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## Land Holding Rights of Fulani Pastoralists and its Effect on their Agropastoral Production System in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Keywords: Land- Land holding rights- Fulani pastoralists- Agropastoral production system- Area of settlement- Nigeria

### Summary

*The study focuses on land holding rights of the Fulani pastoralists and its effect on their agropastoral production system. It was discovered that among the land holding rights options available for land users in Yoruba communities where the Fulanis are settled, leasehold right was the viable option for the pastoralists. The implications of this is that the Fulani pastoralists cannot use the allotted lands for viable social and economic activities such as building of modern houses, establishment of small cottage industry and cultivation of permanent or cash crops such as Oil palm, Cacao, Kola etc since they are holding the land in their custody on a temporary basis. Therefore, their economic activities were limited to production of arable crops. From the average land size of about 5 ha available to majority of the pastoralist, between 0.5 and 1 ha are used for building livestock sheds, residential housing units and storage silos. Land size of about 1ha or more are cultivated for crop production and grazing pad. The situation of the pastoralists calls for government intervention in order to ensure that they have access to secured land rights. This is essential as it will make it possible for the pastoralists to become empowered to use allotted land for viable economic activities that would enhance their living status and meaningfully impact on the economy and development of their areas of settlement.*

### Résumé

**Droits des nomades Fulani d'affermir la terre et l'effet de ces droits sur le système de production agropastorale dans l'état d'Ogun au Nigeria**

*L'étude porte sur le droit des Fulani nomades d'affermir la terre. Parmi les options de droit d'affermissement de terrain disponible aux usagers de terrain dans les communautés Yoruba où les Fulani sont installés, le droit de location était la seule viable pour les nomades. Ceci implique que les Fulani nomades ne peuvent pas se servir des terrains qui leur sont alloués pour des activités sociales et économiques viables telles que la construction de bâtiments modernes, l'établissement de petites entreprises, la culture de produits commerciaux tels que le palmier, le cacao, la kola, etc., puisque l'occupation de ces terrains est temporaire. Donc, les activités économiques de ces nomades ne se limitent qu'aux récoltes. D'une superficie moyenne de 5 ha de terre disponible pour la majorité des nomades, dont 0,5 à 1 ha est utilisée par des étables, des résidences ou des silos de stockage. Ils utilisent une superficie d'environ 1 ha ou plus de terre pour l'agriculture et le pâturage. La situation des nomades nécessiterait l'intervention du gouvernement afin de leur assurer un accès à des droits fonciers garantis et sûrs. Ceci est d'autant plus essentiel qu'il permettra aux nomades d'utiliser les terrains qui leur sont alloués pour des activités économiques viables qui amélioreraient leur condition de vie et qui auraient des effets remarquables sur l'économie et le développement de leurs communautés hôtes.*

### Introduction

Land is one of the natural resources which has witnessed, and has continued to witness ever increasing in demand for various uses. It is always in high demand for activities such as farming, location of industries, construction of residential quarters etc. This is borne out of the fact that land, as a single natural resource has the potential for providing several goods and services. Its productive use, according to Kirk (7), would however depends on the complementary resources such as water, soil quality, natural vegetation, and other embedded soil minerals or resources.

Although land is commonly referred to as "free gift of nature", it is never freely available as every land space is under the control of one or groups of persons known as feudal lords or land owners. The feudal lords, who by virtue of being the first set of people or descendants of the first set of people to settle on the land in their control, determine the extent and purpose for which the land can be used by any other intending users who are not members of the community descendants or indigene.

In addition to feudal lords control of land in a given area is the constituted authority or central Government of a state or nation. For instance, the Nigeria Government under the land-use decree of 1978 laid claim to all lands in the country thereby giving the Government the prerogative right to acquire, allocate and designate appropriate use of the land for the overall national development (15). In view of this, the need for land use can thus be sort from the Government at the federal, state and local levels across the country by the intending users.

