift from traditional grazing routes to open access movement due to population increase and urban expansion has intensified disputes. This ecological pressure generates hostility between both groups, making the conflict one of the most critical internal security threats in Nigeria.

Furthermore, farmers-herders conflict undermines food security, displaces rural populations, and contributes to socio-economic instability in affected regions. As noted by Fasona and Omojola (2019), communities experience reduced agricultural output, loss of livelihoods, and heightened poverty as a consequence of persistent confrontations. Thus, the conflict is both a security and developmental issue requiring institutional and community-driven strategies.

2.2 Agro-Marshall Corps and Agricultural Security

Agro-Marshall Corps refers to a specialized security formation created to safeguard agricultural assets, protect farmers, monitor grazing activities, and manage farm-related conflicts. In Ekiti State, the Agro-Marshall Corps functions under state security initiatives designed to prevent farm invasion, mediate disputes, and support early warning mechanisms in rural settlements (Ekiti State Government, 2023). The Corps operates as a civil-security interface, engaging local communities, traditional institutions, and security agencies. Conceptually, the Corps embodies a hybrid security model that combines formal policing with community-based intelligence gathering. As Ibietan and Ajayi (2020) explain, hybrid security structures in Nigeria help to bridge the gap between government security provision and grassroots realities by deploying trained personnel familiar with local terrains and conflict patterns. This increases trust and accessibility in conflict-prone agricultural zones.

The Agro-Marshall Corps also strengthens agricultural resilience by promoting peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders. Through patrols, surveillance, and rapid response mechanisms, the Corps helps prevent farm encroachment and cattle invasion. Iyekekpolo (2021) notes that such sector-specific security innovations offer proactive approaches to addressing rural insecurity, unlike reactive conventional policing.

2.3 Conflict Reduction and Conflict Mitigation

Conflict reduction refers to deliberate efforts aimed at decreasing the frequency, intensity, or destructive impact of violent disputes. It involves structured interventions such as mediation, negotiation, peacebuilding, early warning systems, and enforcement of security measures (Burton, 1990). In the context of farmers-herders relations, conflict reduction focuses on preventing farm destruction, managing grazing patterns, and fostering peaceful cohabitation. Mitigation frameworks emphasize non-violent mechanisms, such as community dialogue, surveillance, and local dispute-settlement committees. According to Adeagbo and Oyewole (2021), effective conflict reduction requires multi-stakeholder engagement that integrates traditional leaders, security actors, civil institutions, and community groups. This promotes shared responsibility and reduces the likelihood of violent escalation.

Additionally, conflict mitigation contributes to long-term peace sustainability by addressing root causes such as land access, resource scarcity, and poor communication. Scholars like Olayoku (2016) argue that addressing structural drivers is essential for sustainable peace because superficial or short-term interventions fail to eliminate underlying tensions. Thus, conflict reduction measures should be holistic, participatory, and preventive.

2.4 Theoretical Framework: Human Security Theory

Human Security Theory: The modern formulation of *Human Security* was popularised by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the **1994 Human Development Report**, which shifted the security debate from state-centric military concerns to the safety and wellbeing of individuals (UNDP, 1994). The intellectual roots pre-date the report: Mahbub ul Haq championed the human development lens in the early 1990s (Haq, 1995) and Amartya Sen's capability approach provided the normative foundations that informed the UNDP reconceptualisation (Sen, 1999).

Human Security is a people-centred approach to security that emphasises protection from chronic threats (hunger, disease, poverty) and sudden disruptions (violence, environmental disasters) so that individuals can live with dignity

and freedom from fear and want (UNDP, 1994). It reframes security as multi-dimensional, economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political, rather than solely military.

Philosophically, Human Security synthesises normative liberalism (individual rights), the capability approach (freedoms and opportunities), and a pragmatic, human-centred policy orientation. It assumes moral weight to individual wellbeing, arguing that states and policy should be evaluated by their capacity to expand substantive freedoms and protect people from threats to their daily lives (Sen, 1999; Haq, 1995). Key assumptions include: (a) security is primarily about persons not states; (b) threats are multi-dimensional and often interlinked (e.g., poverty breeds instability); (c) prevention and protection are as important as reaction; and (d) local participation and rights-based policies matter for durable outcomes (UNDP, 1994; Edebor, 2021). These assumptions move analysis toward holistic, context-sensitive solutions.

