
**Southern Governors Ban on Open Grazing and Promotion of Cattle Ranching: The
Economic Benefits and Prospects to Nigeria**

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to examine the southern governors' ban on open grazing and the promotion of cattle ranching, as well as the economic benefits and prospects for Nigeria. The study asserts that open grazing became an issue in Nigeria when the Fulani herdsmen started to invade farms. The invasion of farms by the Fulani herders, which started in 1996, was driven by a range of factors, from environmental to political, but at the core is the problem of land scarcity. Climate change and desertification of Nigeria's north have forced the nomadic cattle herdsmen farther south to feed and sell their cattle, encroaching on the territory of sedentary farmers. Moreover, it states that ranching systems consist of labor-extensive enterprises specializing in one or more livestock species and producing mainly live animals for slaughter (for meat, skins, and hides), but also for wool and milk. Cattle ranching is not only managed for monetary benefits, but also for socioeconomic benefits, including hide, manure, a source of medium-term savings, insurance against crop failure, means of diversifying investment, as well as performing social and cultural functions (gifts, christening ceremonies). The study concluded that open grazing is a major issue in Nigeria today, as Fulani herdsmen take farms by force with weapons like AK47s, which also affect the farmers, and it has degenerated to the southern state governments executing bans on open grazing of cattle in order to safeguard the lives of their citizens. One of the recommendations in the study was that the government should effectively implement the law prohibiting open grazing, because it will boost farmers' confidence to go back to the farm.

**KEYWORDS: Cattle Ranching, Economic Benefits, Open Grazing, Prospects in
Nigeria**

Introduction

In Nigeria, the Middle Belt region is considered the “food basket” of the country. The fertile soil and temperate climate offer a favorable environment for farmers and herders to thrive. These two communities have been farming and rearing cattle in Nigeria for centuries, benefiting from mutually beneficial relationships farmers benefit from cattle manure to fertilize their crops and herders benefit from crop refuse to nutritionally feed their herds. This symbiotic practice tied the wellbeing of the farmer to the wellbeing of the herder and allowed for most disputes between the two groups to be resolved non-violently, through traditional

mediation mechanisms. Getting higher global demand for livestock is being forced by the growth of incomes and populations in any developing nation (Jabbar et al, 2011). The law prohibiting the open grazing of livestock, or the practice of allowing cattle to roam freely in search of pasture and water, beginning on November 1, 2017 and called instead for the establishment of ranches within the state. The Open Grazing Prohibition and Establishment of Ranches Law, 2017 was met with both support and opposition. Those that support the legislation have gone so far as to label it the best antidote for farmer-herder conflict in the state. Whereas, those that oppose it claim that the law is discriminatory against herders, does not provide or support the production of alternative livelihoods, and effectively evicts herders from the state. Despite the conflicting responses, the Open Grazing Prohibition Law went into effect on November 1, 2017. In light of the growing demand for legislative solutions to the farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria, this policy brief examines the implications of the Benue State Open Grazing Prohibition Law on relations between farmers and herders and its effects for neighboring states. Open grazing became an issue in Nigeria when the Fulani herdsmen started to invade farms. The invasion of farms by the Fulani herders that started in 1996 was driven by a range of factors from environmental to political, but at the core is the problem of land scarcity. Climate change and desertification of Nigeria's north have forced the nomadic cattle herdsmen farther south to feed and sell their cattle, encroaching on the territory of sedentary farmers. The Fulani herdsmen are a small portion of the population but perpetrate violence. The Fulani herdsmen who cause the conflict spread across Nigeria and remain the minority in comparison to the indigenous populations. However, due to the violent nature and killings of the farmers by the Fulani herdsmen, there is recognition of the Fulani group recently as the world's fourth deadliest militant group. The lack of central system on open grazing fuels the conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers nationwide; therefore, instead of one group taking the upper hand against others, the idea of decentralization is pertinent.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Open Grazing

