Impact of Communal Conflicts on Farm Household Food Security in Southeast Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Communal conflicts pose a significant threat to food security in Southeast Nigeria. A study analyzing the effects of these conflicts on farm household food security revealed that intercommunity land disputes, farmer-herder clashes, leadership tussles, and political affiliation conflicts are prevalent in the region. The study analysed communal conflicts and farm household food security in Southeast, Nigeria using 405 respondents selected through a multistage sampling procedure involving random and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected from primary sources using a structured questionnaire administered in the form of an interview schedule. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the food security index, and logit regression analysis. The study found that 52% of farm households are food secure, while 48% are food insecure. The analysis showed that conflicts between families, farmers, groups, communities, and farmers-herders negatively impact household food security. Specifically, based on a 10% decrease in conflicts between families, groups, communities, and farmer-herders, household food security increased by 0.6%, 0.1%, 1.4%, and 0.06%, respectively. To address food insecurity, the study recommends collaborative efforts between the government, civil societies, community leaders, NGOs, and individuals to bring lasting solutions to conflicts and lift food-insecure households to food-secure status

Keywords: *Communal Conflict, Food security, Farm household, Southeast, Nigeria*

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INTRODUCTION

Communal conflict has been very common in the African societies, and the result of these conflicts is bloody calamity in the aspect of destruction of lives and properties. According to Ubi and Iyanam (2021), conflict generally is the reality of social relations. Johnson (2020) explained that conflicts arise in various areas due to competing interests, desires, goals, values, and aspirations, as individuals and groups vie for limited resources to fulfill the evolving demands of social life within a specific socio-physical setting. As far as man's existence continues, conflicts will definitely abound as a result of the struggle for natural resources.

In recent times, numerous Southeast communities have witnessed a series of conflicts, such as the Ezza and Ezillo communal conflicts and the invasion of Fulani herdsmen in Egedegede and Azuinyaba communities in Ebonyi State, and kidnapping/insurgency unrest in Anambra, Abia and Imo states (Ubi and Iyanam, 2021). Again, the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War led to the formation of pressure groups such as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) due to the perceived injustice in the distribution of the wealth of the nation and the inequality in the development of the zone and the exclusion of the people of the zone in national leadership positions. These developments led to various forms of conflict and inversion in the zone (McMaster, Lum, and McCormick, 2018). The conflicts seem to have bedeviled agricultural activities with consequent food insecurity in the region. For instance, in Ebonyi State, communal conflicts and farmer-herder crises have an adverse effect on agricultural output as farmers do not go to farms. Enugu State too is prone to terrorist attacks and herder-farmer clashes. Abia and Anambra States are flash points for incessant bloody mayhem of farmers and herders. These multifaceted conflicts have deleterious effects on food production and its availability.

Food security is seen as a state of having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable and nutritious food. Food security is a condition 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, 2016). Attaining this level of food security requires the availability of a food supply (Agada and Igbokwe, 2016). Food availability for households in rural areas means ensuring that sufficient food is available for them through their own production or through outright purchase of food from markets. Food security of households and individuals depends on income available to them. Food utilization depends on optimal uptake of nourishment, which is a function of a sustaining diet, child care, clean water, adequate sanitation, and healthcare (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2012). Stability of food supplies means that households should not risk losing access to food as a consequence of sudden shocks such as climatic crises or cyclical events such as seasonal food insecurity (Agada and Igbokwe, 2016). A household is considered food secure when its occupants do not live in hunger or fear of starvation (FAO, 2019). Households' food security can be defined as the ability of individuals to access an adequate supply of food on a stable basis and in a sustainable way (World Bank, 2016). Conversely, a household becomes food insecure when such a household is unable to afford or have access at all times to such quantity and quality of food that makes for healthy living (Obayelu and Orosile 2015). Food insecurity can be viewed as an extreme form of poverty that might be caused by the pressure on the available resources that led to civil unrest in the form of conflicts in different communities (Kakwani and Son 2016).

A household head that is unable to feed his household is not deemed responsible. By extension, any nation or state that is unable to feed its populace cannot be said to be responsible. Besides, recent estimates have put the number of hungry people in Nigeria at over 52 million, which is about 30% of the country's total population of over 200 million, and of this figure, 52% live below the poverty line (Idoko and Teru, 2021). States that were the food basket of the nation are now impoverished due to farmer-herdsman conflicts. Abbas (2012) and Adisa (2012) observed that the resource-competition-driven conflict between the two agricultural land user groups often turned into serious overt and covert hostilities and social friction. To these ends, the study would fill the gap in knowledge of farm families' food security status and the effect of conflicts on agricultural production.