The Fulani pastoralists who were traditionally known for moving from one place to another with their herds of cattle are beginning to settle down permanently, particularly outside their original place of abode in the semi-arid (northern) part of Nigeria. This development is as a result of a number of factors such as the long period of drought in the semi-arid and arid zones, the expansion of cultivated land in the sub-humid zones, and the loss of cattle routes as a result of increased land development (4, 5, 6, 11). The increase in the

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trend of settlement in the humid and subhumid agroecological zones of Nigeria has now further been enhanced by a less incidence of tsetse fly (*Glossina sp*) - a vector of the deadly cattle disease known as trypanosomiasis, due to the depopulation of wildlife harbouring trypanosomes, the successful tse-tse fly eradication programmes by the federal government of Nigeria, seasonal bush burning, deforestation and the abundantly available pasture for cattle for at least eight months of the year in the humid ecological zone of the country. Other possible explanation for the growing sedentary pastoral households in this area has been purely from an economic point of view and suggested that the Fulanis are only responding to changes in their economic environment. For instance, the pattern and location of the settlements of the Fulani pastoralists in this area has been in the peri-urban areas, in order to gain access to a regular market for their products, mainly, milk, cheese and meat (5, 12).

The settled life style of the Fulani pastoralists thus made it possible for them to be involved in other economic activities which they could not have possibly taken up while in migration. Such economic activities as crop and small ruminant livestock production, marketing of farm and livestock products, farm labour work etc serve to improve the economic condition and standard of living of the Fulani households (1, 9). However, the tenure ship of the land rights granted the Fulani pastoralists by their host communities would go a long way to determine whether or not the Fulani pastoralists will be able to sustain and improve their economic conditions and standard of living. Where the Fulani pastoralists have good control of the secured land in terms of outright gift, purchase or long years of use, they may be able to take up social and economic activities such as extensive crop cultivation, establishment of small scale crop and livestock products processing units, and construction of housing units, which would impact meaningfully on their standard of living. But where such kind of control is not possible, the Fulani pastoralists may not be able to improve and or to sustain their economic and living conditions. In the light of this, this study examined the kind of land holding rights of the Fulani pastoralists in their area of settlement and the effect of this on their pastoral production system. To achieve this, the following objectives were addressed.

1. Describe the demographic characteristics of the Fulani pastoralists in Ogun state;
2. Identify the type of land holding rights secured or granted by the Fulani pastoralists;
3. Identify the economic activities and production system of the Fulani pastoralists;
4. Examine land use pattern of the Fulani pastoralists.

## Materials and methods

**Study area:** The study was conducted in Ogun State, Nigeria (Figure 1). The State, which has land area of about 16,726 square kilometers, largely falls within the rainforest zone and partly within the Southern Guinea Savanna zones of the country's agroecological belt. The agroclimatic conditions of the State is characterised by bimodal rainfall pattern, thereby making it possible for farmers to cultivate arable crops such as maize, rice, vegetables and spices at least twice a year.

The vegetation cover of the State which ranges from freshwater swamp within the mangrove forest in the southeast through the diverse forest communities to the woody Guinea savanna in the northwest, also make the state's environment conducive for livestock production, among which are cattle, sheep, goat, pig, poultry and other smaller farm animals. While the indigenous farmers mainly

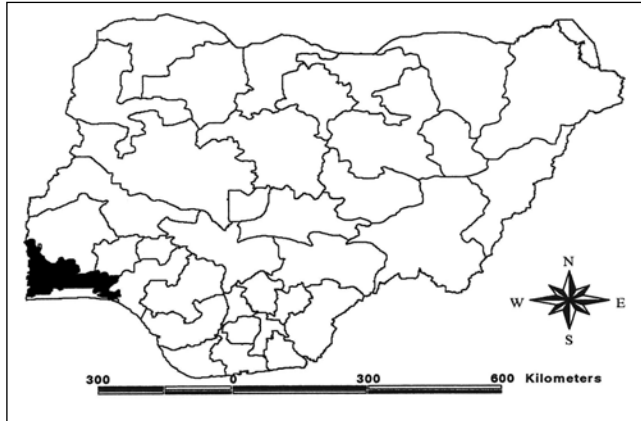


Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the position of Ogun State.

raised small farm animals alongside their cropping activities, the Fulanis are the main keepers and herders of cattle in the State. For political and administrative convenience, the state is structured into 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and four administrative zones (10). Out of these, the Fulani pastoralists are well settled in 5 of the LGAs, namely Abeokuta North, Odeda, Imeko-Afon, Yewa North and Ewekoro LGAs.

