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# **Herdsmen Crises As A Challenging Factor To National Security And Its Effects On National Economic Development In Nigeria**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined herdsmen crises as a challenging factors to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria. it specially assessed the protracted herdsmen-farmers clashes in some part of Nigeria, especially the middle belt (Plateau, Nassarawa, Benue, Kogi and Niger State) and South-West (Ondo, Oyo, Ekiti, and Ogun State) where thousands of people have lost their lives in the course of violent confrontations. This research employed the descriptive survey design which enables the researchers to collect and analyze data from a sample of the entire population without any manipulations. The target population for this study was made up of all regular full-time students and lecturers in government owned tertiary institutions in the study area, i.e. Benue, Oyo and Ondo State. a sample size of one hundred and forty (140) was used for the study, which was selected through the incidental sampling technique. The consisted of twenty (14.29%) college of education students, ten (7.14%) Polytechnics students (i.e 21.43% in teachers) and one hundred and ten (78.57%) university undergraduates. the sample is made up of sixty-three (45%) males (45 undergraduates and 18 lecturers) and seventy-seven (55%) females (12 lecturers and 65 undergraduates). Questionnaire was used to collect relevant data. The questionnaire was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation and Social Studies Education for face and content validity. The reliability was established at 0.86 using the split-half reliability method determined through the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Five null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data were analyzed using t-test. Findings showed that there was no significant difference on the respondents' perception on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development based on gender, religious background, institution type, home background should adopt community oriented policing model, and or regional police outfits to forestall peace and prevent crime and that the federal government and its security agencies should intensify operations against cattle rustlers, improving systems to track livestock movement and trade, arresting individuals who carry illegal firearms and prosecuting suspected assailant.

**Keywords:** development, herdsmen-farmers clashes, national security

## **INTRODUCTION**

The herdsmen crises in Nigeria particularly the violent clashes between pastoralists (mostly Fulani) and farming communities, has been a complex and contentious issue with ethnic, political, economic, and environmental dimensions. Abdulahi (2000) observed that herdsmen/farmers crises in Nigeria has becomes a pivotal concern for national security and economic development. This protracted conflict, characterized by clashes between sedentary farming communities and nomadic herders, has profound implications for the stability and security of the nation. Moreover, the farmers and herdsmen crises in Nigeria poses a significant threat to national security, intertwining historical grievances, resource competition, and cultural differences. The conflict's national security ramifications are evident, with concerns about its potential to escalate into broader instability.

The escalation of tensions between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria, is a complex phenomenon driven by a confluence of socio-economic, political and environmental factors. Socio-economically, the competition for scarce resources, particularly arable land and water, has intensified as with herders and farmers seek to meet their livelihood needs (Akinbiyi, 2021). Changes in weather patterns and decreasing availability of grazing lands exacerbate the challenges faced by herders, leading to increased mobility and competition for resources. Msofor and Akintunde (2023) stressed that weak governance structures and inadequate law enforcement allow disputes to escalate, contributing to a cycle of violence and reprisals.

The protracted herdsmen-farmers violent clashes in Nigeria in recent years have attracted national and international attention and condemnation because of the danger the lingering situation poses to national survival and cohesion. Although there have always been episodes of herdsmen-farmers conflicts even during the pre-colonial period, the dimension and scope the attendant calamities have assumed in recent years, particularly from the year 2011 is to say the least, alarming in view of its catastrophic consequences for human lives and properties, arable land, free movement of people, goods and services.

Crisis is inevitable as long as we live together, especially in a multi-ethnic, cultural and religious community life as Nigeria. However, violence leaves us with various forms of retardation and underdevelopment resulting from the destruction of lives, farmland and property. The crises have had devastating effects on intergroup relationship in Nigeria. Olukunle (2018) stressed that crisis is an event that lead to an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, community, or whole society and country at large. Crisis also refers to an unexpected unplanned situation or rather threat that suddenly dawns upon an area out of nowhere. It is deemed to be negative changes in the security, economic, political, societal, or environmental affairs, especially when they occur abruptly with little or no warning.

Despite efforts being made by security agencies of government and well-meaning Nigerian to put an end to the catastrophe, the orgy of violence has continued unabated as thousands of farmers and pastoralists are still being killed mostly in the middle belt, especially in the states of Benue, Nassarawa, Taraba, Plateau and even in Kaduna and Zamfara states (Archieved, 2015). The reasons that are said to be responsible for the persistent herdsmen-farmers clashes in Nigeria and in most parts of the Sahel region (Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania, Ivory Coast and Senegal) include phenomenal increase in population which puts increasing pressure on land and water resources by both farmers and pastoralists, especially in drought prone areas. The blockage of transhumance routes and encroachment on cultivable land meant for agricultural activities: mass movement of pastoralists towards the southern part which has in many instances led to violent clashes between the herdsmen and farmers in the local communities due to destruction of farm lands and crops by the cattle (Foreign Affairs, 2015).

