Contestations for Land-based Resources in Benue State: The Crop Farmer-Livestock Farmers Crisis, 2017-2019

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Abstract

This paper examines the contestations for land-based resources between crop farmers and livestock farmers in Benue State. With the aid of secondary data, the paper relies on the modernization theory to buttress the prospects of modernity over traditionalism in the face of unhealthy contestations over the use of land-based resources. It found out that the contention between crop farmers and livestock farmers in Benue State is rooted in the squabbles for land-based resources of grazing land and water. These contestations have been triggered by a number of factors, namely: population surge; climate change; clash of modernity and traditionalism where the livestock farmers resist modern approaches to animal husbandry as an affront on their age-long cultural practice and the crop farmers see nomadic livestock rearing as a trespass on existing farmlands and water sources which are in short supply; modern infrastructures which have taken over cattle routes/graing reserves; and the proliferation of small and light weapons. The paper thus recommends the entrenchment of modern land reforms and effective policies which guarantee that land deals reach their economic, social and environmental potential. This include the-functioning land markets that facilitate transfers of valuable land to its most productive use to reduce the yield gap; provide the basis for a structural economic transformation that allows the crop farmers to move into livestock farming and vice versa; identify the potential opportunities that link land to economic transformation; and take into cognizance the interest of the community where any agricultural investment is to be made.

Keywords: Transforming Land, Livelihood, Contestations, Land-based Resources, Benue State, Crop Farmers, Livestock Farmers

Introduction

The demand for land in Africa especially for agriculture has the vista of giving a free rein to Africa’s potential by raising much needed investments and grasping productivity gains that have long evaded the sector. In its quest to strip up this new interest in land investments however, Africa must seek a balance that maximizes gains and minimizes the risks connected with land acquisition, to guarantee that the projected fair economic growth occurs, community livelihoods are protected or enhanced and environmental impacts minimized. In spite of uncharacteristic ecological and socio-economic disparities, global land reform perspectives have previously been provoked by the twin-pronged objective of reforming the land-based production systems, and achieving equity in land resource based access and possession.

In Nigeria, though the Land Use Act of 1978 was intended to usher in a novel land reform, it quickly became a clog in the wheel of development over the years. Its flaws have
become the major basis on which many groups interested in the development of a proficient and useful system of land management in Nigeria have been agitating to abrogate the Decree from the Nigerian Constitution and subjected to the numerous alterations that have become compulsory from the practice of operating it during the previous quarter of a century (Mabogunje, 2019). The primary objective of this campaign has been mostly on the disgusting problem that a number of the requirements of the Decree have constituted for the effectual transactions in land particularly as it leaves the closing of such dealings subject to the unsystematic whims of Governors who have been known to be slipshod in living up to their duty of signing the essential documents at different stages of transactions in land. But, conceivably more essential than all of these grievances, is the threat that these exposures of national land management to the whims and caprices of individual Governors constitutes to the growth and development of the Nigerian agricultural sector. These have led to sequence of ceaseless bloody crisis involving the livestock farmers and crop farmers in different rural communities across the country for available land based resources.

Earlier researches across the country report the massive herdsmen invasions on the farmlands which have prompted aggressive land use clashes (Audu, 2003, Gundu, 2017). Others have generalized the spotlight on land scarcity caused by environmental changes, population growth and ineptitude of land tenure systems (Bello, 2013). Succinct and lucid in their arguments though, such views do not however clarify the shift in the politics of land control and share among herdsmen and crop farmers. This paper therefore, examines the opportunities of governing land-based resources in Benue state, with a view to providing guidance on policy options and mechanisms for engaging in land uses that lead to win-win outcomes for governments and local communities on the one hand, and private investors on the other.

Theoretical Framework: Modernization Theory

Modernization theory has its genesis in classical evolutionary explanation of social change (Tipps, 1973). Its scholarly roots are in the European evolutionists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the French thinkers and fathers of modern sociology Auguste Compter and Emile Durkheim; the British philosopher Herbert Spencer; and of course Marx (Varma, 1980). All were in their diverse efforts trying to clarify the change from pre-industrial to industrial society. Two rudiments in particular from that early theorizing were carried over into discuss about modernization in the Third World. First is the conviction that social change has to do with continuity and the other is the belief in development (So, 1990). Continuity here is not seen as impartial but as progressive. This is the thought that was included into more recent thoughts about the course of becoming a modern society (Hoogvelt, 1978).