Several studies (Abbas, 2012; Umeh and Chukwu, 2016; Okello, 2017; Ubi and Iyanam, 2021; Idoko and Teru, 2021) centered on the causes, intervention options, and socioeconomic consequences of conflicts. None of these studies seems to have addressed specifically the effects of communal conflicts on food security among farm households in Southeast Nigeria; hence, the need to fill the gap. The study therefore set out to analyze communal conflicts and farm household food security in Southeast Nigeria and to address the following specific objectives: (1) describe the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers; (2) identify the forms of communal conflicts in the area; (3) determine the food security status of the farming households in the area; (4) determine the effects of communal conflicts on food security in the study area; and (5) ascertain conflict resolution management measures adopted by farming communities in the study area. The study was guided by the null hypothesis (H_O) which stated that 'farm households are not significantly food secure in the study area.'

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study was carried out in Southeast, Nigeria. Southeast

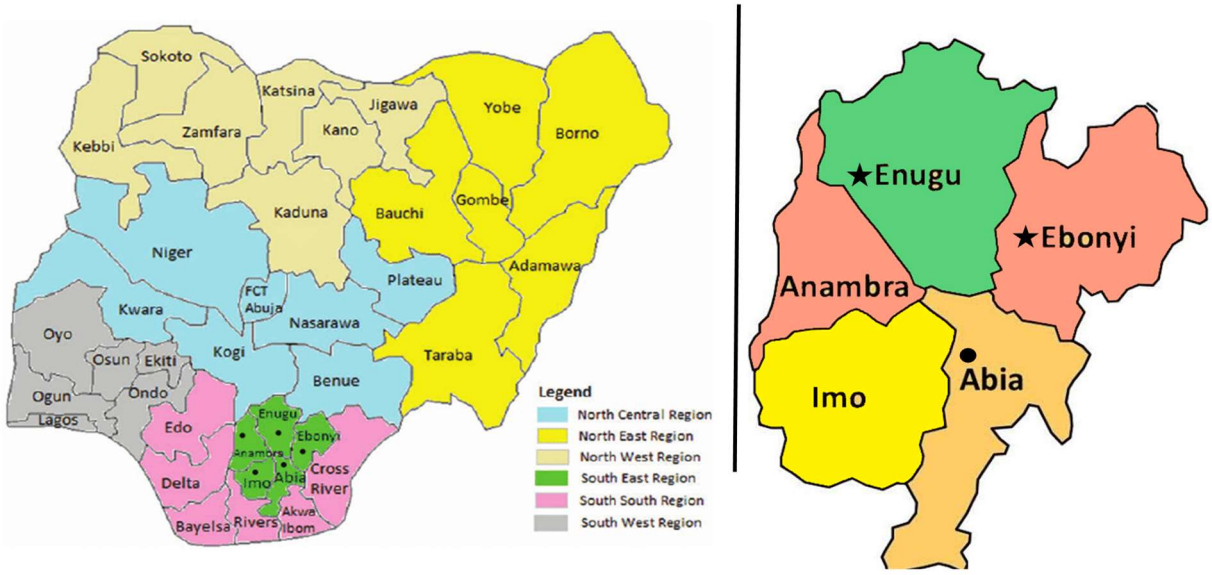

Figure 1: Map of Southeast, Nigeria showing the study Area (google.com)

Nigeria is made up of five States which include Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. It lies between longitude 6^0 $50^/$ and 8^0 $30^/$ E, latitude 4^0 $30^/$ and 7^0 $5^/$ N, covering an area of about 58,214.7 square kilometers and a total projected population of 45.92 million people at a projected rate of 2.8% (NPC, 2022). The area is bordered in the north by Benue and Kogi States, in the south by Akwa-Ibom State, in the east by Cross-River State, and in the west by Delta and River States. Geographically, it is located within the rainforest regions of the country with two major seasons, which are the rainy and dry seasons with a little dry spell in August and a temperature range of 18^0C to 34^0C within the year. Agricultural crops such as rice, yam, cassava, cocoyam, and maize; poultry; sheep/goats; piggery; and fishery dominated the area (Figure 1).

