



RESILIENCE OF SMALLHOLDER FARMERS TO RURAL BANDITRY IN NORTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In the last decade, armed banditry has had significant impact on the rural population of Northwestern Nigeria. This tests the resilience of smallholder farmers in Northwestern Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

This paper adopted descriptive method and employed secondary sources of data. Secondary sources of data include academic articles, books, government reports and media accounts of events in North Western Nigeria and the resilience of small-farmers to rural banditry in the region

Objectives

1

To examine the dynamics of rural banditry in North-western Nigeria.

2

To determine the threats of rural banditry on the livelihood of smallholder farmers.

3

To investigate the resilience of small-scale farmers to rural banditry in this region.

Findings

On Banditry

- Banditry violence has affected populations living in Zamfara, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi and Katsina States
- About 21 million people living in these States have been exposed to insecurity from the activities of bandits. The banditry violence began because of farmer-herder conflict in 2011 and intensified between 2017 and 2018 to include cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, sexual violence and killings
- Artisanal gold mining and competition among artisanal miners for the control of gold reserves have contributed to the growing influence of armed groups in the Northwestern Nigeria.
- Smallholder farmers produce food and non-food products on a small-scale with limited external inputs, cultivating field and tree crops as well as livestock, fish and other aquatic organisms. Ironically, they are not always full-time smallholders.

On Smallholder Farmers

- The main factors undermining production include reliance on rainfed agriculture, smallholder land-holding, low productivity due to poor planting material, low soil fertility, land degradation, limited use of irrigation and limited agricultural extension system.
- Livelihoods are derived, to varying degrees, from smallholder farming - including livestock production and artisanal fisheries - agricultural wage labour, wage or self-employment in the rural non-farm economy and migration. While some households rely primarily on one type of activity, most of them seek to diversify their livelihood base to reduce risk.
- Rapid population growth has pushed farmers into unsettled land traditionally used for cattle grazing
- As a coping strategy, farmers use commercial fertilizers as opposed to dungs from animals for fertilizer. Since many farmers and herders live at subsistence level, changes such as these have threatened their ability to survive in an environment where armed conflict thrives.

Implications for Security

- The inability of the State Governments to adequately address the challenges of rural armed banditry created an opportunity for the informal security sector to contest for control of the security of the area. For instance, a militant vigilante group (MVG), otherwise known as Yan Sakai (volunteers) has emerged in Zamfara State. These are individuals committed to protecting the territorial integrity of their community against hoodlums, bandits and armed robbers.



Image Source: www.channelstv.com

- The paper argues that there is a need for agriculture-based livelihoods for the majority of rural communities and the smallholder farmers in the region because they are facing threats from both natural and human-induced hazards.
- This paper discloses that there is the need to strengthen the capacities of the relevant government institutions to build new, resilient food systems for self-sufficiency, work with organized institutions that can support and bring together a polarized population and promote social cohesion in Northwestern Nigeria.
- This paper concludes that successfully resolving and mitigating rural banditry and other violence conflicts can help build trust and confidence, and have a positive impact on agricultural livelihoods, food security and nutrition, as well as on peace-building between different livelihood groups in farming communities in this region.

References

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