Open grazing is an old practice of roaming ruminant animals in open fields, plains and bushes in search of pasture or foliage. In Nigeria, like in other parts of the world, livestock keeping has been known to all cultures and groups since ages, and the need to provide food of crop and animal origin to meet the ever growing demand of its increasing population has often resulted in the opening up of lands hitherto uncultivated. Alhassan (2012) noted that herding or grazing of animals in Nigeria is dominated almost entirely by the Fulani tribe. According to Olayoku (2014) and Dimelu et al (2017), a typical Fulani herdsman keeps and sustains his herd through open grazing. This open or pastoralist system involves young men who do labor-intensive herding while the women engage in culinary services, cooking, and selling animal products in the market. Naziru (2014) and Nze (2015) reckoned that the Fulani, by their culture, tradition and occupation, have remained an itinerant race who never owned lands nor had any permanent abode. In fact, they care less about land ownership because they are always on the move. They simply lived with their cattle wherever there was an abundance of fodder and an absence of tse-tse-flies. As an occupation, they rear different species of cattle, such as the Keteku, Muturu, and Kuri, but the Zebu is identified as the most common. Grazing of animals can also be a competitor in the world's food supply for humans. However, this is only possible in areas where cattle are pastured in areas perfectly suitable for agriculture, or where they are fed substantial cereal supplements (Rojas-Downing 2017). Generally, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in its 2011 report noted that

livestock production and animal grazing in particular can be seen as lending indispensable support to agriculture as it contributes greatly to food security.

Concept of Cattle Ranching

Ranching is an efficient way to raise livestock to provide meat, dairy products, and raw materials for fabrics. It is a vital part of economies and rural development around the world. Cattle ranching is the rearing of beef cattle on a large scale. Cattle ranching is the practice of raising herds of animals on large tracts of land. Ranching systems consist of labour-extensive enterprises specializing in one or more livestock species and producing mainly live animals for slaughter (for meat, skins and hides), but also for wool and milk. Ranchers commonly raise grazing animals such as cattle and sheep, which cowboys are responsible for herding and maintaining the health of the animals across these vast ranches. Cowboys often work with horses to herd cattle and sheep. Ranching is a very significant change in the pastoralist system's strategy. It changes the mobile nature of pastoralism, where traditionally there are no limits to grazing of the available pastures, into controlled grazing. It also changes the common property character of pastoralist land, where all land is open for pasture without any individual ownership (Home Project, 2019). From 1990 to 2003, the cattle herd in the northern part of the country grew by 140%, from 26.6 million to 64 million heads. Increasing demand and the sector's advantages in the region suggest that ranching will continue to grow in the region. Nevertheless, the growth of extensive ranching in the region is worrying, especially because of increased deforestation. Scientific and modern economic intervention into pastoralism has generally targeted the mobility and communal grazing characteristics of the system, which results in a sedentarized, most likely enclosed, ranching system. This intervention has the implication that the pastoralist ecosystem is a limited and valuable resource. The traditional pastoralist perception is contrary to this implication, and considers and wishes to consider that pastoral land is essentially vast wilderness with no instituted limitation of use (no use limits except the availability of pastures).

Dangers of Open Grazing

This type of grazing has often meant travelling long distances from one point to the other, and thus, intruding into spaces long claimed by settled farmers, and has become the source of potential conflicts between them and the sedentary farming population (Olaniyon, 2015). Open grazing is a main issue in Nigeria today, as Fulani herdsmen take farms by force with weapons like AK47s, which also affects the farmers. Fulani pastoralists pasture or graze their animals in the uncultivated wetlands during the dry season, but with an increasing population, leading to agricultural intensification and encroachment, as well as factors imposed on them by changing climatic conditions, especially in their traditional abode in the Sahel region and the advent of dry season irrigation projects, they have been denied access to this dry season grazing resource. These factors have imposed a southward migration on them, where the grass is much greener. Arising from this migration and other factors, roaming cows, sheep, and goats, scavenging around school playgrounds, golf courses, government residential areas, street shoulders, and railway sidings both at nights and during the day, have become common sights in our cities. In addition to all these, they mess up the ground and bring flies and stench. Our country's news space has lately become awash with skirmishes between what have come to be known as the migrating Fulani herdsmen and the locals over cattle rustling, damage to crops/farm lands, and pollution of the environment, including village streams that serve as the only source of water for the people. According to Naziru (2014), these conflicts are most prevalent in the North Central Nigerian states of Taraba, Nakazawa, Plateau, and

