

INSECURITY AND FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF APA LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF BENUE STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated Insecurity and food security in Nigeria: A Study of Apa Local Government of Benue State. The study examined the nature and patterns of insecurity experienced in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State and assessed the impact of insecurity on agricultural production and food availability in the study area and two research questions were formulated. The researcher made use of descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 1,500, A sample of 150 respondents was selected using a multistage sampling technique. The main instruments for data collection were structured questionnaire and interview, titled “Insecurity the Bane of Food Insecurity Questionnaire (IBFIQ)” Data were collected through field administration of questionnaires with the assistance of trained research assistants, quantitative data collected through questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage, and standard deviation) and inferential with the aid of Statistical Package for Social

Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Qualitative data obtained from interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis. The result of the study showed among other that there is High Prevalence of Insecurity, these forms of insecurity have created widespread fear, disrupted social and economic life, and significantly destabilized rural livelihoods, severe Impact on Agricultural Activities, Insecurity has directly affected farming, with 80% of respondents abandoning their farmlands, while 68% reported reducing the size of cultivated land due to fear of attacks and disruption of Food Access and Availability, the study found that 75% of respondents experienced sharp increases in food prices, and 65% could no longer access local markets due to insecurity. In light of the findings, which reveal that insecurity significantly undermines food production, disrupts rural livelihoods, and endangers educational outcomes, the following recommendations among others are proposed: Strengthen Local and National Security Measures: There is a critical need for both state and federal governments to prioritize rural security, particularly in food-producing areas like Apa LGA, Promote Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: Long-term peace is necessary for sustained food production and community development. The government, NGOs, and traditional institutions should.

Key Words: Insecurity, Food Security, Rural Livelihood, Farmer Herders Conflict and Food Production

Introduction

Food security has increasingly become one of the most critical development concerns globally because it is fundamental to human survival, economic productivity, and sustainable national development. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines food security as a situation in which "all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 2009). This

definition underscores four interrelated dimensions of food security: food availability, food accessibility, food utilization, and food stability. A breakdown in any of these dimensions results in food insecurity, which manifests in hunger, malnutrition, poverty, reduced productivity, poor health outcomes, and social instability (FAO, 2023).

Globally, food insecurity has become increasingly complex due to the interaction of climate change, economic recession, pandemics, environmental degradation, population growth, political instability, and armed conflicts. According to the Global Report on Food Crises (2024), more than 281 million people across 59 countries experienced acute food insecurity in 2023, with violent conflicts remaining the principal driver of food crises in many developing countries (Global Network Against Food Crises [GNFC], 2024). Countries experiencing prolonged insecurity often witness declining agricultural productivity, disrupted food supply chains, population displacement, inflation in food prices, and deterioration in household livelihoods. The relationship between insecurity and food security has attracted increasing scholarly and policy attention because conflict directly undermines agricultural production and sustainable livelihoods. Agriculture remains the backbone of many developing economies, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where over 60 percent of the population depends directly on farming for food and income (World Bank, 2023). When insecurity escalates, farmers are unable to cultivate their lands, access markets, obtain agricultural inputs, or safely harvest crops. Consequently, agricultural output declines, household incomes diminish, food prices increase, and poverty intensifies. Nigeria presents a paradoxical situation regarding food security. Despite possessing over 70 million hectares of agricultural land, diverse climatic conditions suitable for crop production, and an agricultural sector employing approximately one-third of the labour force, the country continues to experience widespread food insecurity (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023). Agriculture

contributes significantly to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and serves as the principal source of livelihood for millions of rural households. However, the sector faces persistent challenges including inadequate infrastructure, climate variability, poor mechanization, limited access to credit, post-harvest losses, weak extension services, and increasing insecurity.

Over the last decade, insecurity has emerged as perhaps the most significant obstacle to agricultural development and food security in Nigeria. The country has experienced various forms of violent conflict, including insurgency in the North-East, armed banditry in the North-West, kidnapping, communal conflicts, cattle rustling, militancy, and recurring farmer-herder conflicts across the Middle Belt (International Crisis Group, 2023). These security challenges have significantly reduced agricultural productivity by forcing farmers to abandon their farmlands, destroying crops and farming infrastructure, disrupting rural markets, discouraging investment in agriculture, and displacing millions of people from their communities.

