

**Cattle Ranching or Cattle Colonies as Panacea to Herders/Farmers Conflict in Nigeria:  
Challenges and Prospects**

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**Abstract**

**T**he paper examined Cattle Ranching and Cattle Colonies as Panacea to Herders/Farmers Conflict in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects, and set out to find the causal factors for farmers/herders conflict in Nigeria. Given the increasing dynamic as an internal security challenge posed by this crisis, is the ongoing debate for cattle ranching or cattle colony the way to go? To achieve these objectives, stakeholders were accessed through questionnaires and quantitative and qualitative data (both secondary and primary) were generated and analyzed as the methodology. As part of the findings, it is recommended that rather than allowing the conflict to snowball into another Boko Haram insurgency, government should take robust strategies and measures to nip it in the bud such as effective intelligence gathering to track movement of violent herders, legislating on ranching, and not cattle colonies, and improving community relations through traditional authority to keep the peace.

*Keywords: Cattle Ranching, Cattle Colonies, Herders/ Farmers Conflict*

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Conflicts between farmers and herders have become a common feature of economic livelihood in West Africa (Tonah, 2006). In the period before the beginning of the 20th century, the problem was mainly restricted to the savannah belts of West Africa. Cattle rearing was common in the Sudan and Sahel savannah belts where crop production was carried out only during the short rainy season on a small scale. This gave the Fulani herdsmen access to vast areas of grass land in the savannah belts of West Africa.

A ranch is an area of land, including various structures, given primarily to the practice of ranching, which is the practice of raising and grazing livestock such as cattle or sheep for meat or wool.

People who own or operate a ranch are called ranchers, cattlemen, or stock growers (Brunson and Huntsinger, 2008). Ranching according to Adebayo (2008) is also a method used to raise less common livestock such as cattle, sheep and goats. Ranches generally consist of large areas but may be of nearly any size.

The introduction of irrigation farming in the savannah belt of Nigeria in the early 80s in order to enhance food security to support the growing population in the country meant more land was put to crop production. This limited the access to the vast area which was initially used by Fulani herdsmen for rearing their herds especially along the river banks of the savannah belts in the northern part of the country. There arose the need for grazing movement to access pasture across regions in order to support herds (Eniola, 2007).

According to Schama (2000), land, crops, livestock, water resources and vegetal resources played a key role in the development, maintenance and projection of socio-economic strength of developing economies. Of all the aforementioned resources, land has remained an overwhelming source of conflict among various user groups as well as individuals. That is, conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers for the use of agricultural land is becoming fierce and increasingly wide spread in Nigeria largely due to intensification of agricultural production activities that are necessitated by increasing human population (Adekunle and Adisa, 2010)

Herders-farmers' conflicts in more recent times have become a recurring decimal in the West African sub-region. While countries such as Ghana, Mali, Niger and Mauritania have made significant progress in addressing these conflicts, Nigeria has continued to grapple with the ugly development (Abbass, 2012). Expectedly, government responded to these conflicts by applying the use of force from various security agencies including the military to restore order, as well as applying various measures and strategies in trying to resolve these conflicts (Ahmadu, 2011). Some of these measures include the establishment of grazing reserves and the institution of mediatory panels, as well as payment of compensation to aggrieved persons. Despite these measures, farmers-herdsmen conflict still rages in several states around the country. Existing conflict resolution mechanisms have been deficient in bringing a comprehensive end to the crises, which has continued unabated in some states.

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### **Objectives**

- i. To determine the impact of the anti-grazing law in the resolution of farmers/herders conflict in Nigeria.
- ii. To ascertain the role of cattle ranching in combating the herders/farmers crises in Nigeria.
- iii. To investigate the merit of ranching over open grazing in cattle production.
- iv. To ascertain if there is any relationship between cattle ranching and cattle colony.
- v. To recommend measures that could help to resolve the prolonged farmers/herders conflicts.