Practically the Human Security framework identifies several interrelated elements commonly cited in the literature: freedom from fear (physical safety, protection from violence), freedom from want (food, health, livelihoods), freedom to live in dignity (rights and non-discrimination), and freedom from hazard/structural threats (environmental degradation, economic shocks) (UNDP, 1994; Edebor, 2021). Many scholars collapse these into the seven UNDP dimensions (economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, political). Researchers operationalise human security with both qualitative and quantitative indicators: homicide/assault rates, food security indices, livelihood loss metrics, displacement figures, access to basic services, perceptions of safety, and incidence of rights violations (Adeagbo & Oyewole, 2021; Akinwale, 2022). Mixed methods, household surveys, key informant interviews, incident mapping, and administrative records, are recommended because the framework deliberately spans material and subjective domains.

Human Security is especially useful in contexts where conflict is driven by resource scarcity, livelihood shocks, and weak governance, typical drivers of farmers-herders clashes. The approach helps analysts link micro-level human suffering (lost harvests, attacks) to macro-policy responses (land policy, policing, social protection), thereby guiding interventions that reduce drivers rather than only suppress symptoms (Fasona & Omojola, 2019; Onuoha, 2015). For state or local security innovations, like agro-security units, the Human Security lens directs attention to whether interventions actually expand freedoms and reduce multidimensional vulnerability: do patrols reduce farm loss (freedom from fear)? Do they restore productive capacity and market access (freedom from want)? Do they protect dignity and rights of both farmers and pastoralists? Evaluative criteria therefore include both reduction in violent incidents and improvements in livelihoods, trust, and access to justice (Ekiti State Government, 2023; Edebor, 2021).

Applied to “Assessing the Impact of Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps on Farmers-herders Conflict Reduction,” Human Security becomes the central evaluative framework: measure changes in personal safety (incidence/severity of attacks), livelihood security (crop loss, return to farming), community cohesion (trust between farmers and herders, incidence of reprisals), and institutional responsiveness (speed of Agro-Marshall response, dispute resolution outcomes). Research questions derived from the framework might include: “To what extent has the Agro-Marshall presence reduced farmers’ perceived and actual risk (freedom from fear)?” and “Has Agro-Marshall activity contributed to recovery of lost livelihoods and reduced displacement (freedom from want)?” Using mixed methods, incident data, household surveys on perceived safety and livelihoods, and focus groups with herders/farmers, will provide a human-centred assessment of whether the Corps actually increases freedoms and dignity in Ekiti’s rural communities (Ekiti State Government, 2023; Adeagbo & Oyewole, 2021; Edebor, 2021).

3 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed-methods survey design to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data on the activities, experiences, and challenges of the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps in reducing farmers-herders conflict. The quantitative component involved the administration of structured questionnaires, while the qualitative component consisted of interviews and engagements with relevant stakeholders. The design enabled the researcher to examine the study objectives from both numerical and experiential perspectives.

The study was conducted in Ekiti State, Nigeria, particularly in selected agrarian communities that have experienced farmers-herders interactions and agricultural insecurity, including Ikere-Ekiti, Ise-Ekiti, Omuo-Ekiti, Oye-Ekiti, Iworoko-Ekiti, and Aramoko-Ekiti. The target population comprised farmers, herders, rural residents, produce marketers, community leaders, vigilante members, and personnel of the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps. These respondents were selected because of their direct experiences, knowledge, or involvement in agricultural activities, conflict situations, mediation, patrols, and enforcement of grazing regulations.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 100 respondents, comprising 20 farmers, 10 herders, 10 community leaders and vigilante members, 10 affected rural residents, and 50 Agro-Marshall personnel or individuals

knowledgeable about the Corps' operations. The major research instrument was a structured questionnaire, complemented by interviews and other qualitative engagements. Secondary data were obtained from books, journal articles, official publications, newspapers, and other relevant materials. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies and percentages and presented in tables, while qualitative responses were analysed thematically to complement and explain the quantitative findings.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

S/N	Gender	Total	Percentage (%)
1	Male	58	58
	Female	42	42
	Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The gender distribution of respondents in this study, as presented in Table 1, indicates that males constituted the majority with 58% (n = 58), while females accounted for 42% (n = 42) of the sample.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