Benue State occupies a strategic position in Nigeria's agricultural economy because of its vast fertile land, abundant water resources, and favourable climatic conditions. Popularly referred to as the "**Food Basket of the Nation**," the state is one of Nigeria's leading producers of yam, cassava, rice, maize, soybean, guinea corn, millet, citrus fruits, vegetables, and several other food crops. Agriculture constitutes the primary occupation of more than 80 percent of the state's rural population and contributes substantially to household income, employment generation, and national food supply (Benue State Government, 2023). Ironically, despite its agricultural endowments, Benue State has become one of the region's most severely affected by violent insecurity, particularly the recurrent farmer-herder conflicts. Reports indicate that thousands of farmers have lost their lives, while many communities have experienced repeated attacks leading to displacement, destruction of farms, livestock

losses, and abandonment of agricultural activities (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2023). The persistent insecurity has transformed several productive farming communities into internally displaced persons (IDP) settlements, thereby reducing agricultural output and increasing dependence on humanitarian assistance. Among the affected local government areas is Apa Local Government Area, a predominantly agrarian community in southern Benue State. The economy of Apa Local Government depends largely on subsistence and commercial agriculture, with crops such as yam, cassava, maize, rice, beans, and vegetables forming the major sources of household food and income. However, the area has experienced repeated incidents of insecurity arising from farmer-herder conflicts, communal disputes, armed attacks, kidnapping, and other violent crimes. These incidents have disrupted farming calendars, limited farmers' access to their lands, reduced labour availability, destroyed harvested produce, and weakened rural economic activities. The consequences of insecurity in Apa Local Government extend beyond agricultural production. Households experiencing displacement often lose access to food, clean water, healthcare, education, and other essential social services. Women and children become particularly vulnerable because they bear the greatest burden of food shortages, malnutrition, and livelihood disruptions. Rural markets become less functional due to fear of attacks, transportation costs increase, food prices rise significantly, and household purchasing power declines. These interconnected effects weaken all four pillars of food security, namely food availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability.

From a theoretical perspective, insecurity affects food security through multiple pathways. Violent conflict disrupts agricultural production by preventing access to farmland during planting, weeding, and harvesting periods. It also destroys physical assets such as irrigation facilities, storage structures, rural roads, and market infrastructure. Furthermore, insecurity discourages investment in agriculture, limits government extension services,

interrupts agricultural value chains, reduces labour productivity, and contributes to forced migration and displacement. Consequently, rural households become increasingly vulnerable to chronic food insecurity and poverty (FAO, 2023). Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between insecurity and food security in Nigeria. For instance, Adisa (2019) reported that farmer-herder conflicts significantly reduced agricultural productivity in Benue and Nasarawa States. Similarly, Adebayo and Olaniyi (2021) found that insecurity negatively affected crop production, household income, and rural livelihoods in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Likewise, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI, 2022) observed that conflict substantially increased food prices and reduced food accessibility among vulnerable rural households. Although these studies have contributed significantly to understanding the broader relationship between insecurity and food security, important gaps remain. First, many previous studies have focused on national or regional analyses without providing detailed empirical evidence from specific local government areas where insecurity directly affects farming households. Second, most existing studies primarily examine agricultural production losses while paying relatively limited attention to the multidimensional concept of food security that encompasses food availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability. Third, relatively few studies have investigated the coping mechanisms adopted by rural households in conflict-affected communities such as Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. Finally, the dynamic nature of insecurity in rural Benue State necessitates continuous empirical investigation to generate current evidence for effective policy formulation and intervention.

This study therefore seeks to bridge these gaps by examining the relationship between insecurity and food security in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. Specifically, the study investigates the nature and prevalence of insecurity, examines its

effects on agricultural production, assesses its influence on household food availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability, identifies coping strategies adopted by affected households, and proposes practical policy measures for enhancing food security in conflict-affected rural communities. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on conflict and food security by providing localized empirical evidence from Apa Local Government Area. The study will also provide useful information for policymakers, government agencies, development partners, humanitarian organizations, agricultural planners, security institutions, and community leaders in designing integrated interventions that simultaneously promote peacebuilding, agricultural development, rural livelihood restoration, and sustainable food security.

