

RURAL SECURITY AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA, 2018-2024

Nwanganga Michael Chinwendu & Samson Akpati Nzeribe

Department of International Relations, Gregory University, Uturu, Abia State

nwangangamike@gmail.com

Abstract

Rural security is a critical factor in agricultural productivity, particularly in South East Nigeria, where farming is a significant source of livelihood. This study examined the relationship between rural security and agricultural productivity in the region. Documentary method and content analysis were employed as methods of data collection and method of data analysis, respectively, while case study research design was used for an in-depth examination of rural communities to understand the security challenges and responses in South East Nigeria. The study utilised rational choice theory in explaining the subject matter. The major finding includes that insecurity in the South-East region has severely disrupted agricultural activities and community life, which has led to a sharp decline in agricultural productivity, reduced food availability, higher prices, and worsening food insecurity across the region. Therefore the study concluded that the escalation of insecurity is the central factor undermining agricultural production and food security in South-East Nigeria. Our main recommendation is that the Nigerian government should not only strengthen community-based security systems and improve coordination between local vigilante groups and formal law enforcement agencies to enhance trust, intelligence sharing, and protection of rural communities but also reinvest in the agricultural sector through targeted funding, provision of modern farming tools, capacity-building programs for farmers, and rehabilitation of rural infrastructure to boost productivity and food availability.

Keywords: *Rural security, Agricultural Productivity, herder-farmer clashes, food insecurity, community-based security systems.*

Introduction

South-East Nigeria, characterised by its rich agricultural potential, faces significant challenges that impede agricultural productivity and threaten food security. The interplay between rural security issues and agricultural output is critical, as conflicts, particularly those involving farmer-herder dynamics, have escalated in recent years. This situation has profound implications for the livelihoods of rural populations who depend on agriculture as their primary source of income. Rural security in South-East Nigeria is increasingly compromised by various forms of violence, including banditry and conflicts between farmers and herders. These conflicts are often exacerbated by competition for land and resources, which have become more pronounced due to climate change and population growth (Amadasu & Etinosa, 2024)

The farmer-herder crisis not only disrupts agricultural activities but also instils fear among farmers, leading to reduced investment in farming practices and ultimately lower productivity (Chigbu & Onukaogu, 2023). The agricultural sector in South-East Nigeria is vital for food production and economic stability. However, the persistent insecurity has led to a decline in agricultural productivity. Farmers are often unable to access their lands due to threats from armed groups, resulting in decreased crop yields and livestock losses (Ariga et al., 2008). However, rural insecurity, characterised by crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, and communal conflicts, has become a significant threat to agricultural productivity. Studies have shown that rural insecurity leads to reduced agricultural productivity, food insecurity, and economic instability (Ogundele & Ojo, 2015; Okoli & Ijatuyi, 2015). Farmers are often forced to abandon their farms due to fear of attacks, resulting in decreased crop yields and livestock production (Afolayan & Adeyinka, 2017). Additionally, rural insecurity hinders the adoption of modern farming techniques and technology, further aggravating the decline. The South East region has experienced heightened rural insecurity in recent years, with incidents of herdsman-farmer conflicts, banditry, and kidnapping (International Crisis Group, 2020). These security challenges have significant implications for agricultural productivity, food security, and the region's economic development.

Moreover, the lack of investment in modern farming techniques and infrastructure further intensifies this decline. Several studies have investigated the relationship between rural security and agricultural productivity in Nigeria. For instance, a study indicated that economic, social, and environmental factors significantly constrain agricultural productivity in the region (Ariga et al., 2008). Food insecurity is a pressing issue linked to both rural security and agricultural productivity. The South-East region has been reported as not being food sufficient compared to other regions in Nigeria (West African Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, 2023). Ogundele and Ojo (2015) found a significant negative correlation between rural insecurity and agricultural productivity in Nigeria's North Central region. Similarly, Okoli and Ijatuyi (2015) discovered that rural insecurity reduced agricultural productivity by 30% in Nigeria's South West region. Factors contributing to food insecurity include government neglect, traditional farming practices, and inadequate infrastructural support. As a result, many households face hunger and malnutrition, which can lead to broader social issues such as increased poverty rates and health crises (West African Journal of Interdisciplinary Research, 2023). The nexus between rural security and agricultural productivity in South-East Nigeria presents a complex problem requiring immediate attention from policymakers. Addressing these challenges involves not only enhancing security measures but also implementing agricultural reforms aimed at improving productivity. This can be achieved through infrastructural investments, educational programs for farmers on modern agricultural practices, and community engagement initiatives designed to foster cooperation among different stakeholders.