**Sampling procedure and data collection:** The population for the study consists of all the Fulani pastoralists who have permanently settled down in Ogun State. A sample frame consisting of the complete list of all agropastoral households presently settled in Ogun State was obtained from the survey conducted by Sodiya (14). The sample frame consists of about 679 of such agropastoralist households residing in 28 settlements across 5 Local Government Areas in the State. These are Imeko-Afon, Yewa North, Ewekoro, Odeda and Abeokuta North. The pastoralists normally live together; hence in each of these local government areas, the pastoral communities were interviewed. According to Mohammed (8), the production unit within the pastoral production system is the household, called Kraal or the *Ruga*. Primarily the family members undertake livestock and crop production activities and other off-farm and non-farm activities of the *Ruga*. Based on these and on the basis of the population frame, 60 percent of the population of the households from each Local Government area were randomly selected so as to give a wider coverage of the pastoral households in the state and that; a generalization about the result of the research could also be easily made. Based on the calculation, 60 percent of the agropastoral households selected gave rise to 407 agropastoral households randomly selected and included in the survey.

The primary data were collected directly from the respondents using structured interview guide, which had initially been validated using the test re-test method to elicit and record their responses. The structured interview guide was divided into four sections. The first section is on socioeconomic characteristics of the Fulani pastoralists and the second section is on the identification of land holding rights options available to the Fulani pastoralists. The third section attempted to determine the land use pattern of the Fulani pastoralists, while the last section identified the economic activities and production system undertaken by the Fulani pastoralists.

The unit of analysis is the household represented by the household head (father) and in some cases, women groups and herd boys were interviewed where necessary. The interview schedule was carried out by embarking on formal and informal visits to the households of settled pastoralists. Direct observation of the agropastoralists activities was

also employed as part of the data collection exercise. Other relevant information on land holding rights and agropastoral production system of Fulani pastoralists were obtained from secondary data sourced from past research and project reports in pastoral studies, monthly and annual reports of the Ogun State Agricultural Development Programme (OGADEP). This information was used to guide the focus of discussion of this study.

**Data analysis:** The data obtained was subjected to descriptive analysis such as frequency counts, and percentages with a view to establishing the summary results and make inferences that led to logical conclusion and policy recommendations for enhanced production performance and sustainable livelihood of the Fulani pastoralist households, not only in Ogun State, but across the humid regions of the tropics.

## Results and discussion

### Socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents

Based on the outcome of the data analysis, it was discovered that majority of the respondents fall within the age range of 41 and 50 years, with a mean age of  $47.7 \pm 0.5$  years. This suggests that most of the pastoralists are still energetic with vigour to take up both economic and social activities that could enhance the livelihood status of their households. Most of the pastoralists, constituting about 74.5 percent, are married with an average household size of 8.1 members. The pastoralists keep such a large number of household sizes because they rely mainly on family labour for both crop and livestock production activities (2). About 32.4 percent of the pastoralists have been residing in different parts of Ogun State for upward of 11 – 15 years. However, the settlement has not really impacted on the educational status of the pastoralists as most of them do not have any form of education.

### Land holding rights of the Fulani pastoralists

Table 1 shows the range of land size and land holding rights options available to the Fulani pastoralists in their settled environment. The available land size to the pastoralists varies between less than 5 and about 10 ha. The available land size to each of the pastoralists depends on limited size of land expanse, number of people seeking for land within the same area and the cost at which lands are given per hectare in their settled environment. Although, more than 50 percent of them have access to land size of not more than 5 hectares for their various social and economic activities, all of them secured their land right on lease from member of their host communities on leasehold. This implies that they have a temporary holding of the lands allocated them and as such cannot lay claims of ownership