The study is anchored on Human Security Theory and supported by the Sustainable Livelihood Framework. These complementary frameworks explain how insecurity undermines agricultural livelihoods and ultimately threatens household food security. Human Security Theory was introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994) in the Human Development Report. The theory emerged as a shift from the traditional state-centred conception of security to a people-centred approach that emphasizes protecting individuals from threats to their survival, dignity, and well-being. According to UNDP (1994), human security consists of seven dimensions: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. The theory is founded on two central principles: freedom from fear and freedom from want. Freedom from fear implies protection against violence, conflict, and insecurity, while freedom from want emphasizes access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, healthcare, education, and employment (UNDP, 1994). Human Security Theory therefore argues that development cannot be achieved where individuals are exposed to chronic insecurity, hunger, poverty, and violence.

Applied to this study, Human Security Theory explains that insecurity in Apa Local Government Area directly threatens food security by disrupting agricultural production, reducing household income, limiting access to markets, destroying productive assets, and displacing farming populations. Farmers who fear attacks are less likely to cultivate their land, resulting in lower food production and declining household welfare. Consequently, insecurity becomes both a humanitarian and developmental challenge because it simultaneously threatens lives and livelihoods. The theory is particularly relevant because it links personal security with food security. It recognizes that ensuring physical safety is essential for agricultural productivity, livelihood sustainability, and economic development. Therefore, addressing insecurity is indispensable to achieving sustainable food security in rural communities.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following specific objectives are to :

- a. examine the nature and patterns of insecurity experienced in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State.
- b. assess the impact of insecurity on agricultural production and food availability in the study area.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. Apa Local Government Area was created in 1991 from the former Otukpo Local Government Area. The headquarters is located at Ugbokpo. The Local Government shares boundaries with Agatu, Gwer West, Otukpo, and parts of Kogi State. The area occupies approximately 1,040 square kilometres and has an estimated population of over 100,000 people (National Population Commission, 2006 Projection). Apa is predominantly rural, with agriculture serving as the principal

occupation of the inhabitants. Major food crops produced include: Yam, Cassava, Maize, Rice, Beans, Millet, Guinea corn and Vegetables. Livestock farming also constitutes an important source of livelihood. In recent years, the Local Government Area has experienced increasing incidents of insecurity. These security challenges have disrupted farming activities, displaced households, reduced agricultural production, and threatened food security, making the area suitable for this study. The population comprises all farming households in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State. For the purpose of this study, the target population consists of: household heads; farmers; community leaders; cooperative society members; and agricultural extension beneficiaries. According to records obtained from the Benue State Ministry of Agriculture and local authorities, the estimated population of registered farming households in Apa Local Government Area is 8,540 households. Therefore, the study population consists of 8,540 farming households. A multistage sampling procedure was employed. Simple random sampling was used to select eight (8) council wards from the eleven wards in Apa Local Government Area. From each selected ward, five communities were randomly selected, within each selected community, households were identified with the assistance of village heads and agricultural extension officers, systematic random sampling was used to select respondents proportionately from each community until the required sample size of 400 respondents was achieved. This sampling procedure ensured adequate representation of all farming communities. The major instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher after reviewing relevant literature. The questionnaire is titled: Insecurity and Food The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity. The instrument was presented to: two experts in Agricultural Economics, one expert in Measurement and Evaluation, and one expert in Peace and Conflict Studies. The experts examined the instrument with respect to: clarity; relevance; adequacy; wording; sequencing; and alignment with the research objectives. Their observations and

recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot study. The questionnaire was administered to 40 farming households in Agatu Local Government Area, which shares similar characteristics with Apa but was not included in the main study. The responses were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability coefficients obtained were:

Variable	Alpha
Forms of Insecurity	0.86
Agricultural Production	0.88
Food Security	0.91
Coping Strategies	0.84

Overall reliability coefficient: 0.87. Since the coefficient exceeded the recommended minimum value of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), the instrument was considered reliable.