Modernization theory, like other evolutionary accounts of society, had its own outlook of the end of the evolutionary process. Modernization means progression towards a state equivalent to the developed industrial societies of the West. “A society that is becoming modern is one that acquires characteristics common to more developed societies, achieving things that modern societies have in common” (Eisenstadt, 1966, p. 1). Traditional societies would slowly get rid of their economic, political and particularly cultural organizations and principles, replacing them with modern ones. In the realm of the state, bureaucracy epitomized the thought of connecting means to ends, and of defining an objective and scheming what desired to be done to achieve it. Black compared modernization with the
adaptation of organizations to ‘the fast growing functions that reflect the unprecedented increase in man’s knowledge, permitting control over his environment’ (Black, 1966). Rostow saw modernization as resulting from man’s ‘rapidly widening control over nature’ (Rostow, 1967). Moore equated modernization with ‘the process of rationalization of social behaviour and social organisation’, defining rationalization as the ‘normative expectation that objective information and rational calculus of procedures will be applied in pursuit or achievement of any utilitarian goal’, an example being the use of sophisticated technology in industry (Moore, 1977).

The modernization theory is a good testing view to tackle land use clashes among the livestock and local crop farmers, since the traditional land use and occupancy systems observed among the livestock farmers and local crop farmers are considered primal, uncreative and desired to be changed and “modernized” (Audu 2013). It is from this outlook that colonial and post-colonial governments set up a number of interference including resettlement programmes, destocking, new land tenure systems and land policies, strengthened by the present state governments in the form of the open grazing law, which in turn has triggered incessant bloody clashes between herdsmen and local farmers. The modernization theory as attributed to anti-colonial campaign on land alienation favours the settlement, re-settlement and open grazing of livestock on any land as well as the attendant impacts.

**Benue State, an Overview**

The history of Benue state dates back to when it was carved out of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria at the start of the 20th century. It was first known as Munshi Province until 1918 when it was named after its most geographical feature, the River Benue. Benue became part of the Northern Province in the 3 region structure of 1954. After independence in 1960, the military coups of January and July 1966 led to the civil war that lasted from 1967-1970 (Kwaja et al, 2018). The administration of General Yakubu Gowon dismantled the 3 regions established by the colonial administration and created 12 states of the 3 regions, one of which was the Benue-Plateau State.

On 3 February, 1976, Benue state was one of the states created by the administration of General Murtala Mohammed which swelled the number of states in Nigeria to 19. By 2006, the census figure showed that the population had increased to 4,253,641 million with an average population density of 99 persons per km2 (Benue State Diary, 2012). This makes Benue the 9th most populous state in Nigeria. It is one of the North Central zones that are a collection of six states namely: Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, alongside with the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The state shares common boundaries with Nasarawa state to the north, Taraba state to the north-east, Cross-River, Enugu and Ebonyi states to the south, and Kogi state to the south-west. There is also a short international boundary between the state and the Republic of Cameroon along the south-east border (Kwanga & Kerenku, 2007).

Occupying a landmass of 34, 059 sq km, Benue state lies within the lower River Benue. Its geographical coordinates are longitude 7° 47’ and 10° 00’ East; latitude 6° 25’ and 8° 24’ North. The state has a tropical sub-humid climate, with two distinct seasons namely: wet season and dry season. While the wet season lasts for seven months between April and October, the dry season comes between November and March. The total annual rainfalls ranges from 1500mm-2000mm. The mountainous strip along the Cameroon border which receives a total annual rainfall of about 2000mm, is the wettest part of the state (Kwanga & Kerenku, 2007). Thus, making the
state more habitable and comfortable for cattle and their herders. Temperatures are generally high during the day especially in March and April. The state records average maximum and minimum daily temperatures of 35°C and 27°C in summer and 37°C and 16°C in winter respectively. Along the river vallies, these high temperatures plus high relative humidity produce debilitating weather conditions. The mountainous strip along the Cameroon border which receives a total annual rainfall of about 2000mm, is the wettest part of the state (Kwanga & Kerenku, 2007). Thus, making the state more habitable and comfortable for existence.

The vegetation of the State forms a floristic composite, encompassing mixed leguminous wood dominant species of 12m-15m in height and an atypical incidence of species of up to 17m-20m in height. The ordinary tree species in Benue State are; Khaya senegalensis, Daniellia oliveri, Vitex doniana, Afzelia africana, Vitellaria paradoxa, Nauclea diderichii, Terminalia schimperiana, Prosopis africana, Parkia biglobosa, Detarium microcarpum among others (Benue State Diary, 2012). River Benue is one of the main rivers in Nigeria. It begins from Cameroonian mountains and run westwards through Makurdi to meet the River Niger at Lokoja in Kogi State. Its tributaries include but not limited to Rivers Donga, Katsina-Ala, Bantaji, Mu and Taraba among others. Along the Makurdi New Bridge, the river is 1.194Km wide with average depth and cross sectional area of 7.82m and 4608.42m² correspondingly. The basin of the river which is covered with meta sediments is made up of land area underneath 300m above sea level.