Rural security and agricultural productivity are intricately linked in South East Nigeria, where agriculture remains a vital sector of the economy. The region's rural areas are predominantly agrarian, with farming serving as the mainstay of livelihood for millions of people (CBN, 2020). Despite the existing literature, there is a dearth of studies specifically focusing on the link

between deepening insecurity in the South East region of Nigeria and poor agricultural production and food security. This study aims to investigate rural security and agricultural productivity in south-east Nigeria.

Literature Review

In recent years, South-East Nigeria has experienced various forms of insecurity, including farmer-herder conflicts, banditry, and communal clashes. These conflicts have been exacerbated by competition for land and resources, driven by population growth and environmental degradation. According to Amadasu & Etinosa (2024), rural banditry and conflicts between farmers and herders have significantly disrupted agricultural activities, leading to decreased productivity and increased food insecurity. The effects of insecurity are particularly pronounced in rural areas where farmers are often vulnerable to attacks that threaten their lives and livelihoods. However, the World Bank (2021) highlights that the persistent violence has led to the displacement of farming communities, resulting in a significant decline in agricultural output across South-East Nigeria. The impact of insecurity on agricultural practices is multifaceted. Farmers often resort to abandoning their farms or reducing their cultivation areas due to fear of attacks. This abandonment leads to reduced crop yields and a decline in food availability. A study conducted by Chigbu and Onukaogu (2023) indicates that food insecurity in South-East Nigeria is closely linked to the prevalence of violence against farmers, which disrupts planting and harvesting seasons. Agricultural productivity in South-East Nigeria is characterised by a reliance on subsistence farming, with crops such as cassava, maize, and yam being predominant. However, the region faces significant challenges that hinder productivity. According to a study published in the *West African Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, factors such as poor infrastructure, inadequate access to credit facilities, and out-dated farming techniques contribute to low productivity levels among farmers. The agricultural sector is crucial for the economy of South-East Nigeria, employing a significant portion of the population. However, the combination of insecurity and infrastructural deficits has led to a decline in agricultural output. Contributing to the on-going debate, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reports that Nigeria's food production did not keep pace with its growing population, leading to increased reliance on food imports. The relationship between rural security and agricultural productivity is bidirectional. On one hand, insecurity directly affects agricultural output by disrupting farming activities; on the other hand, low agricultural productivity can exacerbate rural insecurity by increasing competition for scarce resources. Insecurity remains a pressing issue in South-East Nigeria, with millions facing chronic hunger. The FAO estimates that approximately 22 million Nigerians experienced persistent hunger between 2019 and 2021. The decline in agricultural productivity due to insecurity has resulted in higher food prices and increased vulnerability among rural populations. Furthermore, as highlighted by various studies, including those conducted by Moses et al. (2024), there is a direct correlation between rising levels of violence against farmers and declining crop yields. For instance, an increase in attacks has been shown to decrease productivity significantly by up to 89% for certain crops demonstrating how insecurity undermines food systems.

Therefore, to address the challenges posed by insecurity on agricultural productivity, comprehensive policy interventions are essential. Enhancing security measures is crucial for restoring confidence among farmers. Government initiatives aimed at improving rural security through community policing and collaboration with local leaders can help mitigate risks associated with farming activities. Investment in Agricultural Infrastructure Investing in agricultural infrastructure such as roads, storage facilities, and irrigation systems—is vital for improving productivity. As noted by Chigbu et al (2023), better infrastructure can facilitate access to markets and reduce post-harvest losses.