### **Research Questions**

- i. Would the anti-grazing law have any significant impact on the resolution of farmers/herders' conflict in Nigeria?
- ii. Can the establishment of cattle ranching help in combating the herders/farmers crises in Nigeria?
- iii. Is cattle ranching more efficient than open grazing in cattle production?
- iv. Is there any nexus between cattle ranching and cattle colony?

### **Cattle herding as a Causal Factor of Resource Conflict**

Cattle herding is dominated almost entirely by the Fulani ethnic group in Nigeria. Ofem and Bassey (2014) gave a vivid documentation of the herding system of the Fulani in Nigeria, and most of what is presented was derived from his account. According to him, herding is a daunting task, and contrary to widespread belief, it is not the delight of the Fulani- they herd not as a matter of choice but as a necessity. In as much as herdsman care about their cattle as a matter of necessity, so does the farmer treasure his or her crop not because it is necessary, but because it is indispensable to life.

The herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria have been interrogated by scholars and analysts from a variety of analytical prisms. Although, there appears to be no consensus among groups as to the causes of the conflict, yet a good number of scholars have attributed the conflict to the problems associated with the poor implementation of the grazing reserve policy in Nigeria. This view is supported by Ahmadu (2011) who opined that there are presently 417 grazing reserves that have

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failed in terms of the objectives for which they were established. Ofem and Bassey (2014) contend that most grazing reserves are situated on impoverished land, with little agronomic potential. The absence of enforceable penalties discourages herders from suing farmers who extend farms into the cattle thoroughfare.

The government of Nigeria at various levels — the Local, State and Federal Governments have proposed and employed different measures including the designation and gazetting of grazing reserves, prohibition of open grazing, the deployment of security agents to forestall emerging crises and a recent proposal to create ranching and cattle colonies. These measures have not been totally effective — the end result is further degeneration of these conflicts resulting to increasing deaths and destruction of properties with a high potential to exacerbate the insecurity, food crisis and stability of the country.

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 in the incidence of farmers-herders' conflict. Cases of farmer-herders conflict abound and are widespread in Nigeria in recent times. For instance, according to (Ojomoyela, 2017) in Demsa Local Government of Adamawa state, 28 people were feared killed, about 2,500 farmers were displaced and rendered homeless in the latest hostility between cattle rearers and farmers in the host community in July, 2005. He further stated that many farmers and herders have lost their lives and herds, while others have experienced dwindling productivity in their herds.

## **2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Cattle Ranching**

Ranching is the commercial alternative to the various types of nomadism, is carried out on large stretches of land. Most ranches cover several thousand hectares, sometimes more than 100 000, and carry averagely large, permanent herds of some 1000 or 10,000 animals. The term ranch is generally used to refer to properties with well-defined boundaries (fenced or unfenced), legally owned, or having a long-term lease, and with certain developments present that were affected by the owner or lessee (Brunson and Huntsinger, 2008).

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Ranching according to the Food and Agriculture organization (FAO) as quoted in King (2013) is a modern form of pastoralism which establishes limits of mobility even in arid land. It is an enclosed (usually fenced) system of extensive livestock production. Under this system a piece of land, the ranch, is allocated and owned for livestock grazing, and the owner is granted individual rights of use of the land so allocated.

### **Cattle Colony**

The cattle colony is a recent policy proposal by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2018, has now been modified as the “Ruga Settlement” scheme which ran into a lot of opposition as it has been suspended indefinitely by the Federal Government (Vanguard, June 2019) meant to deal with incessant conflict between farmers and herders. A colony is bigger than a reserve, while a reserve is a defined tract of land usually set apart for animals and plants. Colony is a wide expanse of land measuring a minimum of 5,000 hectares of land which state governments are expected to donate on a voluntary basis to the Federal Government initiative. That is what the initiators of this policy proposal want each state of the federation to provide, so that Fulani herdsmen can have enough grazing land for their cattle along with a backward integration mechanism and provision of other ancillary services like dairy, fodder and tannery etc. However, the responses it received from stakeholders and the general public have been on the negative side, perhaps due to the improper communication to the public of its functionality and workability. Curiously, the cattle colony or suspended Ruga policy sounds like an idea that was suddenly stumbled upon by the initiators, but with no clear-cut modus operandi, thus giving an impression that a community or communities are being created or carved out of the existing ones solely for the herders.