Sampling Techniques

A multistage sampling procedure was adopted for selection of respondents for the study. Stage one involved a purposive selection of three states out of five Southeast States based on the prevalence of communal conflicts. The states selected were Ebonyi, Enugu and Anambra States. Stage two involved purposive selection of three (3) Local Government Areas that were directly involved in communal conflicts from the three states already selected to make a total of 9 LGAs. Stage three was purposive selection of three (3) communities that were directly involved in communal conflicts from the selected 9 LGAs making a total of 27 communities. Stage four involved a random selection of 15 farmers from each of the selected communities using the list of farmers that was obtained from ADP and IFAD to give a total of 405 respondents that were used for the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study used primary data obtained with the aid of a structured questionnaire administered as an interview schedule. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and percentages were used to achieve objectives one and two, while objective three was realized using the food security index. Objective four was achieved using logit regression. In addition, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted among farm households in order to achieve objective five.

Model Specifications

Food Security Index

To determine the food security status of the farming households, the households were classified into food-secure and food-insecure households, using the food security index:

$$F_i = \frac{\text{Per capita food expenditure for the i th household}}{\text{2/3 mean per capita food expenditure of all households}} \quad (1)$$

Where:

F_i = Food security index
When $F_i > 1$, food secure i th household; $F_i < 1$ = Food insecure i th household.

A food-secure household is one whose per capita monthly food expenditure falls above or is equal to 2/3 mean per capita food expenditure; otherwise, it is referred to as food insecure (Olabatoke and Amusain, 2017). Additionally, the number of food secure/insecure households was determined by taking the frequency of the food secure/insecure households. The headcount ratio (H) of food security was calculated to measure the percentage of the population of households that are food secure/insecure. The 2/3 mean expenditure threshold is used as a proxy for the minimum expenditure required to meet basic food needs. This threshold is based on Engel's Law, which states that as income increases, the proportion of income spent on food decreases. Households that spend more than 2/3 of their expenditure on food are considered food insecure because they are likely to be sacrificing other essential needs (e.g., education, healthcare, housing) to meet their food needs. This approach is simple, easy to calculate, and requires minimal data. It also allows for comparisons across different populations and time periods.

The headcount index formula is given by Headcount index (H) = M/N (2)

Where
M = number of food secure/insecure households
N = the number of households in the sample

Logit Regression Analysis

The logistic regression model that related farm household food security status and the different forms of conflict was stated and computed using maximum likelihood estimates of β_i given the non-linear probability distribution of the random error μ_i. Thus this explains whether communal conflicts have an effect on food security in the study area. The model was expressed as:

$$\text{Prob } (y^* = 1) = 1 - F^* (\sum X_i\beta_j) = \frac{e^{\sum Xi\beta j}}{1+e^{\sum Xi\beta j}} \quad (3)$$

$$\text{Prob } (y^* = 0) = F^* (\sum X_i\beta_j) = \frac{e^{\sum Xi\beta j}}{1+e^{\sum Xi\beta j}} \quad (4)$$

$$Y^* = (-\sum Xi\beta j) + \mu_i \quad (5)$$

Explicitly, the model was linearized as

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_3X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + et \quad (6)$$

Where,
Y = Food security status (secure = 1, insecure = 0)
X_1 = Conflicts between individual and families (Yes = 1, No = 0)
X_2 = Conflicts between farmers (Yes = 1, No = 0)
X_3 = Conflicts between groups (Yes = 1, No = 0)
X_4 = Conflicts between communities (Yes = 1, No = 0)
X_5 = Conflicts between farmers and nomads (Yes = 1, No = 0)
a_0 = Constant
$a_1 – a_5$ = Parameters
et = Error term

Test of Hypothesis: The stated null hypothesis (HO), which states that farm households are not significantly food secure, was tested using the LR Chi-square index of logit model

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Characteristics of the Farmers

The results of the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers are presented in (Table 1). The results showed that 74% of the farmers were male, while 26% were female. This implies that male farmers dominated in the area. The involvement of more males than females corroborate the report of Nwoye and Nwalieji (2019), who reported that men perform certain labour-friendly operations with greater skill than women. Again**,** the mean age of 44 years showed that most of the farmers were middle-aged. This implied that they are still within the active, productive workforce and energetic and innovative enough to participate more in the hurdles involved in the farm business. According to Ubi and Iyanam (2021), agriculture employs a high percentage of middle-aged persons, especially in rural areas where farming is a more prominent occupation for self-reliance and generation of income. The mean household size of 8 persons implied that the household size of the farmers was large, and thus, there existed synergy in agricultural production through family labour. This result corroborates with the report of Amaechi and Okafor (2018), who reported that most households in the Southeast had large households. Moreover, the mean farming experience of 19 years indicated that the farmers were highly experienced in farming and could participate in agricultural programmes. This finding is supported by Olabatoke and Amusain (2017), who reported that farmers with more experience would be more efficient, have better knowledge of efficient allocation of resources and market situation, and are thus expected to run a more efficient and profitable enterprise. The result showed a mean education attainment of 12