of the land. They can neither erect permanent structures such as brick houses nor cultivate permanent/tree crops on the lands, except if they do not mind losing greatly when the land is reclaimed from them by the indigenous Yoruba communities hosting them. To further establish that the pastoralists are tenants on the lands, they are made to pay certain amount of money, usually between 1 and 5 Euros per annum (depending on the size of the land), or certain amount of their farm produce as royalty to their hosts. This arrangement though, enables the pastoralists to operate under a relatively secured arrangement with no indications of tension between them and the indigenous Yoruba host communities. However, the arrangement poses a threat to an improved standard of living of the pastoralists because they cannot use the land to erect modern housing units, especially when they have the means to do so. Likewise, they cannot cultivate permanent crops such as cacao, kola, oil palm etc, or establish small cottage industry- such as crop and or livestock product processing unit which if allowed, would serve as additional sources of income for them and a basis for their economic empowerment. This observation is in line with previous studies, which indicates that insecure land for long term activities is one of the major threats to the survival of the evolving pastoral economy in southwest Nigeria (11). Other land holding rights options such as outright purchase, tenancy at government will and land right from land redistribution were not open to the Fulani pastoralist basically because their host communities did consider it inappropriate to sell their lands. Unwillingness of the community to dispose their land could be due to the traditional belief that community land is a sacred entity or commodity that must be protected and or sustained for future generation yet unborn. Similarly, the Fulani pastoralists could not obtain land from the state and or local government areas where they are settled because of legal, social and institutional factors that create barriers for them as non indigenes of their areas of settlements.

### Land use pattern of the Fulani pastoralists

Owing to the limited available land space to the pastoralists in their areas of settlement, they apportion the land for various uses crucial to their livelihood. Proportionate use of the land, as shown in table 2 includes farming, land fallow/grazing, construction of livestock shed, residential housing units and silos. Between 45.3 and 16.6 percent of the respondents subjected land size of about 1 hectare or less to construct residential housing units, erection of local silos, which are used for storage of dried or processed crops, and livestock sheds where cattle are tied down at nights, after allowing them to graze during the day. This observation implies that minimal land space is enough for construction of housing units for accommodation of the pastoralists' household members (13).

**Table 1**  
**Land holding rights of the Fulani pastoralists (N=407)**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean/mode
Land size (hectares)			
≤ 5	163	53.1	
> 5 – 7	216	40.1	5 ± 0.9 ha
> 7 – 9	25	6.1	
> 9	3	0.7	
Land holding right			
Leasehold	407	100	Lease holding right
Land tenure by rent	-	-	
Purchased/title hold	-	-	
Land tenure by gift/pledge	-	-	
Tenancy at will of govt	-	-	

**Table 2**  
**Land use pattern of the Fulani pastoralists**

Variables	Farming	Livestock shed	Housing unit	Land fallow/ grazing	Erection of local silos	*Frequency	◆Percentage
Land use pattern							
≤ 0.5 ha							
0.6 – 1.0 ha	-	268	364	-	215	847	45.3
1.1 – 1.5 ha	-	76	43	-	192	311	16.6
1.6 – 2.0 ha	116	63	-	44	-	223	11.9
2.1 – 2.5 ha	96	-	-	51	-	147	7.7
2.6 – 3.0 ha	57	-	-	90	-	147	7.9
≥ 3.1 ha	65	-	-	53	-	118	6.3
	78	-	-	-	-	78	4.2

\* Multiple responses

◆Percentage is based on the summation of the responses.

Similarly, it was however observed that the pastoralists use the largest proportion of their lands for crop cultivation and for land fallow, as the need may be. While about 11.9 and 7.9 percent of the respondents allotted land size between 1 and 2 ha for either crop cultivation or land fallow, about 7.7 to 6.3 percent use land size between 2.1 and 3 ha for the same purpose. About 4.2 percent of the respondents use land size of more than 3 ha for farm related activities. The allotted large land size to crop cultivation may have been borne out of the need for increased crop cultivation. Among the commonly cultivated crops are maize, guinea corn, cassava, yam, vegetable and spices. Larger proportion of the cultivated crops is however consumed at the household level. The need to ensure sustainable use of land could have informed the need for subjecting a considerable size of the land to bush fallow. By this practice, farm land that have been intensively cultivated for considerable number of years are allowed to be overgrown by vegetation with a view to allowing the farmland replenish its fertility naturally. Such farmlands are usually allowed to fallow for a minimum of 7 years before it is re-cultivated for crop production.