### **Overview of Herders-Farmers Conflict in Nigeria**

There are divergent views on the causes of herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria. Some Scholars have seen colonial policies as cause of the historical rivalry among farmers and herders in some parts of Africa, which are induced by the environment. Abbass (2012) contends that the major source of tensions between pastoralists and farmers is basically economic, with land related issues accounting for the majority of the conflicts. This can then be situated within the broader context of the political economy of land struggle, traceable to a burgeoning demography in which there is

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fierce competition for fixed space to meet the demands of the growing population (Oladele and Oladele, 2011).

Odunsi (2017) contends that while farmers cite destruction of crops by cattle and other property by the pastoralists as the main direct causes for conflicts, burning of rangelands and Fadama and blockage of stock routes and water points by crop encroachment are major direct reasons cited by the pastoralists. Similarly, inadequate social amenities, like pipe borne water, were also observed to be the cause of nomads/farmers conflicts. For example, Ahmadu (2011) observes that in Orkpe Plateau State, pastoralists and sedentary farmers' conflict resulted from the herdsmen contamination of a dam, the only source of drinking water for the sedentary farmers.

Adekunle and Adisa, (2010) emphasize information gap with respect to the stock routes was a major factor contributing to farmer-herdsmen conflicts. Depleting soil fertility, inadequate supply of fertilizer, and the need to increase scale of operation by both groups were also found to indirectly precipitate conflict, as farmers confirmed that they sought for virgin lands to farm. By so doing they might move into stock routes inadvertently.

Blench (2006) attributes farmers-herders conflict to competition over natural resources and over access to grazing and water resources and suggests that, because herders now farm and farmers have herds, competition for the same natural resources has increased. The semi-arid zone has always been more populous than the Middle Belt, and the initial expansion of cultivation was in this zone. As the pressure on arable land in the semi-arid zone increased, soil fertility decreased and farmers were obliged to move to regions of heavy vegetation or to increase their holding size. As a consequence, more and more farmers began to settle further and further south in the lightly settled sub humid zone.

According to environmental experts the conflict between farmers and herders is environmentally-induced, that is, a consequence of environmental degradation and possibly climate change. For example, the Building Nigeria's Response to Climate Change(BNRCC)/Nigerian Environmental Study Team (NEST) observed that Nigeria is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. The experts observed that: "Climate change will significantly affect vulnerable groups because of a variety of factors, including low adaptive capacity, limited

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resources, and poverty. In general, climate change tends to exacerbate differences among various groups” Building Nigeria’s Response to Climate Change (BNRCC Project, 2011) as quoted in Odunsi (2017).

The situation is aggravated by the activities of an increasing human population, over-grazing, over-cultivation, and deforestation, which severely stress the natural support system. In many areas, sustainable-yield threshold of the vegetation and soils have been breached (National Policy on Environment, 1999) cited in Oladele and Oladele (2011).

Ofem and Bassey (2014) observed that the expansion of population can be seen as a cause of the herders-farmers conflicts in Nigeria. With the expansion of population, the rate of food production would naturally increase and to meet that increasing demand, it is natural for the farmers to encroach into marginal lands that had been the traditional pasture routes for the cattle. This has therefore heightened struggle between livestock and agricultural production which, more often than not, result in the escalation of conflicts. Hence, as population grows, more land is being cultivated and less is available for pasture; forcing Fulani to migrate and tramp on crops cultivated by farmers.

