

*Full length Research*

# Effects of Communal Conflicts on Marketing and Distribution of Agricultural Produce in Imo State, Nigeria

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**This broad objective of this study was to determine the effects of communal conflicts on food marketing and distribution in Imo state. The specific objectives of this research were; to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, to ascertain the effects of communal conflicts on food marketing and distribution. Multi-stage sampling technique was used. Data were collected from 150 respondents with the aid of a questionnaire. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as percentage and mean. The findings revealed that the mean age of the farmers was 43years. Majority of the farmers (58%) were males. The effects on food marketing/distribution included increase in transportation costs, decrease in agricultural output, increased prices of produce among others. This study therefore recommends among others the provision of food aid, relocation of farm produce drop-off points, conflict early-warning systems among others.**

**Keywords:** Conflicts, marketing, distribution, produce, agriculture

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country with a Gross National Income of below \$300 per capita, a federation of 130 million people living in 36 states and 774 local government areas (Idowu, 2001). Nigeria is agrarian in nature and greater percentage of the farmers dwell in rural areas where farming activities happen to be their primary sources of livelihood. Agboola and Eniola (1991) stated that agriculture is by far the largest sector on which fast majority of Nigeria populace depends for their wellbeing and livelihood. However, Nigeria recorded several violent conflicts in many rural communities. Since 1999, conflict has resulted in over 10,000 deaths, and the internal displacement of over 300,000 people (Bolarinwa *etal.*, 2012). Such conflicts explain noticeable distortions in farmers' livelihoods since they live and earn their living from rural areas. Agboola and Eniola, (1991) once reported that these conflicts are due to internal boundary dispute, rival interest of nomads and sedentary farmers as well as agitation for improved prices for agricultural commodities and improved standard of living by groups

of farmers or peasants in some local government's areas.

The threat to human security occasioned by these conflicts is quite true and real as cases of farmer-pastoralists conflicts abound and are widespread. For instance, in Densina Local Government of Adamawa State, 28 people were feared killed, about 2500 farmers were displaced and rendered homeless in the latest hostility between cattle rearers and farmers in the host community in July 2005 (Ofuoku and Isife, 2010). Nweze (2005) stated that many farmers and herders have lost many lives and herds, while others have experienced dwindling productivity in their herds. The cattle herds men are now being found in the South- the Guinea Savannah and forest belts in search of pasture for their herds (Oyesola, 2000). Ajuwon (2004) reported farmer – herdsmen conflict in Imo State, Southeast Nigeria. He noted that between 1996-2003, nineteen (19) people died and forty two (42) people injured in this rising incident of farmers – herders conflicts and the violence

that often accompanies such conflict an issue that can be regarded as being of national concern. These conflicts were threats to both peace and national stability. Again, in a study carried out in Nigeria's Guinea Savannah, Fiki and Lee (2004) reported that out of 150 households interviewed, 22 reported loss of a whole farm of standing crops, 41 reported losses of livestock, while eight households from either sides reported loss of human lives. Their study also indicated that stores, barns, residences and household items were destroyed in many of the violent clashes. Serious health hazards are also introduced when cattle are made to use water bodies that serve rural communities.

The implications of all these may put question marks on the achievability of the 10% growth rate in the agricultural sector and its total transformation being proposed by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Therefore, major sources of conflicts involving farmers and other land users, shows that land related issues, especially over grazing fields, ownership and control of land account for the highest percentage of the conflicts. In other words, struggles over the control of economically viable lands cause more tensions and violent conflicts among communities (Isah, 2012). As farmers and other cultivators have co-existed for a long time, the complexities over the land use system have dramatically changed, and thus become the dependent variable in conflicts between herdsman and farmers.

Land is also often at the heart of communal conflict that centre on groups' main livelihood. Land fertility is a united factor to be considered in an attempt to understand how land use principles and practices are perceived and how it is culturally constructed in different context. Therefore, it is very important to understand different perceptions of land use principles and practices in the study of dispute settlement. Land is not only a matter of power and wealth, but is loaded with meaning. Land is sine-quano to life: it is a bridge between livelihood and beyond, as people spend useful parts of their living on land till transition to grave for external preservation inside the land (Yahaya, 2005). Hence, the way by which people perceive land culturally may be instrumental to how disputes between agriculturalist and pastoralists as well as land resource explorers are handled.

Conflicts impose costs on economic production through two broad channels. First, aggressions and attacks during conflicts cause devastation and limit market transactions.