Benue. On the other hand, Haman (Gefu, 2017) revealed that cattle farmers suffer material damage when crop farmers inflict physical injuries on their cattle by using cutlasses, spears, or guns, or by poisoning the cattle. The clashes have become more violent and bloody when, in recent times, pastoralists who normally went about only with staffs began to carry deadly weapons like locally-made and automatic guns such as AK47 with which they freely attacked their host communities, killing many people in the process (Oyeyipo, and James, 2016). In the same vein, other resources worth millions of naira have been lost, thus increasing aggressive poverty in the affected regions. Considering the number of people killed by these conflicts and confrontations, it becomes glaring that the human resources that are engaged in economic activity in the country are being depleted, thereby reducing the productive and consumer strength of the nation. More so, the presence of Fulani herdsmen in the affected areas creates a climate of fear as they carry sophisticated arms and ammunition with which they unleash terror on the people of the regions and other perceived enemies (Abugu 2015). The fear of conflict alone can drive residents to relatively more secure urban and semi-urban areas, where they contribute to worsening the decay of our cities. For women and girls, the impact is frequently magnified. The relatives of men killed in the violence often evict widows from their farmland. Moreover, post-conflict economic and social disenfranchisement renders women and girls even more vulnerable to sexual and economic harassment.

Barriers to Cattle Ranching

When it comes to ranching, the main barrier is the amount of money it takes to even start. Land, cattle, tractors, equipment, feed, and fencing are all very expensive, especially if you're trying to do it all at once. Providing adequate shelter for the cattle is one of the basic necessities for the rancher.

High cost of cattle maintenance: This is a serious challenge for ranchers or farmers, because cattle need one-on-one physical maintenance every day. Cattle ranchers need ongoing technical support to implement the correct intensive production systems and maximize the results of those investments.

Lack of suitable grassland: Many of the householders observed that the main constraints to cattle ranching were lack of grass land, high feed costs, vaccination workers not being available, and lack of a reasonable price for raw milk. Ahmed et al. (2010) reported that 95% of householders were of the opinion that the high cost of feed was the major problem of small-scale cattle fattening.

Fear of disease attack: The most painful and complicated problem to deal with is livestock diseases. It is no secret that animals can catch some viruses or diseases once in a while. Due to different circumstances, including climate, economic, and infrastructure conditions, these livestock diseases will not disappear in the near future. If your animals get sick, then it will cost a lot of money for you to get them treated. For this reason, you have to care for them and take them for proper vaccinations. Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is a severe and highly contagious disease that causes immense financial losses due to mortality, reduced milk production, treatment cost of affected cattle, weight loss of fattening cattle and manpower loss for taking care of affected cattle, which occurs in Nigeria almost every year. An outbreak of this disease causes financial loss to the farmers or ranchers as well as the national economy. Once the outbreak starts, it continues for a long period of time, affecting a large number of cattle herds (Mahmud et al., 2018). There is a significant need for effective disease management and control strategies.

Climate change: Cattle farming has also often displaced local communities who have ensured more regenerative and balanced uses of land in their environments. It causes air and water pollution.

Lack of animal rights advocates: Animal welfare is important because there are so many animals around the world suffering from being used for entertainment, food, medicine, fashion, scientific advancement, and as exotic pets. Every animal deserves to have a good life where they can enjoy the benefits of having a pet. Thus, rights advocates do not accept the property status of animals nor the wisdom of subjecting them to human domination. Animal experimentation in laboratories, even if helpful to humans, is unjustified. By way of comparison, other countries have been more willing to embrace some notions of animal rights, but it is very difficult in Nigeria.