Additionally, providing farmers with access to modern farming techniques and inputs can enhance crop yields. Encouraging sustainable agricultural practices can help build resilience among farmers facing insecurities. Training programs focused on climate-smart agriculture can equip farmers with the skills needed to adapt to changing environmental conditions while improving productivity.

The relationship between rural safety and agricultural productivity in South-East Nigeria can be observed through numerous empirical studies, which highlight that insecurity such as criminal attacks and farmer-herder disputes significantly disrupts farming activities and outcomes. As a result, instances of violence and threats commonly lead to abandoned farmlands, restricted market access, and relocation of those involved in agriculture, thereby reducing overall food production and negatively affecting rural livelihoods (Ewubare et al., 2024). Research indicates that spending on internal security often brings a positive turnaround in farm output, whereas a rise in crimes and terrorist incidents tends to decrease agricultural performance. This pattern suggests that meaningful improvements in safety and crime management contribute favourably to rural agricultural growth (Ewubare et al., 2024).

Scholars have also pointed out that efforts to promote community-based policing in rural regions are only partly successful, mainly because policing structures remain highly centralized and lack local accountability. Enhanced results are seen when local stakeholders participate more fully and when legal systems support grassroots policing initiatives. Effective community policing, supported by adequate funding, training, and clear responsibilities, has been shown to reduce crime rates and improve security conditions for farming communities in South-East Nigeria (CABI, 2024). The reviewed works further emphasize that additional difficulties such as limited financial services, high costs of equipment, and climate challenges compound the negative effect of insecurity on rural farming. When security is lacking, farmers often lose access to resources and markets, which leads to lower productivity. Empirical literature, therefore, recommends a targeted approach that includes expanding local policing, supplying adequate agricultural resources, reorganizing safety oversight, and adjusting rural policies to reflect emerging risks and local needs (Ewubare et al., 2024; CABI, 2024). Empirical investigations into the relationship between rural security and agricultural productivity in South-East Nigeria reveal a complex, multi-layered scenario, marked by both consensus and divergent viewpoints on the exact mechanisms and intensity of insecurity's impact.

However, several studies demonstrate that insecurity including terrorism, crime, and inter-

communal violence exerts a mostly negative influence on agricultural activities, leading to land abandonment, market disruption, and erosion of farmer livelihoods (Ewubare et al., 2024; Ilesanmi & Odefadehan, 2022). Using advanced econometric approaches like the non-linear autoregressive distributed lag (NARDL) model, recent research finds that spikes in terrorism and crime rates have disproportionate effects on agricultural productivity, with reductions during crises being much steeper than subsequent recoveries when insecurity abates (MPRA, 2024). Field surveys in rural communities highlight that security threats such as kidnapping, banditry, and the imposition of levies by armed groups have significantly limited labour availability for farming. This shift is especially pronounced in food-producing belts, where human and financial resources are routinely diverted away from agriculture due to fear or direct loss (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Olagunju et al., 2020).

However, some research presents nuanced perspectives. Louis and Hiikyaa (2018) argue that in certain contexts, the impact of terrorism on agricultural productivity can be weak, especially where local resilience mechanisms supported by strong communal ties help to cushion the sector against temporary shocks. This view is not universally held, but suggests that rural adaptability and community institutions might mediate insecurity's effects. Another finding, drawn from error correction modeling, is that increased government expenditure on security tends to have a positive long-term impact on agricultural output by restoring farmer confidence, improving access to markets, and reducing losses from theft or attacks (Ewubare et al., 2024). Conversely, high poverty rates did not always correlate significantly with productivity declines, suggesting that crime and security issues may be more direct factors than economic deprivation alone (Ilesanmi & Odefadehan, 2022).