The flood plain, which is characterized by wide swamps, is good for dry season irrigated farming. River Benue supplies natural water and sand in commercial quantities to the hinterland. The river banks are widely vegetated with cover encompassing farm tracts, tall grasses and forest. Land use around the riverine area is good for fadama and arable farming.

The soils in Benue are developed from the weather conditions of cretaceous sediments consisting of sandstones, siltstones, shales, and mudstones they show considerable variability in texture with medium textures predominantly (Soil Report, 1985). Alluvial soils are though located adjacent to the drainages of the state ranging from the ancient to recent alluvial deposits and draw concentrated cultivation. Just like other states in the zone is well endowed by nature with very rich vegetation (Guinea Savannah Zone of Nigeria,) and provides a lot of attraction to the transhumance herdsmen from Northern states of the country as well as from Mali, Senegal, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Niger, Chad among others. It is well bestowed with irrigated and arable land, rich pasture, forest reserve, and water bodies. It has marked ecological diversity and climatic contrasts along with diverse biophysical characteristics, agro-ecological zones and socio-economic conditions. It is indeed the food basket of the country. The State is also endowed with various mineral resources that offer potential for economically viable industrial and agricultural development projects which include: tin and columbite, marble, coal, semi-precious stones, barites, iron ore and aqua marine. There are also plenty of untapped energy resources (Soil Report, 1985).

Benue state lies within the lower River Benue. Its geographical cordinates are longitude 7° 47’ and 10° 00’ East; latitude 6° 25’ and 8° 24’ North (BNARDA, 2015). The state has twenty three local government areas namely: Ado, Agatu, Apa, Buruku, Gboko, Guma, Gwer, Gwer-West, Katsina-Ala, Konshisha, Kwande, Logo, Makurdi, Obi, Ogbadibo, Ohimini, Okpokwu, Oju, Otukpo, Tarka, Ukum, Ushongo and Vandeikya, with the Tiv, Idoma and Igede people occupying the major population in fourteen, seven and two local governments.
Map of Benue State showing the 23 Local Government Areas

For political and administrative convenience, these local governments are grouped into three senatorial districts namely: Benue North-West, Benue North-East, and Benue South popularly called zone A, zone B, and zone C respectively. Benue state is ethnically plural and some of the main ethnic groups are the Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Etulo, Abakpa, Jukun, Hausa, Akweya and Nyifon. The Tiv are the dominant ethnic group, occupying 14 local government areas, while the Idoma, Igede and others occupy the remaining nine local government areas. Christians make up the religious majority with a sprinkling of Muslims and traditionalists.

Occupationally, agriculture is the foundation of the financial system, employing over 75 percent of the state farming population. About 80 percent of the population derives its income from agriculture. Most of the people are crop farmers while the inhabitants of the riverine areas engage in fishing as their main or important secondary occupation, a few numbers of the people usually engage in pasturing agriculture as their source of livelihood. Cash crops produced include: groundnuts (240,000 tons), soya beans (120,000 tons) and rice (2,860,000 tons) per year (Nyagba 1995). Major food crops include yams, maize, sorghum and soya beans (with Benue producing more than 70% of Nigeria’s soya crop and being dubbed ‘the food basket of the nation’) Crops grown include potatoes, cassava, soya bean, guinea corn, flax, yams and beniseed. Thus, the natural resource base plays a key function relating to food and living safety of the population. Since the 1960s, there has been an alteration in the production system, with the expansion of dry-season farming along the Benue and its tributaries. Much of the area along the banks is now given over to high concentration of horticulture. The State also gives a fundamental link between the southern and northern parts of the country and its business activities in farm produce are key to the Government’s policy thrust. The state too boasts of one of the longest stretches of river systems in the country with huge prospective for a feasible fishing industry, dry season farming through irrigation and for an inland water way. The vegetation of the southern parts of the state is typified by woods, which yield trees for timber and provide a suitable habitat for rare animals.
The people of the state are well known for rich cultural heritage and creativity, political arithmetics, and above all, agricultural productivity hence the description of Benue state as the Food Basket of the Nation. Christianity is the main religion practiced (75%), with traditional religion (15%) and Islam (4%) following behind. Traditional Rulers play a very important role in Benue State and are recognised by the more formal governance structures as custodians of culture and agents of development at the grassroots. Formal and informal community based organisations (CBOs), including faith-based organisations (FBOs,) are active in the areas of savings/credit financing, craft associations and co-operatives, providing credit through non formal channels to rural people, especially women, who would otherwise have no access to credit lending institutions.

