



## **Addressing Food Security Challenges in Nigeria**

<sup>1</sup>Dr. R.O. Oji & <sup>2</sup>Rev. Fr. Jude Anih

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science,  
Enugu State University of Science & Technology, Enugu, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Social Science Unit, School of General Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

### **ABSTRACT**

An increasing number of countries are facing growing levels of acute food insecurity, reversing years of development gains. Even before COVID-19 reduced incomes and disrupted supply chains, chronic and acute hunger were on the rise due to various factors including conflict, socio-economic conditions, natural hazards, climate change and pests. COVID-19 impacts have led to severe and widespread increases in global food insecurity, affecting vulnerable households in almost every country, with impacts expected to continue through 2021 and beyond. This research looks at rising food insecurity during and the possible ways Nigeria can respond to the challenge. Using secondary sources of data collection and applying the technique of content analysis the study observed that before the COVID-19 pandemic, there was already an existing gap in the Nigerian food system, which led to the importation of food items to augment local production in order to meet local demand. The pandemic has further disrupted each segment of the food supply chain, but the effects are different along the rural-urban continuum. Based on these findings, the paper concludes by positing that policy-makers need clear and reliable data and analyses to inform policies, strategies and actions.

**Keywords:** Food insecurity and Security, Covid-19, Climate Change, Nigeria & Policy makers.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The 2021 Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC 2021) highlights the remarkably high severity and numbers of people in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) or equivalent in 55 countries/territories, driven by persistent conflict, pre-existing and COVID-19-related economic shocks, and weather extremes. The number identified in the 2021 edition is the highest in the report's five-year existence. While conflict continues to displace people, disrupt livelihoods and damage economies, the COVID-19 pandemic and related containment measures have exacerbated pre-existing drivers of fragility, widened inequalities and exposed structural vulnerabilities of local and global food systems, hitting the most economically vulnerable households particularly hard. The shocks come amid the frequent threat of weather extremes that result in crop and livestock losses, destroy homes and displace people. Together and separately, such shocks – especially when persistent or recurrent drive millions of people to lose their livelihoods and lack adequate food. These shocks also increase the risk of all forms of malnutrition, and, in the most extreme cases, cause death.

In Nigeria, Herdsmen and farmers conflicts have remained the most predominately resource-use conflict in Nigeria and the West African region at large. The necessity to provide food of crops and animal origin, as well as raw materials for industry and export in order to meet ever-growing demands, has led to extensive use of land (Okoli & Ogayi, 2018). The competition between these two agricultural land user-groups, however, has often times turned into serious concealed and unconcealed manifestation of hostilities and social friction in many parts of Nigeria. Mikailu (2016) stated that the conflicts have

demonstrated high potential to exacerbate the insecurity and food crisis particularly in rural communities where most of the conflicts are localized, with reverberating repercussions nationwide. International Crisis Group (2017) asserts that this interdependent relationship on each other is evident that both groups depend on each other for survival, and it formed the benchmark for exchange and which brought about even development. The agricultural farmers and the pastoralist have a long heritage and economic relationships, though there were sources of disagreement existing between both groups that were resolved by both groups peacefully.

The activities of the herdsmen include the movement of their cattle to graze on farmlands which belong to crop farmers, while the farmers require from the pastoralist protein in the form of dairy products that are needed for their day-to-day consumption and manure to fertilize their fields. Similarly, Monod, (2018) noted that the survival of the pastoralist group is formed under interaction with sedentary farmers. Thus, it becomes apparent that the interdependent linkage flows as each group needs water, land, fodder and other land use for their economic activities. Unfortunately, this form of relationship that has existed centuries back has been truncated with many disputes arising across the regions that have grown into widespread crisis, death, and internal displacement of persons.