S/N	Age Distribution	Total	Percentage (%)
2	18-25	32	32
	25-40	44	44
	41-55	16	16
	55years and above	8	8
	Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The age distribution of respondents, as shown in Table 2, reveals that the majority were within the 25-40 years bracket, comprising 44% (n = 44) of the sample, followed by 32% (n = 32) in the 18-25 years category. Respondents aged 41-55 years and 55 years and above constituted 16% (n = 16) and 8% (n = 8), respectively.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

S/N	Marital Status	Total	Percentage (%)
3	Single	60	60
	Married	35	35
	Widowed	2	2
	Divorced	2	2
	Separated	1	1
	Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The marital status of respondents, as indicated in Table 3, shows that a majority were single, accounting for 60% (n = 60) of the sample, while married respondents represented 35% (n = 35). Widowed and divorced individuals each constituted 2% (n = 2), and those separated accounted for 1% (n = 1).

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification

S/N	Educational Qualification	Total	Percentage (%)
4	Primary Education	15	15
	Secondary Education	40	40
	NCE/OND	25	25
	HND/BSC	15	15
	Post-Graduate	5	5
	Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The educational qualification of respondents, as presented in Table 4, indicates that the largest group possessed secondary education, comprising 40% (n = 40) of the sample, followed by those with NCE/OND qualifications at 25% (n = 25). Respondents with primary education and HND/BSC each accounted for 15% (n = 15), while post-graduate holders represented the smallest proportion at 5% (n = 5).

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Religion Affiliation

S/N	Religion Affiliation	Total	Percentage (%)
5	Christianity	71	71
	Islam	22	22
	African Traditional Religion	7	7
	Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The religious affiliation of respondents, as shown in Table 5, reveals that the majority were Christians, accounting for 71% (n = 71) of the sample, followed by Muslims at 22% (n = 22), while adherents of African Traditional Religion constituted 7% (n = 7).

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

S/N	Occupation	Total	Percentage (%)
6	Civil Servant	20	20
	Youth Leader	10	10
	Self-employed	15	15
	Student	40	40
	Unemployed	15	15
	Others	0	0
	Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The occupational distribution of respondents, as presented in Table 6, shows that students constituted the largest group at 40% (n = 40), followed by civil servants at 20% (n = 20) and self-employed individuals at 15% (n = 15). Unemployed respondents also accounted for 15% (n = 15), while youth leaders made up 10% (n = 10), and no respondents fell under the “Others” category.

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents by Years of Residency in Ekiti State

S/N	Years of Residency in Ekiti State	Total	Percentage (%)
7	1-5 years	30	30
	6-10 years	25	25
	11-15 years	20	20
	16-20 years	15	15
	21years' above	10	10
	Total	100	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The distribution of respondents based on their years of residency in Ekiti State, as shown in Table 7, indicates that the largest proportion, 30% (n = 30), had resided in the city for 1-5 years, followed by 25% (n = 25) for 6-10 years. Respondents with 11-15 years, 16-20 years, and 21 years and above of residency accounted for 20% (n = 20), 15% (n = 15), and 10% (n = 10), respectively.

4.2 The Major Causes and Patterns of Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Ekiti State

Table 8: Major Causes and Patterns of Farmers-Herders Conflicts in Ekiti State

S/N	Items	Total	SA	A	Percentage (%)	SD	D	Percentage (%)
1	Competition over land and grazing resources is a major cause of farmers-herders conflicts in Ekiti State.	100	49	24	73	11	16	27
2	Lack of clearly defined grazing routes and farmland boundaries leads to recurring farmers-herders disputes.	100	36	44	80	12	8	20
3	Encroachment of farmland by herders contributes significantly to the occurrence of conflicts with farmers.	100	31	22	53	23	24	47
4	Migration patterns of herders into new communities increase the frequency of conflicts with local farmers.	100	34	40	74	16	10	26

Source: Fieldwork, 2026.

The analysis of Table 8 shows that competition over land and grazing resources is a major driver of farmers-herders conflict in Ekiti State, with 73% of respondents agreeing that pressure on scarce agricultural and grazing resources fuels disputes. Similarly, 80% identified the absence of clearly defined grazing routes and farmland boundaries as a significant cause of conflict, indicating that poor land-use demarcation creates uncertainty and increases the possibility of clashes.