A further dimension comes from studies emphasizing how insufficient remuneration and low motivation among security personnel combined with operational challenges diminish public confidence in rural policing, thereby reducing the effectiveness of protective measures and indirectly affecting farm productivity (Mmaobika et al., 2022). Overall, there is strong agreement that insecurity remains a critical barrier to Nigeria's agricultural development, particularly in rural regions where the impact is immediate and practical. However, differences exist regarding the magnitude of effects, with some communities experiencing more resilience than others, and the speed of recovery depending on government intervention and community adaptation. Policymakers are generally advised to increase investment in rural security infrastructure, promote local policing initiatives, and ensure comprehensive monitoring frameworks to adapt to changing risks (MPRA, 2024; Ewubare et al., 2024).

Gap in Literature

The reviewed literature shows that insecurity in South-East Nigeria such as farmer-herder conflicts, banditry, and communal clashes has severely disrupted agricultural activities, reducing productivity and worsening food insecurity. Studies agree that violence leads to land abandonment, displacement, and limited market access. While community policing and infrastructural investments are identified as potential solutions, implementation remains weak. A

clear gap in the literature is the lack of detailed, data-driven analysis on how different forms of insecurity affect specific agricultural outputs across the states. There is also limited focus on gender differences, long-term impacts, and the effectiveness of community-based security strategies in sustaining rural farming.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework underpinning this study is the Rational Choice Theory, which is propounded by Dennis Mueller and Bruno Frey. Thus, the basic assumption of this theory is that individuals make decisions by weighing the potential benefits and costs associated with their choices. This theory assumes that actors are rational beings who seek to maximise their utility based on available information and personal preferences (Boudon, 1998). In the context of agriculture, farmers evaluate various factors such as crop yields, input costs, and risks associated with farming practices before making decisions. Rural security and agricultural productivity are critical issues in South-East Nigeria, where farmers face numerous challenges, including insecurity from armed groups, economic instability, and environmental factors. Rational Choice Theory (RCT) provides a framework for understanding how these challenges influence farmers' decisions and behaviours regarding agricultural practices and productivity. In South-East Nigeria, rural insecurity significantly affects agricultural productivity. Farmers often face threats from armed groups, which can lead to reduced investment in farming activities due to fear of loss or damage to crops and livestock. This insecurity alters the cost-benefit analysis that farmers conduct when deciding whether to engage in certain agricultural practices. For instance:

- i). Increased Costs: Farmers may incur higher costs for security measures or insurance against theft and violence, which can reduce their overall profitability (Adejumo et al., 2014).
- ii). Risk Aversion: The fear of violence may lead farmers to adopt less productive but safer farming practices, such as reducing the area under cultivation or avoiding high-risk crops that require more investment (Hidayat et al., 2015).

Decision-Making under Insecurity:

Farmers' decisions are influenced by their perceptions of risk and security. When faced with insecurity, farmers may choose to diversify their crops or shift to less risky agricultural practices. This behaviour aligns with Rational Choice Theory, as they aim to minimise potential losses while maximising their expected utility. For example, Crop Diversification: Farmers might diversify into less labour-intensive or more resilient crops that require lower investment but provide stable returns (Freire et al., 2021). In summary, Rational Choice Theory offers valuable insights into how rural security influences agricultural productivity in South-East Nigeria. By understanding the decision-making processes of farmers under conditions of insecurity, policymakers can develop targeted interventions that enhance agricultural resilience and

productivity. Addressing security concerns through improved governance and support systems is essential for fostering a more productive agricultural sector.

Methodology

Case study research design is used for an in-depth examination of rural communities to understand the security challenges and responses in South East Nigeria. The study adopted the documentary method in generating data for investigating the hypotheses for this study. Therefore, data for this study will be sourced from documentary sources such as books, journal articles, government documents, internet sources, newspapers and official documents and to analyse data, the study adopted content analysis; this technique is also known as qualitative descriptive analysis. Thus, the use of this method is informed by the simplicity with which it summarises, exposes and interprets relationships implicit in a given data by giving a qualitative description or explanation to the variables under study.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The South East region of Nigeria has been facing significant security challenges in recent years. Based on the data provided, we can visualise the severity of different aspects of insecurity in the region. According to the Rule of Law and Accountability Advocacy Centre (RULAAC) report from March 2024, the data shows that kidnappings and killings are the most severe security issues in the region, followed by property destruction and separatist agitations. Highlights several key factors contributing to the insecurity in the South East:

- i. Agitation insurgency
- ii. Gun proliferation
- iii. Criminal politics by a corrupt political class
- iv. Cultism and occultism
- v. Law enforcement impunity

The report also mentions external factors such as state-sponsored vigilantes, misappropriated funds, and political-crime links.