### **Concept of Food Security**

Without necessarily being definitional, we intend to conceptualize food security. This becomes imperative in the sense that it has assumed the status of an “essentially contested concept” (Gallie, 2019). Simply because the concept of food security has been used in various ways, food security in its most basic form is defined as the access to all people to the food needed for a healthy life at all times (Eide, 2019). Though, in a simple language, a country is food-secure when majority of its population have access to food of adequate quantity and quality consistent with decent existence at all times (Aluko, 2017). What is implied in this definition is that food must be available to the people to an extent that will meet some acceptable level of nutritional standards in terms of a calorie, protein and minerals which the body needs; the possession of the means by the people to acquire (i.e. access) and reasonable continuity and consistency in its supply. In other words, food security can be taken to mean access by all people at all times to sufficient food for an active, health life. According to Abubakar and Dano (2018), its central elements are: (a) the availability of food and (b) the possession of the ability for its acquisition. Food insecurity on the other hand represents lack of access to enough food and can be either chronic or temporary. In chronic food insecurity, which arises from a lack of resources to produce or acquire food, the diet is persistently inadequate. Jared, Ahmed and Singham (2010), elaborated on five dimensions of food security as food availability, food accessibility, food utilization, stability of food supply and food and nutrition safety.

**Food Availability:** refers to the physical presence of food which may come from own production, purchases from internal market or import from overseas. Gregory *et al.*, (2015) explained that food availability refers to the existence of food stocks for consumption.

**Food Access:** Household food access is the ability to obtain sufficient food of guaranteed quality and quantity to meet nutritional requirements of all household members. Here, the food should be at right place at the right time and people should have economic freedom or purchasing power to buy adequate and nutritious food. Kuwornu *et al.*, (2017), explained that food access is determined by physical and financial resources, as well as by social and political factors.

**Food Utilization:** This refers to ingestion and digestion of adequate and quality food for maintenance of good health. This means proper biological use of food, requiring a diet that contains sufficient energy and essential nutrients, as well as knowledge of food storage, processing, basic nutrition and child care and illness management.

**Stability of Food Supply:** This refers to the continuous supply of adequate food all year round without shortages. In the mist of growing population, unfavourable climatic patterns and growing demand for biofuel use; constant supply of food will depend on improved productivity and availability of proper storage facilities. Means of distribution of food required improvement through provision of motorable

roads to food growing areas. The use of storage van here will be a key element to prevent post-harvest losses to sustain the interest of farmers to grow more to feed the population.

**Food and Nutrition Safety:** Food safety is part of a wide range of issues which go beyond the avoidance of food-borne biological pathogens, chemical toxicants, and other hazards (FAO, 2018). There is growing concern of consumers of developed countries about the effects of the food they eat on their health. Consumers expect food not only to meet their nutritional needs but also should be wholesome and tasty, and to be produced ethically respecting the environment, animal health and welfare. This, however, is not a priority in developing countries where the major concerns are access and availability of a nutritious diet throughout the year at relatively low costs (FAO, 2018). Developing countries are forced to overlook food safety due to high poverty and illiteracy rate. Food safety constitutes an effective platform for poverty alleviation, social and economic development, while opening and enlarging opportunities for trade. However, ensuring food safety comes with a cost, and excessive food safety requirements may impose constraints on production, storage and distribution systems, which may possibly result in trade barriers or impede competitiveness (FAO, 2018).

National food security was used to describe whether a country had access to enough food to meet dietary energy requirements of her citizens. To some it connotes self sufficiency, which means a country produces enough food to meet its population's demand. But broadly, national food security measures the extent to which a country has the means to make available to its people the food needed or demanded, irrespective of whether the food is domestically produced or imported (Pinstrup-Andersen, 2019). Food insecurity is the absence of food security and applies to a wide range of phenomena ranging from famine to periodic hunger to uncertain food supply (Bokeloh *et al.*, 2009). Food Insecurity is the inability of a household or individuals to meet their daily required food consumption levels in the face of fluctuating production, food price and income (Moharjan and Chhetri, 2006). Food insecurity is therefore caused by various factors some of which are multifaceted. Food no doubt is a veritable weapon used in foreign policy implementation. Food is life, hence food is an instrument of national power and second, food is used to achieve political ends, because if people are well fed, they would be able ready to contribute to the effective implementation of government policies (Bamisaye, 2017). No doubt food has become a new form of weapon in international relations. Expectedly, governments may use food resources in international diplomacy for two purposes viz: to influence international food markets, and secondly to influence international economic and political relationships beyond food markets.