The findings also reveal that herder encroachment on farmlands contributes to conflict, although responses were relatively divided, with 53% agreeing and 47% disagreeing. In addition, 74% agreed that the seasonal or unregulated migration of herders into new communities increases the likelihood of conflict. The results suggest that land-use competition, unclear territorial boundaries, farmland encroachment, and uncontrolled migration are the dominant factors influencing farmers-herders conflicts in Ekiti State.

4.3 The Roles of the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps in Enforcing Grazing Laws and Promoting Agricultural Security in Ekiti State

Table 9: The Roles of the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps in Enforcing Grazing Laws and Promoting Agricultural Security in Ekiti State

S/N	Items	Total	SA	A	Percentage (%)	SD	D	Percentage (%)
5	The Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps effectively enforces grazing laws to reduce farmers-herders conflicts in the state.	100	40	33	73	15	12	27
6	Agro-Marshals play a significant role in ensuring compliance with state regulations on livestock movement.	100	45	35	80	10	10	20
7	The activities of the Agro-Marshall Corps contribute to preventing encroachment of grazing animals on farmland.	100	29	24	53	21	26	47
8	The Corps' interventions have improved farmers' confidence in safeguarding their crops and livelihoods.	100	35	39	74	15	11	26
9	Regular monitoring and patrols by the Agro-Marshall Corps reduce the frequency and intensity of farmers-herders conflicts in Ekiti State.	100	40	40	80	10	10	20

Source: Fieldwork, 2026.

The analysis of Table 9 indicates that the Ekiti State Agro-Marshall Corps plays a significant role in enforcing grazing laws and promoting compliance with regulations on livestock movement. While 73% of respondents affirmed the Corps' effectiveness in enforcing grazing laws, 80% agreed that it contributes to compliance with livestock-movement regulations. However, the prevention of farmland encroachment received a relatively lower level of agreement, with 53% supporting and 47% disagreeing, suggesting that the Corps' effectiveness varies across communities due to factors such as inadequate personnel, limited coverage, and herders' cooperation.

The findings further show that 74% of respondents believed that the Corps increased farmers' confidence in protecting their crops and livelihoods. Similarly, 80% agreed that regular monitoring and patrols reduced the frequency and intensity of farmers-herders conflicts. The results demonstrate that the Corps contributes to agricultural security, conflict mitigation, and peaceful coexistence through law enforcement, patrols, and monitoring, although improved resources, wider coverage, and stronger community collaboration are necessary to enhance its effectiveness.

4.4 The Extent to which the Activities of the Agro-Marshall Corps have Contributed to Reducing Farmers-Herders Conflicts

Table 10: Extent to which the Activities of the Agro-Marshall Corps have Contributed to Reducing Farmers-Herders Conflicts

S/N	Items	Total	SA	A	Percentage (%)	SD	D	Percentage (%)
10	The activities of the Agro-Marshall Corps have significantly reduced the occurrence of farmers-herders conflicts in Ekiti State.	100	50	30	80	10	9	19
11	The presence of the Agro-Marshall Corps has increased compliance with grazing laws by herders.	100	37	45	82	9	9	18
12	Farmers and herders feel safer in their communities due to the activities of the Agro-Marshall Corps.	100	30	28	58	22	20	42

13	The Agro-Marshall Corps' initiatives have enhanced agricultural productivity by reducing disruptions caused by conflicts.	100	35	39	80	15	5	20
14	The Corps' mediation and conflict resolution efforts have promoted peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders.	100	39	51	90	5	5	10

Source: Fieldwork, 2026.

The analysis of Table 10 indicates that the Agro-Marshall Corps has contributed significantly to reducing farmers-herders conflicts in Ekiti State. About 80% of respondents agreed that its interventions reduced conflict frequency, while 82% affirmed that its presence improved compliance with grazing laws. However, only 58% agreed that the Corps' activities improved perceptions of safety, suggesting that some communities still experience insecurity, inadequate patrol coverage, or lingering fear from previous conflicts.

The findings also show that 80% of respondents believed the Corps' activities improved agricultural productivity, while 90% acknowledged that its mediation and conflict-resolution efforts promoted peaceful coexistence. The results demonstrate that the Corps supports conflict reduction, lawful livestock movement, agricultural stability, and improved relations between farmers and herders. Nevertheless, stronger community engagement, wider operational coverage, and more responsive security interventions are required to address remaining concerns.