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the institution before commencing fieldwork. Permission was sought from: Local Government authorities; Traditional rulers; Village heads; and Community leaders. Four trained research assistants who understood the local language (Idoma) assisted in administering the questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered through face-to-face interaction because many respondents possessed limited formal education. Questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion to minimize non-response. Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, the collected data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 27.0. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Research questions were analysed using: Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation Decision Rule: A criterion mean of 3.00 was adopted.

The study adhered strictly to accepted ethical principles in social science research. The following measures were observed:

- Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional authority before data collection.
- Permission was sought from the Chairman of Apa Local Government Area and community leaders.
- Participation in the study was entirely voluntary.
- Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before questionnaire administration.
- Respondents were informed of the purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and minimal risks associated with the study.
- Participants had the right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without any adverse consequences.
- Confidentiality and anonymity were assured by excluding names and other personal identifiers from the questionnaire.
- Information collected was used solely for academic purposes and stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.
- The researcher respected the cultural values, traditions, and norms of the host communities throughout the research process.
- Findings were reported objectively, honestly, and without fabrication, falsification, or manipulation of data, in accordance with established principles of research integrity.

Results

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from respondents. The data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation in line with the research objectives. A benchmark mean of 2.50 was adopted for decision-making on the four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree

= 1). Mean values of 2.50 and above were regarded as Accepted, while mean values below 2.50 were regarded as Rejected.

Table 4.1: Distribution and Return Rate of Questionnaire (N = 400)

Questionnaire Status	Frequency Percentage (%)	
Questionnaires Administered	400	100.0
Questionnaires Retrieved	400	100.0
Questionnaires Not Retrieved	0	0.0

Table 4.1 shows that all the **400 questionnaires (100%)** administered to respondents were successfully retrieved and found suitable for analysis. Therefore, the analysis was based on **400 respondents**.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.2: Gender Distribution

Gender Frequency Percentage (%)		
Male	236	59.0
Female	164	41.0
Total	400	100.0

Table 4.3: Age Distribution

Age Group	Frequency Percentage (%)	
18–30 years	78	19.5
31–40 years	119	29.8
41–50 years	126	31.5
Above 50 years	77	19.2
Total	400	100.0

Table 4.4: Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farmers	221	55.3
Traders	79	19.7
Civil Servants	41	10.2
Artisans	34	8.5
Others	25	6.3
Total	400	100.0

Research Objective One

To examine the nature and patterns of insecurity experienced in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State.

Table 4.5: Mean and Standard Deviation on Nature and Patterns of Insecurity (N = 400)

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Armed attacks occur frequently in my community.	4.52	0.61	Accepted
2	Kidnapping has increased in recent years.	4.28	0.74	Accepted
3	Farmer-herder conflicts are common.	4.61	0.56	Accepted
4	Farmers are often attacked while working on their farms.	4.57	0.59	Accepted
5	Many households have been displaced due to insecurity.	4.44	0.67	Accepted
6	Fear of attacks has restricted movement of residents.	4.49	0.63	Accepted
7	Banditry has negatively affected community life.	4.31	0.71	Accepted
8	Security agencies have not adequately	4.14	0.81	Accepted

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
	controlled insecurity.			

Grand Mean = 4.42

Grand Standard Deviation = 0.67

The grand mean of **4.42** is above the criterion mean of **2.50**, indicating that respondents agreed that insecurity is prevalent in Apa Local Government Area. The relatively low standard deviation (**0.67**) indicates consistency in respondents' opinions.

Table 4.6: Frequency and Percentage Distribution on the Major Forms of Insecurity (N = 400)

Nature of Insecurity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farmer-Herder Attacks	171	42.8
Kidnapping	62	15.5
Banditry	71	17.7
Armed Robbery	39	9.7
Communal Clashes	35	8.8
Destruction of Farms and Crops	22	5.5
Total	400	100.0

The results indicate that **farmer-herder attacks (42.8%)** represent the most common form of insecurity experienced by respondents, followed by **banditry (17.7%)**, **kidnapping (15.5%)**, **armed robbery (9.7%)**, **communal clashes (8.8%)**, and **destruction of farms and crops (5.5%)**.

Research Objective Two

To assess the impact of insecurity on agricultural production and food availability in the study area.