The Link between Deepening Insecurity in the South -East Region of Nigeria and Poor Agricultural Production and Food Security

Aspect	Description and Analysis	Supporting Scholarly Citations
Nature of Insecurity in South-East Nigeria	The South -East region of Nigeria has experienced escalating insecurity characterised by attacks from unknown gunmen, violent herdsman-farmers clashes, kidnappings, and enforced "sit -at-home" orders by separatist groups like IPOB. These create fear, disrupt daily life, and weaken social cohesion.	Okoye (2022) highlights frequent village attacks and kidnappings by unknown gunmen, with government and military responses often exacerbating tensions; Nwangwu (2022) details rising banditry, secessionist violence, and clashes involving herders and farmers.
Impact of Insecurity on Agricultural Production	Deepening insecurity disrupts agricultural activities through destruction of farmland, loss of labour as farmers flee or avoid fields due to fear, and destruction or theft of farm produce and livestock. It restricts access to land and markets, causing declines in productivity and production.	Abdullahi and Chidiebere (2024) identify armed herdsman attacks on farming communities as a major driver of insecurity affecting cooperative farming efficiency; Okoye (2022) notes the disruption of livelihoods caused by persistent violence targeting rural areas.
Effects on Food Security	Decline in agricultural production directly undermines food availability, leading to increased food insecurity in the region. The combination of local production shortfalls and economic hardship exacerbated by insecurity raises vulnerability to hunger and malnutrition.	Okechukwu (2023) links low agricultural yields partly caused by disruption to food insecurity; Okechukwu et al. (2023) argue that insecurity -induced reduction in food production contributes significantly to regional food shortages.
Socioeconomic Consequences	Reduced agricultural output leads to income losses for farmers, increased food prices, and greater poverty. These effects have broader socioeconomic impacts on the region's development prospects and stability, as poverty and food insecurity can fuel further unrest.	Samuel (2022) points to the loss of income and poor socioeconomic development caused by insecurity; Okoye (2022) emphasises the economic paralysis caused by fear and insecurity, disrupting farming and business activities.

Underlying Causes of Insecurity	Some of the factors include weak governance and security infrastructure, socio-political marginalisation, economic neglect, and unregulated migration of armed herders. These deepen grievances and perpetuate cycles of violence affecting rural livelihoods.	Okoli et al. (2022) critique government capacity and commitment; Nwangwu (2022) discusses political agitation and poor governance exacerbating armed violence; Atahyel (2022) describes armed non-state actors' roles.
Policy and Intervention Recommendations	Recommendations include strengthening security through community policing and modern surveillance, meaningful political dialogue addressing root causes, economic reinvestment in agriculture, and youth engagement to reduce vulnerability and promote resilience.	Atahyel (2022) recommends intensified security measures and professional training; research by Okoye (2022) and Jozac (2023) suggests inclusive conflict management and socioeconomic reforms to mitigate negative impacts and restore farming.