The deadly crises between herdsmen and crop farmers have become of the major insecurity problems in Nigeria. It was stressed that is second to Boko Haram imperil (Okoro, 2018). The bloody attacks and counter attacks have created social and relational implications and economic adverse effects. According to Olakiitan (2016), the failure of government to address the situation of herdsmen attacks decisively has several implications for Nigeria. The fact that herdsmen now carry sophisticated ammunition with which they kill and maim perceived opponents at will constitute graves danger to national economy and security.

This is because security personnel including the police have not been able to understand weapon-wielding herdsmen's boldness and firepower.

Based on Okoro (2015) submission, the herdsmen have sacked whole communities, abducted elder statesmen, burnt churches, killed church priests and other worshipers, killed police officers, raped, looted and perpetrated heinous crimes while the government has done less to arrest the situation, which is a serious threat to national security and national economic development as farmers displacement from the affected communities has drastically reduced agricultural production in Nigeria.

Economic development: Is the process by which the economic well-being and quality of life of nation, region, local community, or an individual are improved according to targeted goals and objectives. Economic development policies focused on industrialization and infrastructure, but since 1960s, it has increasingly focused on poverty reduction. National economies are linked to the expanding global economy. The more businesses and nations that profit, the more individual have jobs and resources and the higher their standards of living. Over decades and generations, seemingly small differences of a few percentage points in the annual rate of economic growth make an enormous difference in GDP per capital. Development is a process of societal advancement, where improvement in the well-being of the people is generated through strong partnership between all sectors, corporate bodies and other groups in the society (Dirisu, 2018). National economic development may suffer a serious setback as a result of the negative effects of the activities on farmers in area where Fulani herdsmen operates and Nigeria as a whole.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The herdsmen crises in Nigeria according to (Archived, 2005), the reason that said to be responsible to the persistence herdsmen-farmer clashes in Nigeria i.e. as noticed in the North Central or middle-belt and the Southwest is as a result of phenomenal increase in population which put increasing pressure on land and water resources used by both farmer and pastoralist especially in drought prone areas. The blockage of transhumance routes and encroachment in cultivable land meant for agricultural activities, mass movement the pastoralist towards the southern part which are in many instances led to violence clashes between the herdsmen and farmers in the local communities due to the distraction of farm land and crops by the cattle (Foreign Affairs, 2015). Herders' attacks on farming communities have spawned dangerous political, economic and religious conspiracy. One is that the attacks are part of a longer-term plot to displace indigenous populations and seize their lands. Among Christian community's herders attacks are widely seen as a subtle form of Jihad. In March 2016, the prelate of the Methodist church of Nigeria Dr. Samuel Uche said; we are aware there is a game plan to Islamize Nigeria, and they are using the herdsmen to initiate it. In the south east, Biafra separatist groups describe the attacks as part of a northern plot to take over the people of the south and forcefully convert them to Islam. Some Southerners accuses President Buhari of deliberately failing to stop herder's aggression, pointing to this pastoral herdsmen background and his position as life patron of the cattle breeders association. To buttress their change through these changes are not supported by any solid evidence, but they are aggravating interfaith, distrust and undermining the country's fragile unity.

In his own opinion, Richards (2019) affirm that serious attacks being perpetrated by arm bandit makes people took to arms either to defend themselves or a form of reprisal attack. This in turn will eventually be a breakdown of law and order, prevailing anarchy. The sound of arms in the process of attacks, the spilling of blood, burning of houses and farmlands during a violent conflict and host of others are all threat to a nation (Akanji, Badmus and Kelade, 2017).For safety, people have such environmental to a well secured environment which is also another threat to a new environment due to its over population and also the shortage of food, water and shelter. Recurring violence between herdsmen and farmers as well as related cattle theft and banditry in many states in Nigeria posed serious threats to peace and security. Although, the crisis in increasingly describing in religious terms, completing claims to land and other resources are at its cores.