Table 1: Distribution of the Farmers According to their Socio-Economic Characteristics.

Variables	Frequency (N = 405)	Percentage (%)	Mean ($\bar{X}$)
Sex			
Male	300	74.1	
Female	105	25.9	
Age (Years)			
≤20	89	22.0	
21-40	106	26.2	**44**
41-60	201	49.6	
Above 60	9	2.2	
Marital status			
Single	46	11.4	
Married	289	71.4	
Widowed	54	13.3	
Divorced	5	1.2	
Separated	11	2.7	
Household size (Number)			
Less than 5	81	20.0	
5-10	175	43.2	
11-15	92	22.7	8
>15	57	14.1	
Farming Experience (Years)			
≤10	64	15.8	
11-20	148	36.5	19
Above 20	193	47.6	
Educational level (years)			
No formal education	59	14.6	
FLSC	117	28.9	
WEAC/GCE	104	25.7	**12.0**
Tertiary	125	30.9	
Farm size (Ha)			
≤1	40	9.9	
1.1-2.0	52	12.9	
2.1-3.0	102	25.2	**2.0**
3.1-4.0	186	45.9	
Above 4	25	6.1	
Annual Income (Naira)			
≤500,000	142	35.1	
501,000-600,000	82	20.2	
601,000 -700,000	68	16.8	346, 259
Above 700,000	113	27.9	
Membership of social organization			
Member	188	46.4	
Non member	217	53.6	
Source: Field survey, 2023Conflicts between families	201	49.6	5th

Source: Field Survey, 2023 *Multiple Responses Recorded

years, which implied that farmers in the study area had at least WASC/GCE. This means that farmers in the area would lend themselves to agricultural programmes available in the area. This corroborates Amaechi and Okafor (2018), who reported that most farmers in Enugu State were literate. The mean farm size of 2 hectares implied the fragmented nature of the size of land holdings in Southeast Nigeria. This could be as a result of the land tenure system predominant in the area or due to population pressure on available land. This agreed with Otite and Albert (2019), who affirmed that the majority of the farmers in Ekiti State are smallholder farmers operating on small farm sizes.

Farmers in the study area had a mean annual income of ₦346, 259. This implied that the farmers' income level was low, which might have an effect on farming activities. This agreed with Adisa (2012), who reported that low income adversely affects farming and non-farming households' production level because it leads to low capital investment. Results further showed that the majority (54%) of the farmers were not members of cooperative organizations, while 46% were members. This implied that farmers in the area do not belong to cooperative societies and as such might not enjoy bulk discounts and economies of scale. This finding disagreed with Nwoye and Nwalieji (2019), who reported that farmers in the Southeast are members of cooperative societies.

Forms of communal conflicts

The forms of communal conflicts prevalent in Southeast, Nigeria is presented in (Table 2). Results in (Table 2)

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents According to Forms of Communal Conflicts.

Forms	Frequency (N = 405)*	Percentage (%)	Rank
Intercommunity land dispute	400	98.8	1st
Farmers and herders clash	386	95.3	2nd
Leadership tussle	320	79.0	3rd
Political/religious affiliation	300	74.1	4th
Conflicts between families	201	49.6	5th

Source: Field Survey, 2023 *Multiple Responses Recorded

showed that the major form of communal conflict prevalent in the study area was intercommunity land dispute (98.8%), which was ranked first among other forms of conflict. This implied that land dispute was the common form of communal conflict in Southeast Nigeria. This could be attributed to the fact that land is the bedrock of all forms of natural resources, especially in the support of food production. This was supported by the finding of Iloh *et al.* (2021), who reported that the necessity to provide ever-increasing domestic food needs and raw materials for industry has led to an increase in the pressure on land and increased crisis due to the struggle for the right to the use of land.