Second, the presence of non-state armed actors pushes households to modify behavior inspite of not facing violent shocks. Studies on the economic literature concentrate mostly on the impact of violent shocks during conflict (Blattman and Miguel 2010). Conflicts tend to affect food security by creating food shortages, which disrupt both upstream input markets and downstream output markets, thus deterring food production, commercialization and stock management

(Pierre Wilner Jeanty and Fred Hitzhusen, 2006). Depending on the location of the fights in a country, crops cannot be planted, weeded or harvested, decreasing dramatically the levels of agricultural production. In conflict situations, food producing regions experience seizing or destroying of food stocks, livestock and other assets, interrupting marketed supplies of food not only in these regions but also in neighboring regions. These predatory activities diminish food availability and food access directly, because both militias and regular armies in the field tend to subsist by extorting the unarmed populations for food and any other productive resources. management (Pierre Wilner Jeanty and Fred Hitzhusen, 2006). Any food that the militias and armies cannot use immediately in the contested areas will be destroyed to prevent their adversaries from accessing it.

Communal conflicts involve groups with permanent or semi-permanent armed militias but do not involve the government. However, it can escalate to include government forces. Hendrix and Salehyan (2010) insist that communal conflicts are common in the Sahel, the zone of transition between the Saharan desert and Savanna. . In an attempt to improve our understanding and fill this gap of knowledge, the study will attempt to answer questions related to the socio-economic characteristics of respondent; and explore the effect of conflict on agricultural marketing and suggest strategies to enhance peaceful co-existence in the study area. Not much is known on this topic in the study area. There is therefore, knowledge gap which the result will close. The specific objectives are:

1. to describe the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.
2. to ascertain the perceived effects of communal clashes on marketing and distribution of agricultural produce and
3. Suggest coping strategies during conflicts.

## METHODOLOGY

The study area was Imo state. Imo state is in Southeast of Nigeria. Imo State lies within latitudes 4°45'N and 7°15'N, and longitude 6°50'E and 7°25'E with an area of around 5,100 sq km. It is bordered by Abia State on the East, by the River Niger and Delta State on the west, by Anambra State to the north and Rivers State to the south. The state is rich in natural resources including crude oil, natural gas, lead, zinc. The estimated population in 2016 is 4.8 million and the population density varies from 230-1,400 people per square kilometer. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to sample respondents for the study. The first stage comprised sampling of the three zones in Imo state: Owerri, Orlu and Okigwe. The second stage involved selection of local governments with cases of communal conflicts. In Owerri zone we have Ahiazu Mbaise, Mbaitoli and Owerri-west. In Okigwe zone we

have Ehime Mbanjo and Isiala Mbanjo, while in Orlu zone we have Ohaji/Egbema and Oguta. The third stage involved selection of communities from each of the local government areas where conflicts occurred. They are as follows: Ahiazu Mbaise (Ogbe-ahiara), Mbaitoli (Ogbaku), Owerri-west (Irete), Ehime Mbanjo (Oriagu), Isiala Mbanjo (Anara), Ohaji/Egbema (Awarra) and Oguta (Akabor). The fourth stage comprised selection of the affected households from the list obtained from the Office of the Governor on Peace and Conflict Resolution, Owerri. The list contained a total of 1500 farm families and 10% of this population was selected to give a total sample size of 150 respondents. The study employed two sources of data collection and they include primary and secondary sources. The primary sources were collected through the use of a well-structured questionnaire. Data relating to the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, causes of communal conflicts, effects of communal conflicts and suggestions on how to solve problems arising from communal conflicts whereas the secondary sources include textbooks, past projects, internet, journals, literature related to study etc. Simple descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, frequency distribution was used to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of the respondent. Objective 1 was analyzed using percentage presented in table. Objective 2 was achieved on a 4 point likert-type rating scale of very serious (VS=4), serious (S=3), less serious (LS=2) and not serious (NS=1). This was computed thus:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{VS + S + LS + NS}{4} = \frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$$

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Socio-economic characteristics of respondents**

Table 1 shows that 8% were between 21-30years, 32% were between 31-40years, 8.7% were between 51-60years while 5.3% were between 61years and above. The remaining 46% were between 41-50years which implies that the majority of the farmers were within the age bracket taken to be relatively young and are receptive to innovations. The mean age was 43years. It was seen that 42% were females while 58% were males. The high percentage involvement of men could be explained by the dictates of prevailing culture. Men have numerous rights, responsibilities and privileges. They own land, pass same to their heirs and have opportunities of using it for collateral. The table showed also that 4.67% were widowed, 1.33% were divorced, 10% were single while 84% were married men and women. This means that the farmers in Southeast were more of married men and women, therefore, youths should be mobilized to do so. From the table, 2% had