Table 4.7: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Impact of Insecurity on Agricultural Production and Food Availability (N = 400)

S/N	Statement	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Insecurity has reduced the size of farmland cultivated annually.	4.63	0.55	Accepted
2	Agricultural production has declined significantly.	4.54	0.60	Accepted
3	Many farmers have abandoned farming activities.	4.49	0.64	Accepted
4	Food prices have increased because of insecurity.	4.67	0.51	Accepted
5	Food shortages are experienced in many communities.	4.39	0.69	Accepted
6	Household food consumption has reduced.	4.25	0.77	Accepted
7	Access to markets has become difficult.	4.43	0.66	Accepted
8	Food availability has reduced considerably.	4.48	0.63	Accepted
9	Many households now depend on food assistance.	4.12	0.82	Accepted
10	Agricultural investment has reduced because of insecurity.	4.36	0.70	Accepted

Grand Mean = 4.44

Grand Standard Deviation = 0.66

The grand mean of **4.44** indicates that insecurity has significantly affected agricultural production and food availability in Apa Local Government Area. The low grand standard deviation (**0.66**) suggests a high level of agreement among respondents.

Table 4.8 Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Effects of Insecurity on Agriculture (N = 400)

Effect	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reduction in Agricultural Output	119	29.8
Abandonment of Farms	93	23.2
Increase in Food Prices	74	18.5
Poor Access to Markets	51	12.8
Food Scarcity	43	10.7
Loss of Livestock	20	5.0
Total	400	100.0

The findings show that **reduction in agricultural output (29.8%)** is the most severe consequence of insecurity in the study area. This is followed by **abandonment of farms (23.2%)**, **increase in food prices (18.5%)**, **poor market access (12.8%)**, **food scarcity (10.7%)**, and **loss of livestock (5.0%)**.

Summary of Findings

Objective One: Nature and Patterns of Insecurity

The study found that:

- Armed attacks are frequent in Apa Local Government Area (Mean = **4.52**, SD = **0.61**).
- Farmer-herder conflicts are widespread (Mean = **4.61**, SD = **0.56**).
- Farmers are regularly attacked while cultivating their farms (Mean = **4.57**, SD = **0.59**).
- Fear of attacks has significantly restricted residents' movement (Mean = **4.49**, SD = **0.63**).
- The overall grand mean (**4.42**) confirms that insecurity is highly prevalent.
- Farmer-herder attacks constituted the most reported form of insecurity (**42.8%**).

Objective Two: Impact of Insecurity on Agricultural Production and Food Availability

The study further revealed that:

- Insecurity has significantly reduced the size of farmland cultivated annually (Mean = **4.63**, SD = **0.55**).
- Agricultural production has declined substantially (Mean = **4.54**, SD = **0.60**).
- Food prices have increased considerably because of insecurity (Mean = **4.67**, SD = **0.51**).
- Food availability has significantly reduced (Mean = **4.48**, SD = **0.63**).
- The overall grand mean (**4.44**) demonstrates a strong perceived negative impact of insecurity on food security.
- The most frequently reported effects were **reduced agricultural output (29.8%)**, **abandonment of farms (23.2%)**, and **increased food prices (18.5%)**.

The findings clearly indicate that insecurity in Apa Local Government Area of Benue State is predominantly driven by farmer-herder conflicts, armed attacks, banditry, and kidnapping. These forms of insecurity have severely disrupted farming activities, forced many households to abandon agricultural production, and constrained access to farmland and markets. Consequently, respondents reported significant declines in agricultural output, rising food prices, reduced household food consumption, and worsening food availability. The consistently high mean scores (4.12–4.67) and relatively low standard deviations (0.51–0.82) demonstrate strong agreement among the 400 respondents that insecurity is a major determinant of food insecurity in the study area. These findings support the argument that improving rural security is fundamental to restoring agricultural productivity, strengthening local food systems, and enhancing household food security in Apa Local Government Area and similar agrarian communities in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study investigated Insecurity and Food Security in Nigeria: A Study of Apa Local Government Area of Benue State with the objectives of examining the nature and patterns of insecurity experienced in the area and assessing its impact on agricultural production and food availability. The findings established that insecurity has become a persistent challenge in Apa Local Government Area, manifesting predominantly through farmer–herder conflicts, armed attacks, kidnapping, banditry, destruction of farmlands, and forced displacement of farming households. These forms of insecurity have created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty that has significantly disrupted the socioeconomic activities of the people, particularly agricultural production, which is the primary source of livelihood in the area.