In the same vein, food security has been promoted by the United Nations as the most basic human need and as a central indicator of absolute poverty and physical well being. Food security refers not only to an adequate aggregate supply of food, but also means that "all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food". This requires not just enough food to go around. It requires that people have ready access to food (UNDP, 2016:24 also cited in Jenkins and Scanlan, 2018), this is measured using two indicators: (1) food supply is measured as the mean daily per capita supply of calories and protein (FAO, 2016) and (2) the child hunger rate is measured by the percentage of children under age 5 who are undernourished (UNDP, 2019). It is in this context that Clover (2017) averred that 'no human right has been so frequently and spectacularly violated in recent times as the right to food'. Africa which reversed from being a key exporter of agricultural commodities into being a net importer, has the highest percentage of undernourished people and has shown less progress on reducing the prevalence of undernourishment in the last 30 years. Chronic food insecurity now affects some 28% of the population that is nearly 200 million people who are suffering from malnutrition. Acute food insecurity in 2003 is affecting 38 million people in Africa who are facing outright risk of famine with 24,000 dying from hunger daily. Famines are the most visible and extreme manifestation of acute food insecurity.

Food insecurity is no longer seen simply as a failure of agriculture to produce sufficient food at the national level, but instead as a failure of livelihoods to guarantee access to sufficient food at the household level. Today, most common definition begin with individual entitlement, though recognizing the complex inter-linkages between the individual, the household, the community, the nation and the

international community (Clover, 2017). In the 2016 Rome declaration on world food security, food security is defined as:

food that is available at all times, to which all persons have means of access, there is nutritionally adequate in terms of quantity, quality and variety, and is acceptable within the given culture (cited in Clover, 2017).

Availability, access and affordability are all elements of food security complex issues that encompass a wide range of interrelated economic, social and political factors – internal and external which challenge Nigeria’s ability to address food security. Haile (2016) identified a number of factors that are responsible for the precarious food insecurity, in Nigeria. They are: low agricultural productivity, lack of agricultural policies, country’s internal crisis (farmers/herders crisis), poor infrastructure and high transport costs, lack of appropriate marketing strategies, frequent extreme weather events, high – disease burden including HIV/AIDS, weak financial support systems, lack of safety net systems and political conflicts. The greatest challenge facing food security in Nigeria too for Abubakar and Dano (2018) is poverty and crisis from political instability.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Methods of Data Collection and Analysis**

This study adopted Documentary research design. The documentary research design attempts to explore cause and affect relationships where causes already exist and cannot be manipulated. It uses what already exist or documented, and looks backward to explain why. Secondary sources were strictly used in collecting data for the study. The secondary methods of data collection that we consulted are text book, academic journals, official documents, newspapers and magazines and the internet publications. A critical study of the secondary sources was done in order to determine the data that is relevant to the study. Data collected was analyzed using the qualitative descriptive method of analysis. Qualitative descriptive analysis is used to summarize the information generated in the research.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A Theory is needed to vividly explain the farmers -herders conflict escalation, this study adopts the frustration aggression theory to discuss the issues in Farmers-Herders conflict and to allow a more in-depth understanding of the causes and impact of farmers’ herders Conflict on socio economic development.

#### **Theoretical Framework of Analysis**

Frustration–aggression theory also known as the ‘frustration–aggression–displacement theory’, is a theory of aggression proposed by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer and Robert Sears in 1939 and further developed by Neal Miller in 1941 and Leonard Berkowitz in 1961.