Prospects of Cattle Ranching and its Economic Benefits

Today, cattle rearing is a promising and profitable sector, especially in the "northern part" of Nigeria. Most of the farmers or ranchers were of the opinion that the high price of beef and milk products, and easy and participatory husbandry practices made cattle rearing a lucrative small enterprise at homestead level. On the other hand, Quddus and Amin (2010) found crossbred cattle farming a profitable enterprise. So cattle rearing could be a very good enterprise to generate employment in the study area. The opinions of farmers were very much more positive towards cattle rearing. The opinions of farmers were very much more positive towards cattle rearing. Immediate steps such as feed cost reduction, health worker increase, and raw milk price increase were significant challenges to maintaining and increasing dairy and beef cattle production. The prospects of using community cattle ranches depend on the availability in the rural community (+), level of security (+), distance between the ranching site and town (-), sanitation (+) and fees charged for keeping cattle (-).

In particular, managed grazing can support biodiversity, provide wildlife habitat, enhance carbon sequestration, and contribute to nutrient cycling. Additionally, ranches safeguard ecosystem services because they conserve rangeland, protect open space, and maintain traditional ranching culture. The cattle can easily be vaccinated against diseases both for the producers and consumers. Yinka (2016) asserted that incoming animals can be isolated first and get their health information. And sick animals can also be isolated to prevent the spread of the diseases. Implementing biosecurity on farm animals has long-term benefits. Ike Ekweremadu, at the 2016 Convention of the World Igbo Congress held in New York, USA, enumerated the following benefits of cattle ranching:

- The production of healthier animals
- Production of better products
- Provision of employment
- Added value to the farm products
- Promotion of peaceful co-existence
- Sifting of armed bandits and terrorists from real farmers doing legitimate business.

He also encouraged governments to go a step further to invest in constructing and leasing out modern ranches. Cattle ranching is not only managed for monetary benefits, but also for socioeconomic benefits, including hides, manure, a source of medium-term savings, insurance against crop failure, means of diversifying investment, as well as the performance of social and cultural functions (gifts, christening ceremonies) (Weyori et al. 2018).

Indirect and induced impacts of beef cattle ranching are estimated to have a great contribution to other agriculture and related industries. In order to understand the overall contribution of cattle in developing economies, it is important to have an understanding of the different livestock production systems, which exist in the country and the producers' cattle keeping objectives. The vast majority of cattle production takes place in pasturelands, and considerations of intensification mean transformation to semi-intensive or semi-extensive systems rather than to truly intensive confinement-based systems (Bowman et al., 2012).

Conclusion

The study concluded that open grazing is a major issue in Nigeria today, as Fulani herdsmen take farms by force with weapons like AK47s, which also affect the farmers, and it has degenerated to the southern state governments executing bans on open grazing of cattle in order to safeguard the lives of their citizens. Fulani pastoralists pasture or graze their cattle in the uncultivated wetlands during the dry season, but with an increasing population, leading to agricultural intensification and encroachment, as well as factors imposed on them by changing climatic conditions, especially in their traditional abode in the Sahel region, and the advent of dry season irrigation projects, they have been denied access to this dry season grazing resource. Also, the herding or grazing of cattle in Nigeria is dominated almost entirely by the Fulani tribe. The fear of conflict alone can drive residents to relatively more secure urban and semi-urban areas, where they contribute to worsening the decay of our cities. For women and girls, the impact is frequently magnified. The relatives of men killed in the violence often evict widows from their farmland. Moreover, post-conflict economic and social disenfranchisement renders women and girls even more vulnerable to sexual and economic harassment.

Recommendations

1. The government should effectively implement the law prohibiting open grazing because it will boost farmers' confidence to go back to the farm.
2. In order to control this indiscriminate grazing method so that farms, natural vegetation, and infrastructure can be safe from destruction by grazers and forestall other associated shortcomings of the system, the government should establish grazing reserves.
3. Ranchers should vaccinate their cattle and isolate incoming cattle first to ascertain their health status in order to prevent the spread of the disease to other cattle.
4. The government should also provide adequate security for the cattle ranchers.

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