Similarly, Blench (2010) has attributed the causes of these conflicts to increased migration from the North to the South. For example, Over the years, the Lake Chad Basin, considered one of Africa’s largest, covering an average area of 22,000 square kilometers, today represents the ‘diminished remains’ and a skeletal shadow of itself. This has pushed many herdsmen to cross the border from Chad, Niger and Cameroon into northern Nigeria, settling in Plateau, Plateau Niger, Nasarawa and Kogi states.

### **Challenges**

Today there exist are a lot of challenges to all countries involved in the cattle industry. India has the largest cattle inventory in the world, followed by Brazil, then China, making the three countries accounting for 61% of the global cattle industry producing beef and milk for food to humans making United States, followed by Brazil then the European Union as the largest consumer of beef in the world (Blench, 2004). The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) gave a vivid picture of the world’s cattle meat production as: US 18%, Brazil 16.8%,

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EU 13%, China (mainland) 9.8%, Africa 8.6%, India 6.8%, Argentina 4.7%, Australia 3.3%, Russia 2.5% and the rest of the world 13% (Blench, 2004).

Another area of concern and challenge to the cattle industry is the grazing facilities provided by government and concerned individuals. Since 1965 when the then Northern Regional government gave a legal status for establishing grazing reserves, the sector got a boost in 1974 through the World Bank assistance for facility improvement and by 1976 the government through National Livestock Project Department (NLPD) oversee a total of 115,000 hectares of Grazing Reserves at Kachia, Gujba, Udubo and Garkida across the states of Kaduna, Borno, Bauchi and Adamawa respectively, all in an effort to address depleting grazing resources in areas that are having high concentration of cattle ( Abbass, 2012)).

Another major area of challenge in the industry, which was deliberately neglected by the public sector, is the issue of mass transportation of cattle from the North to the Southern states. For instance, in the First Republic the Borno Native Authority (N.A) transported cattle through the rail(Ahmadu, 2011). Other areas from the North solely rely on the traditional way of transporting cattle, through drovers that will be herding the cows for the long distance journey taking a good number of months before reaching the destined market, which was much later supplemented by road transport on laterite roads to all seasoned roads despite series of unforeseen challenges and risks associated with it (Adekunle and Adisa, 2010).

### **Prospects**

The struggle for land resource is the major cause of conflict in the country. Though, the Fulani herders in the past largely enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with sedentary agriculturalists in Nigeria, this relationship has been disturbed in recent years by climate change that has driven the herders further south, massive growth in the size of Fulani herds, the growth of practices such as agro-pastoralism and the expansion of farmland into traditional corridors used by the herders (Ahmadu, 2011).

Many Fulani now tend to reach for automatic weapons to resolve disputes with agricultural communities. This has in turn led to the development of “self-defense” forces or militia in the agricultural communities. Farmers routinely accuse the Fulani herders of allowing their animals to

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feed on still-growing crops and contamination of community watering-places. The herders in turn often accuse the farmers of denying them access to grazing areas when alternatives cannot be found (Adekunle and Adisa, 2010).

Thus, the Nigerian authorities need to take cognizance of them and their level of involvement in fashioning out an acceptable and sustainable solution to all concerned parties in the herders and farmers conflict. If the continuing conflict between pastoralists and agriculturalists cannot be contained and resolved in the near future, there is every possibility that Nigeria could once more descend into a nation-wide distortion of inter-ethnic relations that will ultimately be of little benefit to anyone other than extremists.

### **3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **The Environmental Scarcity Theory**

This theory is built on the ground that complex causes could move ‘from the most local to the most global’ types of causes of conflict. Thomas Homer-Dixon is one of the proponents of this theory, which proposes that environmental scarcity could produce violent conflicts. Such conflicts range from local environmental degradation, to ethnic clashes, to civil strife (insurgencies), scarcity induced wars out of a loss of sources of livelihoods and the negligent behaviour of the state and elite class cited in Blench (2010). Lending support to the environment and conflict argument, Brunborg and Urdal (2005) cited in Adebayo and Olaniyi (2008) specified that “demographic factors may, however, also be potential causes of conflict”, with factors like “high population pressure” making negative impact on scarce resources such as arable land and fresh water which could lead to violent conflicts. However, not all resource conflicts lead to overt conflict behaviour, and even fewer to the use of force.