**Table 1:** Showing violent attacks by herdsmen in Benue, Nigeria from year 2014

S/N	Incidents	Date	Location	Death Toll	Details
1	Agatu killing	13 Jan – 20 April, 2013	Agatu/Obagaji	Between 500-1000	Herdsmen/farmers clash
2	Agatu killing	May 1st – June 30, 2013	Agatu/Ochigbada	Between - -----	herdsmen/farmers clash
3	Ogbadigbo killing	July 7 – July 30, 2013	Otupa	Atleast 1000	Protest by villagers over land encroachment
4	Otukpo	Jan. 2014 – Feb. 20, 2014	Otupa	More than 2000 casualties	Protest by the Otada people over their chief seeding of their land to the Herdsmen
5	Apa	Jan. 4, 2015 – April 30, 2015	Ukgbkpo	2000 to 25000 casualties	Protest by the communities from land encroachment
6	Ukgbkpo/edumoga	Nov. 1, 2017	Omusu	Atleast 3000	The villagers attacked on the herdsmen camp/reprisal attack of herdsmen
7	Logo and Guma killing	Jan. 1, 2017	Logo & Gawa	30 people	Fulani herdsmen attack

**Table 2:** Showing violence attacks by herdsmen in Ondo State.

S/N	Incidents	Date	Location	Death Toll	Details
1	Ijugbere/Owo	Feb. 14, 2021	Ijugbere/Owo	3	Herdsmen attack
2	Arimogiga	April 14, 2020	Arimogiga	5	Herdsmen attack
3	Ute	Feb. 12, 2021	Ute community	2	Herdsmen attack
4	Ajowa Akoko	Feb. 5, 2021	Ajowa Akoko	1	Herdsmen attack
5	Irele	Jan. 8, 2020	Irele	1	Herdsmen attack
6	Araromi	Jan. 31, 2020	Araromi	5	Herdsmen attack
7	Ikare	March 14, 2021	Ikare	4	Herdsmen attack
8	Igbara oke	July 8, 2021	Igbara oke	2	Herdsmen attack

**Table 3:** Showing violence attacks by herdsmen in Oyo State

1	Igangan killing	June 6, 2021	Igangan community	11	Herdsmen attack
2	Ayete	Jan. 10, 2021	Ayete	At least 45	Herdsmen attack
3	Igangan killing	June 14, 2021	Igangan	At least 50	Herdsmen attack
4	Ibarapa killing	June 6, 2021	Ibarapa	10	Herdsmen attack

**METHODOLOGY**

This study is a survey of stakeholders’ views on the herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of all regular full-time students of all the government owned tertiary institutions in Benue, Oyo and Ondo State which are: Benue State University, Makurdi; Benue State Polytechnics, Ugbokolo; Federal University of Agriculture Markurdi; Rufus Giwa Polytechnics; Adekunle Ajasin University, Akugba Akoko and Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. The estimated population is twenty-four thousand, three hundred and seven (24,307) out of which a sample of one hundred and forty respondents was drawn through the incidental sampling technique. The sample consisted of twenty (14.29%) college of education students, ten (7.14%) polytechnics students (i.e 21.43% of in-service teachers) and one hundred and ten (78.57%) university undergraduates. The sample is made up of sixty-three (45%) males (45 undergraduates and 18 lecturers) and seventy-seven (55%) females (12 lecturers and 65 undergraduates).

Questionnaire was used to collect relevant data. The questionnaire has three (3) sections which focused on herdsmen crises, challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria. The questionnaire was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation and Social Studies education for face and content validity. The reliability was established at 0.84 using the split-half reliability method determined through the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficiency formula. The analysis of data was done with percentages, means, standard deviation and the t-test statistic formula for the stated hypotheses.

**RESULTS**

**Testing of Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference in the perceptions of male and female undergraduate students on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on nation economic development in Nigeria.

**Table 1: Gender difference in the respondents’ perception on herdsmen crises**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-table	df	Sig. level	Decision
Male	63(45%)	89.9	381.39	0.005	1.96	138	0.05	H <sub>0</sub> accepted
Female	77(55%)	89.04	439.27					

The analysis in table 1 shows the comparison of the perceptions on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria on the basis of their gender. The result shows that there was no significant difference in both male and female respondents’ perception on herdsmen crises because the calculated “t” was less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference in the perception of undergraduate students on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria based on religious background.

**Table 2: Difference in the respondents’ perception on herdsmen crises based on religion background**

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-cal	t-table	df	Sig. level	Decision
Christianity	110(78.57%)	8.71	532.5	0.018	1.96	138	005	H <sub>0</sub> accepted
Islam	30(21.43%)	88.43	265.44					

Table 2 shows the analysis of the comparison of the perception of the undergraduate students on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria based on religious background. There was no significant difference in both

Christians and Muslim perceptions on herdsmen crises because the calculated “t” was less than the table value at 0.05 significant level.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant difference in the perception of undergraduate students on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria based on institution type.