Farmers-herders clashes (95.3%) were ranked second after land disputes. This implied that farmer-herder conflict is high in agrarian communities of Southeast Nigeria. This could be due to the fact that farmers in their quest to provide food for their household would put arable land within their reach into cultivation, leaving none for herders to graze their cattle and as an encroachment into the farmers' food crop field would be made by the herders, hence the continued conflicts between farmers and herders. This corroborated with the findings of Odozi and Oyelere (2019), who reported that population pressure and inadequate grazing land area had resulted in the increased farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria.

Leadership tussles (79.0%), political/religious affiliation (74.1%), and conflicts between families (49.6%) ranked third, fourth, and fifth among the forms of conflicts in the study area. Leadership tussles indicated that the quest for leadership positions was among the common forms of conflict in the study area. This could be attributed to the quest for control of natural resources by members of the community, such as agricultural land, for which the opposition members of the community would be denied of their right to use the community land for agricultural production, hence the rising communal conflict in the study area. Political affiliation conflict implied resource control, which is common in the country's political environment, where the winner takes it all and the opposition is left impoverished. This is consistent with the findings of Awodola and Oboshi (2015); Nwoye and Nwalieji (2019); and Odozi and Oyelere (2019), who reported that socio-political conflict in the area had contributed to the low food security status observed in some parts of Southeast Nigeria.

Food Security Status of the Farming Households in the Area

The food security index was estimated using the expenditure method as used by Olabatoke and Amusain, (2017), thus the study used it to classify the farmers into food-secure and food-insecure households, as shown in (Tables 3 and 4). A food-secure household is, therefore, that whose per capita monthly food expenditure is at least two-thirds of the mean per capita monthly food expenditure. The mean per capita food expenditure per month was N2188.2 and was used as a food security index. Therefore, households whose per capita food expenditure falls below N2188.2 were food insecure, while households whose per capita food expenditure is ≥N2188.2 were food secure. Therefore 52.0% of the households were food secure, while 48.0% were food insecure. This showed that 52.0% had their per capita food expenditure above N2188.2, while 48.0% had their per capita food expenditure below N2188.2. This implied that 52% of the farm households were food secure, while 48% were food insecure. The food-secured households might be attributed to households not affected by communal conflict, which might have increased income due to increased crop output. However, food-insured households might be conflict-affected households or households that lost their food crops to conflicts. This finding is similar to the findings of Ibok *et al.* (2014) and Kibriya, *et al.* (2018) who reported 53% and 63% food-secure households as well as 47% and 37% food-insecure households in Cross River and Oyo States of Nigeria, respectively. Furthermore, the food security index of 1.5 implied the farm households of Southeast Nigeria were food secure in line with the a priori expectation, which stated that when the food security index is greater than 1, then such household is food secure.

Effects of Communal Conflicts on Food Security in the Study Area

The result of the logit regression analysis on the effects of communal conflicts on food security in the study area is presented in (Table 5). The likelihood ratio chi-square value of 17.290, which was significant at 1% showed that the coefficients of the explanatory variables were statistically different from zero, hence the goodness-of-fit

Table 3: The Food Insecurity line for the Households.

Households' Food Security per month (Deciles)	Mean per capita food expenditure (MPC FE) (N)
First	139.9
Second	222.4
Third	148.7
Fourth	218.6
Fifth	208.8
Sixth	189.1
Seventh	244.2
Eight	368.0
Ninth	307.4
Tenth	200.1
Eleventh	208.9
Twelfth	236.2
Total	3282.3
2/3 MPCFE	2188.2

Source: Field survey, 2023 *MPCFE = Mean Per capita Food Expenditure

Table 4: Summary of Household Food Security Status in the Study Area.

Variables	Food secure	Food insecure	All
2/3 Mean per capita food expenditure is N2188.2			
Percentage of households	52.0	48.0	100
Number of households	210	195	405
Head count ratio (H)	0.520	0.480	-
Food Index (F_i)	1.5		

Source: Field survey, 2023 $F_{i=}$ food security index

Table 5: Logit Regression Result on Effects of Communal Conflicts on Food Security of households.