Tourist attractions in the state include; Akata Fishing Festival, Ikyogen Cattle Ranch, Ushongo Hill, Kwaghbir Puppet Theatre, and Engimbia warm spring at Orokam in Ogbadibo local government area of the the state. With regards to transportation, Benue state has a rail line which connects Makurdi (the state capital) with the rest of the country. The state is also accessible by both state and federal roads and air as well as water. There is an airport at Makurdi and small air stations at Gboko and Otukpo, though, moribound and abandoned.

The 23 LGAs of Benue State, listing their ethnic composition and administrative headquarters

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<th>No.</th>
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**Contestation for Land-Based Resources**

The contest for access to and utilization of land-based resources which are principally water and pasture between the crop farmers and livestock farmers is situated within the peasant and nomadic contexts of economic
production systems adopted by both groups. The indigenes of Benue are particularly a sedentary people whose livelihood is rooted in crop farming as their agricultural practices that prime land (Genyi, 2017). Population expansion puts pressure on available land accessibility even among the crop farmers. Declining soil fertility, erosion, climate change and modernity verses tradition all conspire to moderate agricultural practices that challenge the very livelihood of farmers (Tyubee, 2006). The livestock farmers are a nomadic stock whose system of production revolves around cattle rearing. They use mobility as a strategy of production as well as consumption (Iro, 1991).

To sustain this, a number of factors have conspired to challenge the herder’s economic livelihood. These factors comprise the clash of modernism with traditionalism. As the livestock farmers particularly the cattle rearers have resisted modernity and hence their system of production and consumption remained largely unaltered in the face of ineluctable influences such as population expansion as well as modernization itself. Environmental factors constitute a major set of issues affecting the cattle production economy in Benue and Nigeria at large. These include the pattern of rainfall, its division and seasonality and the degree to which these shape the exploitation of land. Closely connected to this is the pattern of vegetation which is divided into semi-arid and forest areas. This vegetation pattern established pasture accessibility, diffidence and insects’ predation (Iro, 1991). Vegetation pattern therefore explains pastoral movement. The loss of grazing paths and reserves owing to modern farming activities thus set the tone for contemporary conflicts between livestock farmers -cattle rearers and their host, the crop farmers in Benue state.

Genyi (2017) avers that, grazing on cultivated farmlands would incure the wrath of farmers whose livelihood would be threatened by the act of destruction by the herds. Any reaction from crop farmers in protection of their crops would result into conflicts leading to pervasive destruction of crop farmers homesteads as is being experienced today in a more coordinated and sustained armed attacks that began in the early 2000s. Prior to this period, disagreements between these groups over farmlands were usually muted. Livestock rearers would arrive and formally ask for consent to encampment and graze which was frequently granted. Any infraction on farmers’ crops would be harmoniously settled by means of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. These methods appear to have warped owing to the composition of new arrival of pastoralists.