no formal education, 23.3% attained primary education, 70.6% attained secondary education while 4% attained tertiary education. This implies that most farmers visited were literates. This has implication for benefits of modern education in terms of production, processing and marketing method. On family size, 4.7% have a household size of 10-12 members, 8.6% had 7-9 members, 38.7% had between 1-3 members while 48% had between 4-6 members. The mean household size is 6. The household size is adequate as it entails father, mother and biological children and or maids. Large household size could entail converting investable fund to consumptive fund. The table also showed that 6% have been into farming for between 1-10years, 21.3% have been into farming for 11-20years, while majority (72.6%) have been into farming for 21 and above. The mean years of farming experience was 11.3years. This implies that adequate years of farming enables a farmer to take resounding farm decision, have deeper knowledge of the topic under study and helps in technology utilization. He/she is equipped with knowledge and can always compare technologies while making reference to past practices. Table 1 showed also that 73.3% had between 0.25-3 hectares of farmland, 18% had 3.5-5 hectares, 6% had 5.5-7 hectares, while 2.6% had a whopping 7.5 hectares of land and more. This implies inequality in distribution of landed resources. Finally, 96.6 % belonged to social organization, while 3.3% did not belong to any organization.

**Effects of Communal Conflict on Marketing/Distribution in Imo State**

The table 2 shows the effects of communal conflicts on marketing/distribution in the study area. The major effects are increase in transportation costs with mean 3.65, decrease in agricultural output with mean 3.51 and increased prices of produce with mean 3.48 respectively. Others are: death/kidnapping of salesmen with mean 3.40, low supply of products with mean 3.34, delays vehicular movement with mean 3.33, reduction in the amount of goods supplied to market with mean 3.31, reduction in profit earned with mean 3.30, limitation of farmers in their market participation with mean 3.29, enormous drop in the amount of animals slaughtered with mean 3.28, delays in supply to market with mean 3.22, fear of attack with mean 3.19, disruption of agricultural extension activities/work with mean 3.15, disruption of credit opportunities with mean 3.07, reduction in the amount of crops distributed with mean 3.02, reduction in consumers demand with mean 2.93 and spoilage of produce with mean 2.83. This implies that, due to communal conflicts, there has been increase in transportation costs which makes people not been able to transport their produce to market for sale. It also increases prices of produce which makes people not been able to have enough food for consumption to meet

**Table 1:** Socioeconomic Characteristics of Semi-Urban Famers

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Age</b>		
21-30	12	8.0
31 – 40	48	32.0
41- 50	69	46.0
51 -60	13	8.7
61 and above	8	5.3
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	87	58.0
Female	63	42.0
<b>Education</b>		
No formal education	3	2.0
Primary	35	23.3
Secondary	106	70.6
Tertiary	6	4.0
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	15	10.0
Married	126	84.0
Widow	7	4.7
Divorced	2	1.3
<b>Farm Size</b>		
0.25-3	110	73.3
3.5-5	27	18.0
5.5-7	9	6.0
7 and above	4	2.6
<b>Household Size</b>		
1-3	58	38.7
4-6	72	48.0
7-9	13	8.6
10 and above	7	4.7
<b>Farming Experience (years)</b>		
1-10	9	6.0
11 -20	32	21.3
21 and above	109	72.6
<b>Organization Membership</b>		
Yes	145	96.6
No	5	3.3

**Field survey, 2015****Table 2:** Effects of Communal Conflicts on Marketing/Distribution

<b>Effects on Marketing/Distribution</b>	<b>VS</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>LS</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Remark</b>
Increase in transportation costs	99(66.0)	49(32.7)	2(1.3)	0(0)	3.65	VS
Decrease in agricultural output	82(54.7)	64(42.7)	3(2)	1(0.7)	3.51	VS
Low supply of products	66(44)	71(47.3)	12(8)	1(0.7)	3.34	VS
Increased prices of produce	80(53.3)	64(42.7)	4(2.7)	2(1.3)	3.48	VS
Reduction in profit earned	63(42)	70(46.7)	16(10.7)	1(0.7)	3.30	VS
Reduction in consumers demand	40(26.6)	66(44)	37(24.7)	7(4.7)	2.93	VS
Disruption of credit opportunities	48(32)	75(50)	17(11.3)	10(6.7)	3.07	VS
Limitation of farmers in their market participation	60(40)	74(49.3)	15(10)	1(0.7)	3.29	VS
Disruption of agricultural extension activities/work	56(37.3)	65(43.3)	24(16)	5(3.3)	3.15	VS
Enormous drop in the number of animals slaughtered	71(47.3)	55(36.7)	19(12.7)	5(3.3)	3.28	VS
Reduction in the amount of goods supplied to market	62(41.3)	77(51.3)	7(4.7)	4(2.7)	3.31	VS
Delay in supply to market	53(35.3)	80(53.3)	14(9.3)	3(2)	3.22	VS
Death/kidnapping of salesmen	77(51.3)	60(40)	9(6)	4(2.7)	3.40	VS
Reduction in the amount of crops distributed	30(20)	94(62.7)	25(16.7)	1(0.7)	3.02	VS
Spoilage of produce	58(38.7)	26(17.3)	49(32.7)	17(11.3)	2.83	VS
Delays vehicular movement	61(40.7)	77(51.3)	12(8)	0(0)	3.33	VS
Fear of attack	67(44.7)	49(32.7)	30(20)	4(2.7)	3.19	VS