The theory says that aggression is the effort to attain a goal (Friedman Schustack2014).When first formulated, the theory stated that frustration always precedes aggression, and aggression is the sure consequence of frustration. Two years later, however, Millerand Searsre-formulated the theory to suggest that while frustration creates a need to respond, some form of aggression is one possible outcome. Therefore, the re-formulated theory stated that while frustration prompts a behavior that may or may not be aggressive, any aggressive behavior is the result of frustration, making frustration not sufficient, but a necessary condition for aggression (ZillmannDolf, 1979).

It attempts to give an explanation as to the cause of violence. Frustration is the “condition which exists when a goal-response suffers interference”, while aggression is defined as an act whose goal-response is injury to an organism (or an organism surrogate).The theory says that frustration causes aggression, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target(scapegoat).This theory is also used to explain riots and revolutions, which both are believed to be

caused by poorer and more deprived sections of society who may express their bottled up frustration and anger through violence(wordpress.com, 2012).

### **Application of the theory to the study**

According to Olu-Adeyemi (2017), a number of other variables influence the use of violence as well, for example the culture, the society, and the political environment. The culture must at least accept, if not approve, violent action as a means to an end.

Violence is also more likely if the current leadership and/or the socioeconomic/political system is seen as unresponsive.

As Olu-Adeyemi asserted that the central theme of the theory is that scarcity is the product of insufficient supply (impact of climate population explosion) or unequal distribution of resource as a result of deprivation which ultimately leads to aggression. On the issue of frustration, it means that one's access to means of livelihood (farming or grazing as the case may be) is being thwarted by another or possibly by particular circumstances and that one's reaction to this thwarting is that of annoyance. Olu-Adeyemi also added that, deprivation is not based on wants or needs alone, but on the wants and needs that we feel we ought to have or deserve. More often than not, the Herdsmen are frustrated due to desertification, thus, the reality is that they face forced migration and as they migrate, series of challenges are encountered which in turn brings frustration. Similarly, farmers who have struggled to cultivate farmlands also get frustrated whenever herds of cattle destroy their farmlands. The Fulani Herdsmen terror is a struggle over values and claims to scarce resources in which their aims are to neutralize, injure or to eliminate the host communities in a bid to fend for their animals. The violent activities of the Fulani Herdsmen occur because of the accumulation of residual instigated effect of frustration.

The terrorist activities of the herdsmen are traceable to the desertification that has caused depletion in grazing opportunities or scarcity of feed for their animals which in the long-run affects their economic wellbeing. If a herdsmen loss his flock to drought and water scarcity, he may be frustrated because of the loss of livelihood. From this reality, he may be aggressive and since, he cannot channel it to the natural causes, he may in the long-run channel it to any person or group that obstructs his migration to a safe area. On the side of farmers and host communities in Benue state and in Nigeria at large frustration also occur whenever animals of the herdsmen trample on their farmlands to eat up their crops. And because they are frustrated too, they become aggressive and channel their aggression to the herdsmen and their cows. Owing to this reality, conflict and confrontation is inevitable.

### **Drivers of Food Security**

Scholars have studied different drivers that influence food security. Amongst them, three drivers stand out: environmental and climate change, the economic situation of the population, and political and social unrest or conflict (Oyinloye, Akinola, Akande, Akinyele & Mosimabale, 2018).

### **Environmental and Climate change as a driver of food insecurity**

Corvalan, (2018) sees the environmental factors as all those factors in the physical environment that exercise or may exercise deleterious (harmful) effects on the physical development, agricultural development and survival of man. In like manner, Ademuwagun and Oduntan (2016) defined environmental factors as the provision and control of all those factors in people's physical surrounding which can affect their daily productive activities. Environmental factors can be any form of harm, danger, peril or any risk of loss in the environment. He described it further as any situation in nature or in the environment which is destructive or probably detrimental to man or any other component of the environment. It results from the deterioration of environmental quality. Chen (2015) posited that humankind currently faces significant global environmental problems including climate change, shortage of clean and accessible freshwater, ecosystem degradation, soil erosion, and biodiversity loss. Most of these problems are as a result of climate change.