The contestation for pasture and water has become stronger and may always discard off into armed conflict easily. The rivalry for access to pasture and water resources is challenging as herds struggle for foliage wiping out crops in the course and their use of water also pollutes it beyond use by the indigenous communities. Grazing was based on distinct routes and allowed fields. Changing resource access rights and the inadequacy of grazing resources as a result of increasing crop cultivation therefore set the stage for conflict (Adisa, 2012). This perceived order appears to have been upset by three factors: changing population dynamics, inadequate governmental attention to pastoralist-farmers issues, environment exigencies, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Benue state is facing two global crises – population growth and climate change. Benue’s growth rate is about 2.7 per cent and as human population that rely on land resources for survival increases so does the population of livestock. As populations increase and more and more people seek land to provide for themselves and their families, traditional systems of land management that were developed under conditions of relatively small population and land abundance begin to break down. In addition to more people and animals...
across the state, average temperatures are predicted to rise by between 0.5 and 2 degrees Celsius by 2035 (Benue State Diary, 2012). These climatic changes, in conjunction with ineffective state policies to mitigate the effects of variations in rainfall, can lead to crises. The increasing scarcity of land and water in a region that is becoming warmer as a result of climate change can be a major contributor to conflict. According to Sachs (2005 p.57) “…is a result of corrupt leadership and retrograde cultures that impede modern development”. The transition to modern economic growth might appear to be an unambiguous and straightforward benefit for the world. After all, new technologies enabled society to harness energy and ideas that raised labor productivity (economic output per person) to levels never before imagined. This productivity brought about a rise in living standards of unprecedented scale. Yet the transition was more tumultuous than not, involving vast social struggles and often war. In Nigeria the lack of state capacity to provide adequate security is a major concern in the country generally and particularly in Benue state, though the problems vary substantially in degree across the states. Capacity problems are most severe in Benue state, where much of the communities become virtually inaccessible during the dry season and now inclusive of the rainy season. However, this policy of increased military presence and ongoing disarmament is not without serious challenges. Governments have responded to conflict, particularly in armed pastoralist and crop farmers through land redistributive policy by chunking out pieces of land for grazing instead of ranching and disarmament programmes at various times. The problem with disarmament programmes is that they tend to operate unevenly, leaving disarmed crop farming communities vulnerable to attack from armed livestock farmers who do not reside permanently in the state so cannot be reached in the process of disarmament. Because the state government has little capacity to provide protection to disarmed communities in Benue, these communities resist disarmament and rearm quickly. Recently however, the security situation appears to have improved somewhat, with roads that previously were closed for security reasons now open for general use and communities reporting somewhat improved conditions. Finally, disarmament programmes are often not coordinated regionally between the governments of the north central states. This is a particular problem because of the cross-border ties between ethnic communities in the region and the ease with which borders can be crossed; disarming a community only on one side of the border has relatively little effect. Experts agree that in the north central zone, armed cattle raiding is intimately linked with resource scarcity, lack of development, and few alternative livelihoods.

To avert further escalation of violent contestation, in May 2017, the Benue State Government enacted the Open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment Law, 2017 (commonly referred to as the Open Grazing Prohibition Law) banning open grazing of livestock in the state of Benue. The Benue State Government presented the Open Grazing Prohibition Law as a tool to prevent clashes between herders and crop farmers by limiting the unrestricted grazing of cattle and instead called for cattle to be reared in ranches as a modern way of cattle rearing. This legislation is the first of its kind in Nigeria and implementation began on 1st November 2017. Since the implementation of the law began, there have been a number of repercussions, including several attacks, such as the New Year’s Day attack in Benue where unidentified gunmen killed dozens of people (Abdulbarkindo & Alupsen 2017). As stated in the legislation, the overall purpose of the Law was to achieve six goals: (i) prevent...
the destruction of crop farms... by open grazing; (ii) prevent clashes between nomadic livestock herders and crop farmers; (iii) protect the environment from degradation and pollution caused by open rearing and over grazing of livestock; (iv) optimize the use of land resources in the face of overstretched land and increasing population; (v) prevent, control, and manage the spread of disease and... enhance the production of high quality and healthy livestock for local and international markets; and, (vi) create a conducive environment for large scale crop production (Benue State Government, 2017). In order to achieve this agenda, the Law restricts the free movement of cattle and requires that livestock be bred in ranches. The Law vests authority for its implementation in the Livestock Department of the Benue State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Livestock Department, acting under the Commissioner of the Ministry and on behalf of the Governor, has the authority to issue ranching permits, withdraw permits, provide guidance and regulations for enforcement by the Livestock Special Task Force, as well as coordinate actions of the Advisory Committee.

Global Best Practices

Prior to the contemporary livestock production, societies had the experiences of farmers roaming around with large ruminants looking for pasture. Compelling conditions including pressure on land, development in science and technology as well as new advances in veterinary medicine, animal science and nutrition combined to change the universal outlook on animal husbandry with the reality that pastoralism has become old-fashioned globally. For Entwistle (2013), America shared similar security challenges with Nigeria at a certain period in its development a hundred years ago but the institutionalization of legal frameworks which compelled livestock farmers to confine animals to ranches as heavy fines were imposed on owners of cattle who allowed their animals to graze on crop farmlands. Abu (2019) avers that there are no nomads in Europe at the moment as well as South America; however Australia allows free range grazing but Australia is a continent – a country with a size approximately to the size of the United States while the population is just about 23.8 million people with a growth rate of 1.2%. It is also worth to note that Australia has a conservative immigration policy which by implication would take her 120 years to arrive at the population density of Nigeria. It must be added that being an advanced country, they have the best option in animal health, nutrition and range management.