**Source: Field Survey Data, 2015.** Mean > 2.50 = Very serious (VS) Mean < 2.50 = Not serious (NS)

**Table 3:** Suggested coping strategies

<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>*Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Relocation of farm inputs supplies drop-off	133	88.6
Engagement of different farm suppliers	101	67.3
Engage in less risky agricultural endeavors	122	81.3
Rebuilding multiple grain/storehouses	98	65.3
Provision of conflict early-warning systems	110	73.3
Provision of peace-sensitive social/economic assistance	137	91.3
Provision of emergency food aid	147	98.0

**Field Survey Data, 2015 \*Multiple responses**

their dietary needs. Products/goods are supplied in small quantity to markets as well as disruption of agricultural extension activities/work.

The sale of crops produced on the family farm is an important income source for the farm household. This could be a small part of income for some farmers consisting of one or two crops whose harvest was good enough to sell part of it on the market, to a large part of

income whereby sales are the result of a strategy of specialisation (Verwimp,2012). In the latter case the farm household only produces a limited number of crops which it sells in the market and whose earnings are used to buy the food needed for consumption. Cash crops often include coffee, tea, cacao, rice, maize and bananas. Violent conflict may disturb the marketing process of these crops be cutting off access to roads, disrupting transport, or in general prohibiting market transactions to take place.

Hence, the farm household becomes food insecure, not because its crop production capacity is imperilled but because it cannot command food in the market. Even when warring parties allow trade to take place, it may not be viable anymore for the traders to take part as a consequence of confiscation, theft or high taxes. Brück and Bozzolli (2009) find evidence that farmers retreated into subsistence activities during the civil war in Mozambique. Farmers may also be asked to provide warring factions with food supply in which case they make no profit at all and hence have less income to command food in the market.

While on average smaller than income derived from crops, a non-negligable part of farm income is derived from products emanating from livestock such as meat, eggs, milk, wool and skins. Big livestock such as cows also provide manure for the farm and represent an

important asset for the household. It can be sold in times of distress to prevent hunger and

starvation, an act of what economists call consumption smoothing. In times of conflict however, livestock may be stolen or killed by warring parties. In times of distress, market prices may be low as the supply of animals increases or farmers may be unable to get to market, as demonstrated by Verpoorten (2006) in a case study on Rwanda. In a specific type of conflict, which opposes cultivators and pastoralists, entire

livelihoods may be at stake, in particular over the contest of scarce land.

Conflict has a direct and indirect effect, on food security, undermining it through various channels. Direct effects include razing farm land, spreading cluster bombs and mines, killing livestock, destroying machinery and blockading access to markets. Conflict disrupts access to markets by both consumers and producers. It discourages investment into agricultural modernization, thereby reducing the availability of food. It strips government of tax revenues that prevent the establishment of social safety nets. Furthermore, conflict deteriorates the environment for the utilization of food. The political and economic radiation of conflict beyond its geographic borders is an important indirect effect as well, which is manifested in refugee migration, the deterioration of regional investment climates and the crowding out of pro-growth policy priorities that would otherwise receive more attention

**Suggested Coping Strategies**

Table 3 showed the various coping strategies suggested by respondents. The table showed that provision of emergency food aid with 98% response is the major strategy indicated by respondents. Other strategies included engagement of different farm suppliers (67.3%), engaging in less risky agriculture endeavors (81.3%), (activities that does not require frequent travels to the markets), building multiple grain store houses (65.3%), provision of conflict early-warning systems (73.3%), and provision of peace-sensitive social/economic assistance with 91.3% response.

**CONCLUSION**

Communal conflicts have both social and economic repercussions affecting mankind in the society. Economically, communal conflicts affect the marketing and distribution of farm produce, thereby increasing human hardship. It results in high transportation cost, low supply of products, reduction in consumer demand, delay in food supply to market among others. Farmers

cope when the relocate drop-off points, receive emergency food aid, social/economic assistance, engage multiple suppliers.

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