**Table 3: Difference in the respondents’ perception on herdsmen crises based on institution type**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t-cal</b>	<b>t-table</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. level</b>	<b>Decision</b>
University students	63(45%)	25.63	109.93	0.045	1.96	138	0.05	H <sub>0</sub> accepted
College of Education students	77(55%)	24.77	115.57					

Table 3 presents the analysis of the comparison of the perceptions of the undergraduate students on herdsmen crises as a challenges factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria based on institution type. The analysis gives no significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents based on institution type because the calculated “t” was less than table value of 0.05 of significance.

**Hypothesis Four:** There is no significant difference in the perception of undergraduate students on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria based on home background.

**Table 4: Difference in respondents’ perception on herdsmen crises based on home background**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t-cal</b>	<b>t-table</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. level</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Educated	110(78.57%)	25.42	144.92	0.69	1.96	138	0.05	H <sub>0</sub> accepted
Illiterate	30(21.43%)	24.13	68.65					

Table 4 presents the analysis of comparison of the perceptions’ of the undergraduates on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria based on home background. The analysis gives the calculated “t” as less than the table value at 0.05 significant level hence, there was no significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents based on home background.

**Hypothesis Five:** There is no significant difference in the perception of undergraduate students and lecturers on herdsmen crises and its effects on economic development in Nigeria based on status.

**Table 5: Difference in respondents’ perception on the causes of herdsmen and farmers’ crises based on status**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t-cal</b>	<b>t-table</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig. level</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Students	11(78.57%)	31.45	65.97	0.044	1.96	138	0.05	H <sub>0</sub> accepted
Lecturers	30(21.43%)	30.17	116.668					

Table 5 presents status effects on the perceptions of respondents on the causes of herdsmen and farmers’ crises in Nigeria. The calculated “t” was less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, there was no significant difference in the perception based on the status of the respondents as regards causes of herdsmen and farmers’ crises in Nigeria.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The analysis on the first hypothesis which is on the comparison of the perception of respondents on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria on the basis of gender. The result shows that there was no significant difference on the respondents' perception on herdsmen crises because the calculated "t" was less than the table value. Therefore the hypothesis was accepted. Johnson (2023) observed that over the years, herder farmer clash has been enormous, apart from the loss of human material and capital resources there are also social implication intern of humanitarian crises. Herdsmen conflicts in Nigeria are getting worse almost on a daily basis. Tade (2022) stressed that the perception of male and female are not different on herdsmen crises because of uncontrolled conflicts threaten the sustainable national development in Nigeria as many lives and properties worth millions of naira have been destroyed. Therefore, this affects the living standard of citizens in terms of food security, reduction of the labour force, uprooting people from their ancestral home, low number of children enrolled in schools and the destruction of schools which have long negative effects on the areas and the country at large. Herdsmen crisis created tension not only in areas where there was direct confrontation between the disputants, but the conflicts terrorized every community and put them on alert to ensure that both short-term and long-term solutions were provided to return the state to a violence-free community (Benson and Trespure, 2023).

The analysis on the table 2 shows the comparison of the perception of the undergraduate students on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria based on religions background. There was no significant difference in both Christians and Muslims perceptions on herdsmen crises. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. This is in line with the submission of Akinbiyi (2021) who observed that both Christians and Muslims accepts that herdsmen lack respect for custom of the communities invaded leading to causes of conflict between herders and farmers as the visitors have no regard for traditions and agreement stipulating the modus operand of the herders. The burning of the farms that belong to their hosts and disrespect for traditional authorities. Abdulahi (2022) opined that many active young men and women that could help to sustain the country had been killed by the herdsmen. Students in the conflict-prone areas could not go to school again due to fear of the unknown and by extension, this will have a grave impact on human capital development. The majority of farmers and herdsmen crises have occurred between Muslim and Fulani herdsmen peasants, exacerbating ethno-religious hostilities.

The result on table 3 presents the analysis of the comparison of the perceptions of the undergraduate students on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria based on institution type. There was no significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents based on the institution type. Therefore the hypothesis was accepted. This corroborate with the ascertain of Benjamin (2023) who stressed that all students are aware that herdsmen crises result in significant loss of lives and livelihood, undermine food security, permit the proliferation of small arms, displace large numbers of people, and divert resources meant for development. Nigeria has faced widespread violent conflicts of terrible proportions across numerous groups, communities, religions, education, economic, and political elites. These long standing conflicts have varying dimensions, procedures and parties. Pastoralists and farmers have been at odds since the dawn of agriculture. Scarcity of resources, notably lands, causes conflict. All students are aware that the battle has recently become more unstable due to an increase in deaths and displaced persons across the afflicted nations. Animals, crops, and other valuable goods will be lost if the war continues (Adoche, 2024).