4.5 The Challenges Affecting the Operational Effectiveness of the Agro-Marshall Corps in Ekiti State

Table 11: Challenges Affecting the Operational Effectiveness of the Agro-Marshall Corps in Ekiti State

S/N	Items	Total	SA	A	Percentage (%)	SD	D	Percentage (%)
15	Inadequate funding limits the operational effectiveness of the Agro-Marshall Corps in Ekiti State.	100	36	45	81	10	9	19
16	Lack of modern equipment and technology hinders the Agro-Marshals from performing their duties effectively.	100	38	36	80	12	8	20
17	Poor cooperation from local communities reduces the effectiveness of Agro-Marshals' operations.	100	49	25	74	10	16	26
18	Threats or resistance from herders impede the Corps' ability to enforce regulations effectively.	100	34	40	74	15	11	26
19	Inadequate training, insufficient personnel affects and capacity-building limit the efficiency and performance of the Agro-Marshall Corps.	100	38	33	81	14	15	19

Source: Fieldwork, 2026.

The results in Table 11 indicate that inadequate funding is perceived as a major constraint on the operational effectiveness of the Agro-Marshall Corps in Ekiti State, with 81% of respondents agreeing that financial limitations affect logistics, personnel welfare, mobility, and the sustainability of field operations. Similarly, 80% identified inadequate modern equipment and technology as a significant challenge, particularly in relation to surveillance, communication, mobility, and rapid conflict response. These findings demonstrate that adequate financial resources and modern operational tools are essential for strengthening the Corps' capacity to prevent and manage farmers-herders conflicts, especially in rural communities.

The findings also show that poor cooperation from local communities and resistance from herders constitute significant operational challenges, with 74% of respondents agreeing with each factor. These challenges may limit information sharing, intelligence gathering, compliance with regulations, and effective enforcement. Furthermore, 81% agreed that inadequate training, insufficient personnel, and limited capacity-building compromise the Corps' efficiency. The findings suggest that improving funding, equipment, community relations, personnel strength, training, and professional capacity is necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the Agro-Marshall Corps in mitigating farmers-herders conflicts in Ekiti State.

4.6 Strategies for Improving the Role and Performance of the Corps in Mitigating Farmers-Herders Conflicts

Table 12: Strategies for Improving the Role and Performance of the Corps in Mitigating Farmers-Herders Conflicts

S/N	Items	Total	SA	A	Percentage (%)	SD	D	Percentage (%)
20	Increasing funding and resources will improve the operational efficiency of the Agro-Marshall Corps in Ekiti State.	100	40	35	75	15	10	25
21	Regular training and capacity-building programs will improve the effectiveness of Agro-Marshals in conflict mitigation.	100	45	35	80	10	10	20
22	Providing modern equipment and technology will enhance the Corps' ability to monitor and enforce grazing laws.	100	30	25	55	20	25	45
23	Strengthening collaboration between the Agro-Marshall Corps and local communities will reduce farmers-herders conflicts.	100	35	40	75	15	10	25
24	Conducting awareness and sensitization programs for farmers and herders will improve compliance with grazing regulations.	100	35	39	74	15	11	26

Source: Fieldwork, 2026.

The analysis of Table 12 indicates strong support for increased funding, regular training, and community collaboration as key strategies for improving the effectiveness of the Agro-Marshall Corps in mitigating farmers-herders conflicts in Ekiti State. Specifically, 75% of respondents agreed that increased funding and resources would enhance operational efficiency, while 80% supported regular training and capacity-building to strengthen personnel skills in conflict management, negotiation, surveillance, and enforcement. Similarly, 75% agreed that stronger collaboration with local communities would improve conflict prevention through better intelligence gathering, early warning, and de-escalation. These findings demonstrate that institutional strengthening and community engagement are central to improving the Corps' performance.

The findings further show that 74% of respondents supported awareness and sensitization programmes for farmers and herders as a means of promoting compliance with grazing regulations and reducing conflict triggers. However, views on modern equipment and technology were relatively divided, with 55% agreeing and 45% disagreeing, suggesting that technological improvements may need to be complemented by adequate funding, personnel, training, and institutional reforms. The results support a multifaceted approach combining improved funding, continuous training, community collaboration, sensitization, and appropriate technological enhancement to strengthen the capacity of the Agro-Marshall Corps to effectively manage and mitigate farmers-herders conflicts in Ekiti State.