According to the table above, deepening insecurity in South-East Nigeria disrupts agricultural production by driving away farmers, destroying farms, and restricting market access, which in turn exacerbates food insecurity and socioeconomic decline in the region. The drivers of insecurity are complex, involving weak governance, ethnic-political tensions, and armed violent groups, necessitating integrated security and development-focused policy responses. The insecurity in the South East Region of Nigeria is characterised by violent attacks from unknown gunmen, violent clashes between herders and farmers, kidnappings, and separatist groups enforcing lockdowns that disrupt daily life. These types create fear and social instability that undermine both community cohesion and economic activities, including farming. Scholars like Okoye (2022) and Nwangwu (2022) highlight these on-going security threats impacting rural areas. Farming activities are directly disrupted as insecurity causes destruction of farmland and seizures or theft of crops and livestock. Many farmers abandon their fields due to fear of attacks, leading to labour shortages and reduced productivity. The inability to access farmlands and markets further worsens agricultural output. Recent findings by Abdulahi and Chidiebere (2024) and Okoye (2022) confirm these adverse impacts on farming efficiency and livelihoods.

Since agricultural production declines, food availability diminishes, causing food shortages and heightened vulnerability to hunger and malnutrition in the region. The insecurity thus contributes significantly to food insecurity both locally and region-wide. This link is backed by data showing that reduced food production due to violence corresponds with food scarcity, as Okechukwu et al. (2023) and the IMF (2023) explain. The economic fallout includes income

losses for farmers, increased food prices, and poverty growth. These trends reduce the overall development prospects of the South-East, as poverty and food insecurity can further fuel unrest and instability, creating a vicious cycle. Samuel (2022) and Okoye (2022) emphasise how insecurity hampers broader socio-economic opportunities by disrupting agricultural business and livelihoods. Root causes such as weak governance, political marginalisation, economic neglect, and the unregulated movement of armed herders exacerbate conflict and insecurity. These systemic issues entrench cycles of violence that disproportionately affect rural areas where farming is a key livelihood. Scholars like Okoli et al. (2022), Nwangwu (2022), and Atahyel (2022) analyse these political and social dynamics. The experts recommend a multi-pronged approach: enhancing security through community policing and surveillance technologies, engaging in political dialogue to tackle root grievances, reinvesting economically in the agricultural sector, and involving youth in resilience-building activities. Scholarly sources, including So Okoye (2022), & Jozac (2023), advocate for integrated policies combining security measures with socioeconomic reforms to restore agricultural productivity and food security.

Additional scholarly evidence points to key challenges such as the low level of technical skills among farmers, which aggravates poor agricultural productivity despite the region's potential (Abdulahi & Chidiebere, 2024). Moreover, rising insecurity leads many farmers to completely abandon their farms, which reduces labour capacity and drives away investment, further worsening food availability (Nwangwu, 2022). This broader context underscores how insecurity interacts with other factors like skills gaps and economic conditions to impact agriculture and food security.

In summary, the table captures a complex, cyclical relationship in South-East Nigeria: escalating insecurity disrupts farming and market access, which lowers food production and availability, intensifies food insecurity, damages livelihoods, and fuels greater socio-political instability, making comprehensive security and development policies imperative for breaking this cycle. The relationship between insecurity and food security is cyclical: Insecurity reduces agricultural output by displacing farmers and making farmland unsafe. Reduced agricultural production leads to higher food prices and scarcity, worsening food insecurity. Food insecurity can fuel further conflict as communities compete for scarce resources.

Findings

The study reveals that insecurity in the South-East region of Nigeria has become a major threat to agricultural production and food security. The nature of insecurity documented, including attacks by unknown gunmen, kidnappings, herder–farmer clashes, and the enforcement of sit-at-home orders has deeply destabilized rural communities. Farmers face constant fear and displacement, while their productive activities have been disrupted by violence, property destruction, and theft of crops and livestock. This has translated into large-scale abandonment of farmland, resulting in a decline in agricultural output across the region.

Findings show that the daily experience of insecurity discourages both individual and cooperative farming efforts, thereby reducing the labour force available for cultivation and harvesting. As rural populations migrate to safer urban areas, agricultural labour shortages intensify, making it difficult to sustain production levels. Additionally, restricted access to farmlands and markets has limited the circulation of food commodities, leading to food scarcity and higher prices. The cumulative effect is a worsening of food insecurity, especially among households that rely primarily on local food production for sustenance (Okoye, 2022; Okechukwu, 2023).