The study further revealed that insecurity has substantially reduced access to farmlands, discouraged agricultural investment, limited access to markets, and caused many farmers to abandon farming activities. Consequently, food production has declined, food prices have increased, household food consumption has reduced, and food availability has become increasingly unstable. The descriptive statistics showed a high level of agreement among respondents that insecurity is directly associated with declining agricultural productivity and worsening food insecurity.

The findings affirm that food security cannot be achieved in an environment characterized by persistent violence and instability. Sustainable agricultural development depends on a peaceful and secure rural environment where farmers can cultivate their land, transport their produce, and participate freely in agricultural markets without fear of attack. Therefore, addressing insecurity should be regarded as a national development priority because it is closely linked to food security, poverty reduction, rural development, and sustainable economic growth.

In conclusion, the study establishes that insecurity is not merely a security problem but also an economic and developmental challenge that undermines Nigeria's capacity to attain food self-sufficiency and improve the welfare of rural households. Lasting peace, effective security governance, and coordinated agricultural support programmes are essential for restoring food security in Apa Local Government Area and other conflict-affected communities across Nigeria.

Implications of the Study

Economic Implications

The findings of this study have several important economic implications for rural development, agricultural productivity, household welfare, and national economic growth.

1. **Declining Agricultural Productivity:** Persistent insecurity has significantly reduced agricultural production due to the abandonment of farmlands, destruction of crops, displacement of farmers, and limited access to farming communities. Since agriculture constitutes the major economic activity in Apa Local Government Area, continued insecurity threatens local food production and rural livelihoods.
2. **Rising Food Prices and Inflation:** Reduced agricultural output has contributed to shortages in food supply, resulting in increased food prices within local markets. Higher food prices reduce the purchasing power of households, particularly low-income families, thereby worsening poverty and food insecurity.
3. **Reduction in Household Income:** The study indicates that insecurity has adversely affected farmers' incomes through crop losses, livestock theft, reduced harvests, and restricted market access. Consequently, many households experience declining living standards and increased dependence on humanitarian assistance.
4. **Declining Rural Investment:** Persistent violence discourages both public and private investment in

agriculture and rural infrastructure. Investors are less willing to invest in conflict-prone communities, thereby limiting employment opportunities and slowing rural economic development.

Educational Implications

The findings equally have significant implications for education, particularly in rural communities affected by insecurity.

1. **Disruption of School Activities:** Frequent attacks and insecurity discourage school attendance as learners, teachers, and parents fear for their safety. Schools may experience prolonged closures, reducing instructional time and academic achievement.
2. **Reduced Human Capital Development:** Food insecurity negatively affects children's nutrition, concentration, cognitive development, and classroom participation. Poor nutrition often results in reduced academic performance and increased dropout rates.
3. **Declining School Enrolment:** Displacement of families and economic hardship caused by insecurity may force children to discontinue schooling in order to support household livelihoods or migrate with their families to safer locations.
4. **Increased Educational Inequality:** Communities severely affected by insecurity experience poorer educational outcomes than relatively peaceful communities, thereby widening educational disparities between rural and urban areas.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Strengthening Rural Security:** Federal, state, and local governments should strengthen security architecture in rural communities through increased deployment of well-trained security personnel, improved surveillance systems,

intelligence gathering, and rapid response mechanisms to protect farming communities.

2. Community-Based Security Initiatives: Government should encourage community policing and strengthen collaboration among traditional rulers, community leaders, vigilante groups, and security agencies to improve intelligence sharing and early warning systems while ensuring that all community security activities operate within the rule of law and respect human rights.
3. Resolution of Farmer–Herder Conflicts: Governments at all levels should establish effective conflict-resolution mechanisms involving farmers, herders, traditional institutions, civil society organizations, and relevant stakeholders to promote peaceful coexistence and reduce recurring conflicts

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