5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicate that farmers-herders conflict in Ekiti State is driven by interconnected factors such as land scarcity, climate-induced migration, farmland destruction, weak enforcement of grazing regulations, and the weakening of traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms. The study further establishes that the Agro-Marshall Corps has become an important security mechanism through anti-grazing law enforcement, farmland protection, patrols, monitoring, and rapid response. Its activities have contributed to reducing farm encroachment, violent encounters, and the frequency and intensity of conflicts, while improving farmers' confidence, early-warning systems, conflict reporting, and access to agricultural activities. These findings confirm that farmers-herders conflict is a multidimensional human security challenge requiring security interventions that address both physical safety and livelihood protection.

Despite these positive contributions, the effectiveness of the Agro-Marshall Corps is constrained by inadequate funding, insufficient logistics and personnel, limited institutional capacity, and weak coordination with other security and agricultural institutions. The findings therefore suggest that sustained conflict reduction requires stronger institutional support, improved resources, inter-agency collaboration, and community engagement. The findings support Human Security Theory by demonstrating that effective conflict management involves protecting communities from fear and violence while safeguarding livelihoods and wellbeing. The Agro-Marshall Corps consequently represents a community-

oriented and preventive security mechanism with significant potential for promoting peaceful coexistence and sustainable rural development in Ekiti State.

6 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that farmers-herders conflicts in Ekiti State are driven by interconnected environmental, socio-economic, and governance factors, including competition for land, unclear grazing routes, climate-induced migration, and weak enforcement of regulations. These factors have sustained tensions, disrupted agricultural activities, threatened rural livelihoods, and undermined community stability. The study also establishes that the Agro-Marshall Corps plays an important role in mitigating these conflicts through patrols, enforcement of grazing regulations, prevention of farm encroachment, rapid response, dispute resolution, and early-warning mechanisms. Its activities have contributed to reducing the frequency and intensity of conflicts while promoting safer agricultural practices and peaceful coexistence.

However, the effectiveness and sustainability of the Agro-Marshall Corps remain constrained by inadequate funding, logistics, training, personnel, modern equipment, limited community cooperation, and resistance from some herders. The study therefore concludes that sustaining the gains achieved by the Corps requires increased financial investment, improved logistics and technology, continuous personnel training, adequate staffing, and stronger partnerships with local communities. Addressing these institutional challenges alongside the underlying causes of farmers-herders conflicts will be essential for achieving lasting peace, protecting rural livelihoods, improving agricultural productivity, and promoting sustainable socio-economic development in Ekiti State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

- Adequate funding should be prioritized to enable the Agro-Marshall Corps to operate optimally across the state. Enhanced financial support will improve logistics, expand operational coverage, and facilitate the acquisition of necessary tools for effective field operations. Sustainable funding frameworks should be established to ensure long-term stability and prevent disruptions in security activities.
- Regular and specialized training programs should be instituted to enhance the technical skills, conflict management abilities, and professional competence of Agro-Marshall personnel. Emphasis should be placed on modern security practices, community engagement, intelligence gathering, and effective enforcement of grazing regulations to ensure improved performance in conflict-prone areas.
- The government should invest in modern surveillance tools, communication gadgets, mobility devices, and monitoring technologies to enhance the Corps' ability to track livestock movements and respond quickly to conflict situations. The deployment of digital mapping systems and early-warning technologies will strengthen proactive conflict management.
- Stronger partnerships should be built between the Agro-Marshall Corps, traditional institutions, community leaders, farmers' associations, and herders' groups. Collaborative platforms for dialogue, community policing, and information sharing will improve trust and increase compliance with grazing regulations. Community-driven security participation should be encouraged to enhance early detection and resolution of emerging disputes.
- Continuous education and sensitization campaigns should be conducted to inform farmers, herders, and rural communities about grazing laws, conflict prevention strategies, and the importance of peaceful coexistence. Awareness programs will help to reduce intentional violations, improve understanding of regulations, and foster a culture of cooperation that supports long-term agricultural and community security.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding this manuscript.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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