Climate change is defined as ‘any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity’ (IPCC 2001: 2). Climate change has turned into a global issue and has worsened in recent times. It is now considered a climate crisis and threatens the agricultural production due to higher and more inconsistent temperatures as well as the variation in rainfall patterns and extreme events, such as droughts and floods, occurring more often (Ojo and Adebayo, 2017; Ogbo et al., 2018). With this change, researchers decided to study the relationship between climate change and food security. Studies were done concerning one single country, several countries, or simply regions. Most of the research has been conducted through surveys, direct observation, and weather data. They often used a modeling approach, because they often predicted future scenarios (Zewdie, 2014; Berhanu and Wolde, 2019; Wossen et al., 2018; Fudjumdjum et al. 2019). Researchers agree upon several impacts that climate change already has or will have on food security: on the cultivation and crop yields, as well as on biodiversity.

Climate change affects the first aspect of the food supply chain most. Food production starts with crop growth and cultivation. These are strongly affected by climate variability and therefore especially the agricultural sector is hit by climate change (Jung and Kunstmann, 2017; Wossen and Berger, 2019). In Iran for example Karimi et al. (2018) have with the help of crop modeling looked towards the possible impacts, the decline of water resources and precipitation, warmer temperature, and higher CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will have on crop growth and food production. Their findings were similar to the majority of research: food production depends on a steady climate and enough clean water resources.

Another effect climate change has on the beginning of the food supply chain is in the fishery sector. According to Ficke (2017) and Muringai et al. (2020) droughts that are happening due to climate variability are the biggest problem in that sector. Water temperature is increasing, and the level of oxygen is decreasing which leads to a change of fish habitats. The fish might then be contaminated with bacteria, might reproduce less, or get wiped out completely. Droughts can also lead to desertification and lakes disappear, on which small-scale fishers depend (Tirado et al, 2020).

#### **Economic development as a driver of food insecurity**

Previous literature suggests that the economy influences food security. Economic growth is one of the biggest variables to measure the economy and can be closely connected to food security. Studies by several scholars provide proof that the better the economic growth is, the more people are likely to be food secure (Warr, 2014). Hence a weak economy or an economic crisis can lead to food insecurity in a country (Tawodzera, 2011; Musemwa, 2015; FAO et al, 2019). Most research has been conducted in developing countries in Africa because especially developing countries might have thriving economic growth, but at the same time are vulnerable to an economic crisis, because they are often low-income countries, countries in conflict and the countries that are hit most by climate change. All this increases the vulnerability of a population (FAO, 2019).

For the food security status of a household, the economic situation of the individual is significant as well. Many researchers analyzed unemployment as a factor leading to food insecurity. It is one of the most explored factors in the field of economic development and food security. Being unemployed puts people into poverty and poor people usually depend on the market to obtain food. They spend a higher percentage of their income on food and consequently suffer more likely from food insecurity (Etana and Tolossa, 2017). A lot of other literature argues that unemployment, in particular long-term unemployment, does not only result in people spending less money on food but also causes people to change their diet. Evidence showed that they bought cheaper and less healthy food, which in turn impacted the quality of the daily calorie intake. Other studies also found that consumption patterns change when one gets unemployed (Leichenko and Silva, 2017). Therefore, unemployment can lead to food insecurity on the individual level.