The study also highlights the economic and social implications of this insecurity. Reduced agricultural productivity correlates with declining income for farmers, rising poverty, and increased dependence on imported foodstuffs. These socio-economic outcomes deepen regional inequalities and fuel further grievances that can contribute to additional unrest. Thus, insecurity and poverty are mutually reinforcing—each worsening the other in a self-perpetuating cycle. A critical underlying factor identified is weak governance manifested through poor law enforcement, corruption, and inadequate security infrastructure. The proliferation of small arms, cult-related violence, and politically motivated attacks exacerbate the situation. In some cases, state-backed vigilante groups have also been implicated in rights abuses, further eroding public trust in government institutions (Nwangwu, 2022; RULAAC, 2024). Such structural weaknesses reduce the effectiveness of government interventions and undermine peacebuilding and rural development efforts. More so, the study showed that the insecurity problem has overshadowed other key constraints already limiting agricultural progress, particularly the low level of technical skills among farmers and the lack of investment in farming technologies. Even where conditions are relatively stable, the absence of infrastructure and extension services limits productivity. In regions most affected by insecurity, these development gaps are widened, leaving communities trapped between violence and economic stagnation (Abdullahi & Chidiebere, 2024).

Overall, the findings indicate that addressing insecurity in the South-East requires an integrated approach combining improved security strategies with socio-economic reform efforts. Strengthening community policing, fostering political dialogue, and prioritizing youth empowerment could promote stability and renew confidence in local governance. Simultaneously, targeted reinvestment in agriculture and rural infrastructure is necessary to revitalize production and support food security. Restoring safety and rebuilding rural economies are thus interdependent goals that must be pursued concurrently if the South-East is to overcome its current crisis.

Conclusion

The deepening insecurity in South-East Nigeria has significantly impacted agricultural production and worsened food security. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving security conditions, supporting displaced farmers, enhancing infrastructure for agricultural activities, and implementing policies that promote sustainable

farming practices. The deepening insecurity in the South East region of Nigeria is closely linked to poor agricultural production and food insecurity. The high levels of violence, particularly kidnappings and killings, have severely disrupted agricultural activities. This disruption, combined with other factors such as economic instability and climate change impacts, has led to significant challenges in food production and security. To address these issues, a comprehensive approach is needed that tackles both the root causes of insecurity and the specific challenges facing the agricultural sector. This may include efforts to improve law enforcement, address political corruption, invest in climate-resilient agricultural practices, and implement economic policies to stabilise food prices and improve access to necessities. The deepening insecurity in the South-East region of Nigeria and its impact on agricultural production and food security are interconnected issues that have escalated over recent years. The provided charts and data offer a clear visual representation of these challenges.

The research clearly demonstrates that the escalating insecurity in South-East Nigeria has a profound and detrimental impact on agricultural production and food security in the region. The persistent violence, including kidnappings, armed attacks, and enforced lockdowns, has disrupted farming activities, displacing farmers and limiting access to farmlands and markets. This has significantly reduced agricultural output, leading to food shortages and increased vulnerability among local populations. Moreover, the intertwining of insecurity with weak governance, political agitation, and economic neglect creates a vicious cycle that perpetuates instability and undermines development efforts. To break this cycle, it is essential to adopt a multidimensional approach that strengthens security measures while simultaneously addressing socio-economic challenges and governance deficits. Only through integrated policies that combine community-focused security, political engagement, and investment in agriculture can the region hope to restore stability, enhance food production, and promote sustainable development.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the Nigerian government should:

- Strengthen community-based security systems and improve coordination between local vigilante groups and formal law enforcement agencies to enhance trust, intelligence sharing, and protection of rural communities.
- Reinvest in the agricultural sector through targeted funding, provision of modern farming tools, capacity-building programs for farmers, and rehabilitation of rural infrastructure to boost productivity and food availability.
- Promote inclusive political dialogue and youth empowerment initiatives aimed at addressing underlying grievances, reducing unemployment, and mitigating the appeal of violent or criminal activities in the region.

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