The result on table 4 presents the analysis of comparison of the perception of the undergraduates on herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria based on home background. The result shows that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents based on home background. This result is in line with submission of Arold (2022) that the perception of people about herdsmen crises has nothing to do with their home background. Farmers and herders have always had issues in Nigeria, but it increased as the population grew, leading to more cultivation of grassland and livestock paths. As a result of the paucity of

pasture area in the north, the herdsmen migrate south. Conflict impair food security, economic development, putting participants and the country at risk. The slow burning battle, which was regularly handled by officials, change the way farmers and cattle herders used to resolve disputes. Both the illiterates and educated are aware that food security is a well-known concept globally. It was initially discovered as a concept of food supply in which food shortages created fears of global political instability. Food availability was recognized as a key component of understanding food security at the time, but was also believed to be insufficient for household food access which is affecting everyone.

Result of data analysis on table 5 has shown the present status effects on the perception of respondents on the causes of herdsmen and farmers' crises in Nigeria. There was no significant difference in the perceptions based on the status of the respondents as regards causes of herdsmen and farmers' crises in Nigeria. This finding corroborates with that of Tade (2022) who found that there was no significant difference between the mean achievement score of students and lecturers. However, it is a conflict with the finding of Nsofor and Akintunde (2023) who found that there is a significant difference between lecturers and students in their mean score on respondents' perception on the causes of herdsmen and farmers crises. Abdulahi (2022) pointed out the broader security situation in Nigeria, including the activities of Boko Haram, bandit groups, and other armed factors, has created instability in rural areas. This instability makes it difficult for farmers and herders to coexist peacefully, leading to violent confrontation.

The menace is posing a serious threat to life and livelihood as herdsmen attribute the roots of the crisis to religious differences resulting in killing of their cows while the farmers see the herdsmen as a threat to their crops and farm produce since the herdsmen allow their cattle to graze on the crops (Akinbiyi, 2021). This crises have disrupted socio-economic, religious, educational and political activities in the country which has threatened the national unity. The persistent violence have become so alarming that there is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria is at a crossroad and gradually drifting to a conflict society. In recent times, the killings recorded by cattle herdsmen and farmers clashes have rampaged most rural communities in Nigeria depriving them of their farmlands and ancestral homes as well as leading to loss of their major source of livelihood (Benjamin, 2023). Most worrisome in the present development is the raping, killing and kidnapping of innocent people where women and children are the most vulnerable and worst hit. Again, the destroyed properties, socio-economic life in the affected states is usually grounded to a halt as people could not freely go about their farming and socio-economic activities for fear of being killed (Arold, 2022). He stressed further that conflicts between cattle herdsmen and farmers had led to loss of live, valuable properties and destruction of vast expanse of arable crop farmlands thereby posing serious threat to food security since farmers for fear of attacked could no longer go to farm and harvest their farm produce.

Adequate measures are needed in providing security for people in rural communities across the states in Nigeria. This can be achieved by constituting a special security taskforce at the local government and grassroots levels to prevent further clashes between cattle herdsmen and farmers. There is also a need to set up punitive mechanisms to penalize criminal actors who kill in communities which will serve as a form of justice and a potential deterrent to others.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study was undertaken to examine herdsmen crises as a challenging factor to national security and its effects on national economic development in Nigeria. Based on solid evidence, the researchers concluded that the country's farmers' and herdsmen crises has caused wanton devastation of human lives and property, including livestock and farmland assets which has adverse effect on national economic development in Nigeria. Again, farmers were displaced due to the high level of insecurity of farmlands, owing largely to the activities of the warring parties that make those regions unfit for habitation.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made on the

1. Government should adopt community oriented policing model, and or regional police outfits to forestall peace and prevent crime.
2. Federal Government should engage peace and conflict resolution experts in dealing with the rising cases of herdsmen, farmers crises, this will enable dialogue, negotiation and of course a win-win resolution.
3. The security in the affected regions should be improved on actively. The federal government and its security agencies should intensity operations against cattle rustlers, improving systems to track livestock movement and trade, arresting individuals who carry illegal firearms and prosecuting suspected assailant.
4. State government should designate some areas for grazing fields for the nomadic herdsmen and make them pay tax to state, whilst warning that any crime involving herdsmen would attract severe penalties. Hence, all herdsmen operating in all local governments should be registered to enable monitoring of their activities and co-existence.
5. Ranching method of cattle rearing should be adopted at rearing location across the country while the herdsmen should be given needed training for effective and efficient management of the ranching.

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