Variables	β (coefficients)	Standard error	Z -value	Probability level
Constant	0.754	0.164	4.586	0.000***
Conflicts between families	-0.059	0.077	-0.760	0.004***
Conflicts between farmers	-0.017	0.035	-0.485	0.063*
Conflicts between groups	-0.096	0.073	-1.324	0.019**
Conflicts between communities	-0.143	0.064	-2.255	0.026**
Conflicts between farmers and herders	-0.006	0.059	-0.096	0.092*
LR chi-square	17.290			
Log Likelihood	42.823			
PseudoR^2 (Nagelkerke)	0.764			

Source: Field survey, 2023. *, **, *** = Significant at 10%, 5% and 1% respectively.

$$Y = 0.754 - 0.059 - 0.017 - 0.096 - 0.143 - 0.006 + et$$
$$(0.164)\ (0.077)\ (0.035)\ (0.073)\ (0.064)\ (0.059)$$

of the estimated model. The result showed that conflicts between families (-0.059) were negative and significantly related to farm household food security. This implied that a decrease in conflicts between families would lead to an increase in household food security. Marginally, a 10% decrease in conflicts between families would increase household food security by 0.6%. Similarly, a 10% decrease in conflicts between farmers (-0.017) would lead to a 0.2% reduction in food insecurity. Furthermore, a 10% decrease in conflicts between groups (-0.096), conflicts between communities (-0.143) and conflicts between farmers and herders (-0.006) would increase the food security of farm households by 0.1, 1.4, and 0.06%, respectively. The decrease in conflicts as observed from the results could be attributed to the ongoing collaborative effort of the government, security agencies and the stakeholders in addressing security issues in the country on one hand, and on the other hand, the increase in the food security of farm households could be as a result of government interventions in addressing food security challenges in the country. This was supported by Lezuya (2021), who reported that reducing the incidence of the farmer-herder conflicts would increase crop farming, which would translate to increased productivity and food security of the farmers. With the Chi-Square of 19.345 and 17.290, the Nagelkerke R2 of 0.673 and 0.764 and the likelihood ratio statistics which were highly significant at 1% ($P < 0.01$), the study suggests that communal conflicts have significant effects on agricultural programmes and food security among farm households in the study area. Therefore, the first null hypothesis which stated that communal conflicts have no significant effects on

Agricultural programmes and food security among farm households in the study area was rejected. Thus, the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This supports the findings of Chikaire et al., (2016) that conflicts have very serious effect on agricultural output and food security of the farmers. The findings is also in tandem with Idoko and Teru (2021), who discovered that conflicts hindered the full implementation of most agricultural programmes in Nigeria.

Report of Focus Group Discussion on Conflict Resolution Management Adopted by Farming Communities in the Study Area

Focus Group Discussion (FGD). was conducted with view of identifying how conflict were resolved between: two or more individuals in the community, individual(s) from the community and individual(s) from another community, family/families and another family/families in the community, village/villages, farmers-herders and the community and another community.

Group A, B, C and D said that conflict resolution management adopted by farming communities in the study area includes; billing of fine to defaulters by community leaders/youth leaders, reporting offenders to Ezeogo, handing over offenders to the police after trial at Eze's palace, punishing the offenders and denial of access to land and properties in the community to defaulters among others.

The respondents described the actions of the community that help to ensure peace in the area to include stipulation of rules and regulations that can inject fear into the lives of the people in the area, thereby making them shy away from anything that may cause crises or disunity in the area. However, institutions or their representatives, like family/family head, kindred association/head, village association/village head, town union/association, Eze/Ezeogo/Obi and cabinet, women socio-cultural associations (Umuada) and youth association/age grades create some mechanisms that help in conflict resolution in the area. Some of the mechanisms adopted include: billing of fine to defaulters by the community leader/youth leader (Royal Palace) reporting offenders to Ezeogo, handing over offenders to the police after trial at Eze's palace, punishing the offenders and denial of access to land and properties in the community to defaulters. All these actions are taken very seriously by the community heads/leaders that work under the instruction of the Ezeogo and his cabinet. This was supported by Otite and Albert, (2019) who reported that the fundamental processes involved in conflict management include grassroots community-based activities, good governance, communication, collaboration, negotiation, conciliation, mediation, arbitration, adjudication, and crisis management, which at times could involve the use of law enforcement agencies to maintain the peace.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the 52% of the households with per capita food expenditure above mean per capita food expenditure and the significant Chi-square value of the model of effect of conflicts on food security, it was concluded that farm households in Southeast Nigeria are significantly food secure. Moreover, it was recommended that there be a need for collaborative effort between the government, civil societies, community leaders, NGOs and individuals to put an end to conflicts of different forms that threaten the food security of farm households as a way of lifting the 48% food-insecure households to food-secure households.

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