Food prices are another indicator leading to food insecurity (Hertel et al., 2016; Smith et al, 2017). Global food price drops or rises hit especially countries with an uneven trade balance. When a country depends on exporting agricultural goods or minerals, they are more vulnerable to global price volatility (FAO, 2019). As mentioned above, most scholars argue that often developing countries are affected by economic

crises. However, all countries can be affected by a sudden global economic shock. Especially the 2008 financial crisis and the recession that followed have negatively impacted several countries in the Global North. Davis and Geiger (2017) analyzed the demand for food aid in Europe after 2008. They argue that the need for more food aid represents higher food insecurity. They found a rise in food aid and therefore more food insecurity after 2017. Griffith et al. (2018) have, on the other hand, examined the food expenditure of people in the UK and concluded that after 2008 there was a significant change in what people bought. Further studies have also shown identical results in studies covering developing countries (Browning and Crossley, 2019; Huang et al, 2016).

#### **Political and Social Issues as drivers of food insecurity:**

The FAO (2017) has asserted that conflict-affected countries have on average higher rates of food insecure people than countries not affected by conflict. Violent conflicts like the farmers and herders conflict can have short term effects on people's nutritional status. This in turn can have long-lasting impacts on their livelihoods. There are several ways where violent conflict affects food security. However at first, it has to be mentioned that the effect conflict has on food security depends on what kind of conflict it is, considering that 'measuring and categorizing conflict is not straightforward' (Martin-Shields and Stojetz, 2019). Studies show that the outcome depends on the type of conflict.

Literature shows that conflict often occurs in rural areas, areas that have a lot of agriculture (FAO, 2017). Consequently, violent conflict such as farmers and herders conflict experienced in Nigeria can especially impact agricultural production. On the one hand, food production can decrease. Cultivation is interrupted, where people depend on agriculture. Often fields were ruined by bombs, or it was simply unsafe to work on them (Baumann and Kuemmerle, 2016). Other times farmers abandoned their lands because farmers or workers were killed, people were forced to leave, fled voluntarily, or were involved in the fighting. This can lead to a labor shortage and therefore fewer people harvesting which then can lead to crop yield loss and food insecurity (Suthakar and Bui: 2018; Eklund, et al.: 2016; Adelaja et al., 2019). On the other hand, agricultural productivity can increase and have a positive impact on the food security situation in conflict areas. Agriculture can be an important income source for the militants. Jaafar and Woerz (2016) analyzed the agricultural productivity of the Islamic State in their controlled area until 2016. Their findings were that it is an important source of domestic food security.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The findings in this study have shown that the effects of Fulani herdsmen and farmers crisis on food security in Benue State Nigeria is destruction of lives and properties, displacement of women and children. Unless and until, these root causes are squarely addressed by Federal government with political will, peaceful resolution of the conflict will be farfetched because focusing attention to the manifestation of the crisis can only lead to its escalation.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Policy-makers need clear and reliable data and analyses to inform policies, strategies and actions. But information is often conflicting, based on various data sources and employs different methodologies that do not have an agreed equivalent in terms of standard IPC/CH phases.

*Also* there is need for governments across Nigeria to build successful interventions on existing social safety nets. Such tactics include assistance for farmers, unemployment benefits, and public food programs. Avoiding food export restrictions is also needed to help prevent food prices and insecurity from rising further.

Food security experts also urge governments for more transformative policies and initiatives. Progress toward global poverty reduction has allowed some households to spend smaller portions of their incomes on food and decrease their vulnerability to food price shocks, though the pandemic appears to be undoing some of those gains. The agricultural sector can take steps to fortify supply chains against future disruptions, particularly through diversification. This could mean food companies source raw food

materials from a diverse group of farms across multiple regions, or individual farmers expand their variety of crops and livestock.

As the need for climate action takes on increasing urgency, food and environmental experts have stressed the importance of transforming food systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These efforts include reducing food waste and emphasizing plant-based or nutrient-dense diets. Amid the pandemic lockdown, farmers in India used social media to redirect their produce directly to consumers. On a larger scale, China launched its “clean plate” campaign, aimed at pressuring citizens not to throw away food. Beijing is also implementing a national nutrition plan. Some countries, including India, Mexico, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, have taxed or banned sugary foods and drinks.

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