#### **Structural Conflict Theory**

The structural conflict theory is also adopted in this paper to provide support to environmental scarcity conflict theory because of diverse meanings and explanations it brings to environmentally linked- resource conflicts. Environmental scarcity in this case connotes the limited supply of grazing land, farmland and water. Such environmental scarcity generates ‘severe social stresses

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within countries, helping to stimulate sub national insurgencies, ethnic clashes and urban unrest' (Homer-Dixon, 1999) in Blench (2010). This assumption helps the research to demonstrate how and why farming communities who depend mainly on these environmental resources such as fishing water and farming land fight to control the farming land. It also provides explanation on the structural violent nature of environmental scarcity, as the social crises it causes consequently fuels non-state conflict among affected communities.

However, this theory was criticized for ignoring the more direct linkage between economic and political factors and domestic armed conflict, thereby reducing the understanding of the causal pathway to domestic armed conflict. This flaw in the theory has been noted and is complemented by structural conflict theory, in order to build a direct linkage between economic and political factors, and domestic armed conflict. This is one of the reasons why this theory is not adopted as a single theory, but together with the structural conflict theory.

### **Cattle Population**

According to the National Agricultural Sample Survey (Oladele and Oladele, 2011), it is estimated that Nigeria is endowed with over 19.5 million cattle, with Sokoto, Kebbi, Kano, Jigawa, Katsina, Borno, Adamawa, Taraba, Kaduna and Cross River States having the highest numbers of reared cattle in the country, as a result of climatic conditions, customs and religious beliefs of the habitats of that particular region, and the type of vegetation and topography of area. The farmers/herdsmen crisis has also been a problem in states like Benue, Enugu, Bayelsa and Plateau and need serious attention from the government to bring this dilemma to an end.

### **Study Population and Sample Size**

The total population for this study comprises of one thousand (1026) herdsmen and farmers located within five farming settlements located at Gidan Zakara a rural settlement along Keffi-Abuja expressway within Karu Local Government of Nasarawa State, contiguous to the Federal Capital Territory. The sample size taken is 200 being 20% of the study population. Questionnaires were distributed and filled with the help of 4 translators (English and Fulfulde speaking) who also served as research assistants.

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#### 4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

**Table 1: Can the establishment of cattle ranching help in combating the herdsmen/farmers crises in Nigeria?**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage%
Strongly Agree	45	22.5
Agree	80	40
Strongly Disagree	40	20
Disagree	35	17.5
Undecided	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 says that 22.5% strongly agreed that the establishment of cattle ranching can help in combating the herdsmen/farmers crises in Nigeria, 40% agreed that cattle ranching are a useful policy in resolving the conflict.

**Table 2: Would there be any merit in prioritizing cattle ranching over open grazing in cattle production?**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage%
Strongly Agree	50	25
Agree	75	37.5
Strongly Disagree	30	15
Disagree	45	22.5
Undecided	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 indicated that 25% strongly agreed that there would be merit in the efficiency of cattle ranching over open grazing in cattle production; an additional 37.5% agreed that there would be merit in the efficiency of cattle ranching over open grazing in cattle production. This implies that there would be merit in focusing on cattle ranching over open grazing in cattle production.

**Table 3: Is the effect of the farmers/herdsmen conflict on economic growth in Nigeria negatively significant?**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage %
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<b>Yes</b>	165	82.5
<b>No</b>	35	17.5
<b>Undecided</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

From the Table 3 above, it was seen that 82.5% said yes that the farmers/herdsmen conflict has significant negative effect on economic growth in Nigeria, indicating that the majority of the respondents agree that the farmers/herdsmen conflict has significant negative effect on economic growth in Nigeria.