#### **Economic activities and production system of the Fulani pastoralists**

Although, the pastoralists are traditionally known for livestock herding, their sedentarised lifestyle has made

it possible for them to be ingrained in other economic activities such as crop production, merchandising, and farm labourer alongside their livestock herding activities. Obviously all the pastoralists are into production of livestock; about 96.3 percent of them cultivate the soil for crop production. The crops, which are mainly arable crops, like maize, cassava, sorghum, millet, soybean and yam are cultivated for consumption purposes at the household and in some cases, may be sold especially when they have excesses. Other economic activities of the Fulani pastoralists include farm paid labourer as indicated by 45 percent of them. They take up farm work such as land clearing, soil cultivation, weeding and harvesting on other farmers' farm for paid wages. This was done as means of additional income with which they can meet other non-farm needs. Merchandising is also noted among the pastoralists, particularly among the women, in which they sell milk and milk products, especially cheese. They are also engaged in the sales of farm products such as sorghum, millet, yam and so on (3, 14).

The arable crops, cultivated by the pastoralists, as indicated by 81.3 and 52.3 percent of them (Table 3) are usually cultivated in mixed form (mixed cropping) - such as maize/cassava; sorghum/cassava; maize/yam; sorghum/yam etc. However, sorghum, which is the most common crop among the pastoralists, is sometimes cultivated solely. It is mostly consumed by the Fulanis as a staple food. The

**Table 3**  
**Economic and production system of the Fulani pastoralists (N= 407)**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean/mode
Economic activities	407	100.0	
Livestock production	392	96.3	Livestock production
Crop production	137	33.7	
Merchandising	183	45.0	
Farm labourer			
Crop production			
Arable crops	331	81.3	Arable crops
Biennial crops	213	52.3	
Permanent crops	-	-	
Cultivated crops			
Maize/cassava	156	38.3	
Sorghum/cassava	197	48.4	Sorghum/cassava
Maize/yam	91	22.4	
Sorghum/Yam	109	26.8	
Livestock raised			
Cattle	407	100.0	
Sheep	315	77.4	Cattle
Goat	168	41.3	
Poultry	73	17.9	

crop stem also serve useful purposes such as stakes for yam, for fencing or demarcation of their land areas, and for making seats and beds.

Cultivation of both arable crops, with little or no attempt at permanent crop cultivation, could have resulted from the type of land holding rights taken up by the Fulani pastoralists. The leasehold right implies that they are not owners of the land in their custody and thus, they could only use the lands for "temporary activities". This probably accounted for the reasons why their residential houses are constructed with mud, which does not cost as much as brick houses would have cost.

In addition to cattle production by the Fulani pastoralists, they also raise other smaller stocks such as sheep, goats, chicken, guinea fowl and ducks. While all the respondents raised cattle as major livestock, about 77.4, 41.3, and 17.9 percents of them raised other livestock such as sheep, goats and poultry respectively.

Among the livestock raised by the pastoralists, cattle served as the main source of income and cash reserves for the pastoralists and as such it is considered as the most valuable livestock among all other stocks. Poultry production on the other hand mainly serves consumption purposes. Sheep and goats however serve the dual purpose of income and consumption purposes for the pastoralists' household. Integrated crop-livestock production among the pastoralists thus helps them to have access to their household food needs as and when needed.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The study into the land holding rights of the Fulani pastoralists across their settlement base in Ogun State, Nigeria shows that leasehold right is the viable option of land holding rights available to the pastoralists. This implies that the pastoralists could not develop the livelihood status to the point of building modern housing unit for accommodation or intensify crop enterprise production, which would have been possible if they have title holding of the lands in their custody. With this scenario, this study recommends that, government at the centre would have to come to the aid of the pastoralists with a view to making it possible for them to have land title holding for their social and economic activities. This can be achieved if the Government could embark upon land reform policies that would ameliorate the problems associated with land use by both pastoral and agricultural or host communities.

Secondly, Government should establish and develop more grazing reserves as a means of providing easy access to land for the pastoralists. Further more, the Government should promulgate decrees on the existence of such grazing reserves, thereby, declaring encroachment upon them by farmers or dwellers a recognizable offence; punishable by law. This action will not only ensure land security to the pastoralists, but would also serve as catalyst to pastoral development, facilitate development of economic and social activities of the communities involved and enhance the livelihood status of the inhabitants.

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