Again, the Masai in East Africa are being sedentarised and modernized with advanced technologies in livestock farming. In West Africa, Mali and Burkina Faso have ranches and ranching laws in place while Ghana is on the verge of putting the laws in place. The position of Food and Agricultural Organisation is to encourage transition from peasant farming of roaming livestock to large scale through ranching, as has been the practice in the European countries, USA, Brazil, Canada, Mexico and Argentina. Brazil for instance introduced this reform and her ranches was the largest beef exporter in the world in 2012 with 213 million beef cattle generating $1.2 billion in foreign exchange and produced 360,000 direct jobs (Abu, 2019 & Adisa, 2012) These are good examples Nigeria can learn from to attain heights in agricultural production. This would lead to other benefits like public health and nutrition. For instance animals that roam about are more likely to pick up diseases that are transmittable to humans (zoonosis). We have cases of Ebola virus, Lassa fever and avian influenza that originated from animals. Presently, the globe is battling with another pandemic, Corona virus (COVID 19) that is believed to have connection with animals.

Nutrition wise, when animals are driven through long distances most of the energy
gained from eating grasses but when the energy spent is more than the energy gained their productivity either dairy cattle or beef cattle is lowered as against the intensively produced livestock. The socio-economic turmoil caused by security issues arising from contestation between crop farmers and animal farmers are not needed. If agricultural practices are properly modernized and adopt best practices, these drawbacks will cease to exist in Benue and Nigeria at large. It is worthy of note that Nigeria is signatory to the United Nations Convention to the protection of the Rights of the Child and through ranching, the rights of the herdsmen children will be protected from child labour and other forms of nomadism to intensive crop-livestock farming system.

The economic drive can be explained on the basis that ranching is essential to exploit the productivity of an otherwise under-utilised or unutilised farming sector, to provide a surplus to earn foreign exchange and to provide the capital to build up industries. For instance Johnson and Mellor (1961) advanced five ways in which agricultural development due to land use reform through ranching can aid general economic development. First is by satisfying an increased demand for food supplies; second, by exporting agricultural products to get foreign currency; third, by providing labour for the manufacturing and other growing sectors of the economy; fourth, by putting in the profits generated in industry; and fifth, by raising agricultural incomes which increases demand for consumer goods, thus stimulating industrial expansion. It should also be noted that improved agricultural production may increase demand for agricultural inputs and farming machinery and implements thereby creating more employment in the production of these agricultural capital goods and inputs-the process of modernization. According to Apter (1965), modernization is about diversion and strain and it can only achieve something through retraditionalization that is the cultural conflict between tradition and modernity. Nigeria and Benue have reached a stage where they must modernize or perish in perpetual crisis over land based resources.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The contention between the crop farmers and livestock farmers in Benue state is ingrained in the squabbles for land-based resources of grazing land and water. The policy of this contestation is confined by the arguments that culture and tradition of a group of people cannot be changed in the face of dwindling natural resources and modernization. Natural factors of ecological limitations such as desert infringement, population upsurge, climatic conspiracy and temperature change have combined to give effect to the crisis.

Modernization of the prolific system of each group guarantees a riddance of the apparently intrinsic issues underpinning current contestation for land-based resources. Population dynamics and ecological demands have mapped modernization as a more capable concession in the interest of nonviolent coexistence in the circumstance of constitutional and collective nationality.

African countries like Ghana, a neighboring state to Nigeria, Uganda Kenya, South Africa are now realizing that addressing some of the underlying land governance and management issues is a precondition for successful and essential to mitigating the resource curse associated with large-scale land deals and production process. This includes instituting transparent contractual arrangements and modalities for their enforcement, to ensure that land deals reach their economic, social and environmental potential. Well-functioning land markets that facilitate transfers of valuable land to its most productive use are much needed to help reduce the yield gap and provide the basis for a structural economic transformation that allows the crop farming population to move into livestock farm employment and vice-versa.
There is also need for recognition of the potential opportunities that link land to economic transformation. There is an urgent need to clarify if, indeed, investments in Benue’s land resources can enhance agricultural productivity, offer employment opportunities, enhance human capital in agriculture, and even potentially enhance food availability locally, if such deals are properly structured. A number of economic issues and challenges surround the practice of agriculture based on the land governance and the impact of large-scale land leases on the well-being of farmers and food security. Any investment activity in Benue state must reflect an important interest for the people living in the area, must contribute to the development of the local community, and the views of the community relative to any acquisition of land must be taken into consideration.

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