**Table 4: Would the current government intervention put an end to the farmers/herdsmen conflict in Nigeria?**

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Yes</b>	65	32.5
<b>No</b>	95	47.5
<b>Undecided</b>	40	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

47.5% do not think that the current government intervention effort will put an end to the farmers/herdsmen conflict in Nigeria. This is a vote of no confidence on the current government intervention policies and programmes on resolving the farmers/herdsmen conflict in Nigeria.

**Table 5: Would communal leaders have any specific role to play in the resolution of farmers/herdsmen conflict in Nigeria?**

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b>Yes</b>	170	85
<b>No</b>	30	15
<b>Undecided</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

The Table 5 above shows that 85% believe that communal leaders have a specific role to play in the resolution of farmers/herdsmen conflict in Nigeria underlining the importance of traditional authority as a conflict resolution mechanism.

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**Table 6: Is cattle colony or ranching the right solution to the resolution of the farmers/herdsmen conflict?**

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage %
<b>Ranching</b>	185	92.5
<b>Cattle Colony</b>	15	7.5
<b>Undecided</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

92.5% said that ranching is the right solution to the resolution of the farmers/herdsmen conflict.

**Table 7: Does the anti-grazing law in the long term have any significant impact on the resolution of the farmers/herdsmen conflict in Nigeria or is capable of aggravating it?**

Opinion	Response	Percentage %
<b>Yes</b>	35	17.5
<b>No</b>	156	78
<b>Undecided</b>	9	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

78% said that the anti-grazing law in the long term will not have any significant impact on the resolution of the farmers/herdsmen conflict in Nigeria, but may rather aggravate it.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The incessant violent reprisal attacks on human life and destruction of properties is responsible for the low trust and acceptance of Fulani or herdsmen of any ethnic stock in the host communities. This study has also shown that first, both at international and local levels, crop and livestock farming are important to herdsmen and farmers respectively. Hence the making of the law prohibiting open grazing did not stop herdsmen from engaging in livestock farming in subsistence agriculture crop farming communities. However, the law requires the herdsmen to be dynamic by adapting to changes. They are expected to embrace modification from open grazing to ranching as global best practice requires. And contrary to insinuations by herdsmen, this study further found that the anti-open grazing law allows interstate commerce and regards violent attacks as unhealthy to interethnic relations and settler/ indigene dichotomy. The legal process of law making and law review to accommodate the contradictions where necessary is better than violent attacks to destroy life and property that can harm the farming culture and economic livelihood of both antagonists.

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### **Recommendations**

1. Government should enact a law to provide for the establishment of ranches (restricted grazing).
2. Government should intensify efforts in the arrest, trial and persecution of perpetrators of violence in conflict zones.
3. Law enforcement agencies should be trained and equipped to combat the rising and continuous spate of herders'-farmers' clashes. The employment of intelligence gathering should be encouraged to strengthen inter agency security cooperation and to effectively track the movement of violent herders and aggressive farmers as part of strategies to nip possible conflicts in the bud.
4. Traditional rulers who are the custodian of the culture of the people on the basis of traditional authority should be adequately engaged in the resolution of conflicts between herders and farmers. They should be engaged in providing civic education and advocacy about the importance of peaceful coexistence and the effects of violence on the people with a view to preventing the eruption of conflicts. Also, their involvement will facilitate the identification and reporting of residents with criminal tendencies and disposition. Such information will enable the security agencies to act in a timely fashion in preventing crisis.
5. There should be enhanced public information and education on the need to respect the anti-grazing law. Such enlightenment should focus on propagating the dangers of violence and the gains of peaceful co-existence within the communities.
6. Federal government should encourage establishment of more cattle ranches than colonies as a solution to the raging farmers/ herdsman clashes in the country as ranching is the modern method of rearing and growing livestock making them healthier, more hygienic and more productive than cattle colony, which has the potential of being abused as a land grabbing policy.

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