



EXAMINING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S INSISTENCE TO REOPEN GRAZING ROUTES IN NIGERIA

EZINWA, Vincent Chi, PhD

General Studies Division, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani, Enugu.

Email: eivinhi@yahoo.com phone: 08068408448

Abstract

This paper examined Federal Government's quest and insistence on recovering grazing routes in Nigeria. It should be recalled that during the Southern Governors meeting held in Asaba, Delta State, on Thursday May 20, 2021, they banned open grazing in Southern Nigeria as one of their demands to curb herdsmen/farmers crisis in Southern Nigeria. Unfortunately, President Buhari reacted to the ban of open grazing by a vow to restore cattle routes and grazing areas across the country to ensure that Fulani herders have free access for their animals. Thereby spearheading a disagreement between the Federal government and the Southern Governors forum on the issue of open grazing ban. The paper aptly explained and argued that the idea of grazing routes has been rejected by the South because it was a pre-independence arrangement, which has been overtaken by population explosion and its attendant developments. Meanwhile, the president's insistence of grazing routes across Nigeria would not have any effect as the ball was in the court of the Governors and their State Houses of Assembly members. (Kokori, 2021, p.7). The Study adopted the descriptive methodology; it drew upon primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include oral information and testimonies. Newspapers and magazines reports were also used in conjunction with official records in Government publications. Secondary sources include relevant books. The researcher also made use of direct observation method. All the information gathered were subjected to critical historical examination.

Keywords: Government, grazing routes, Fulani herders, Nigeria.

Introduction

The quest of the Buhari-led government to ask on June 10, 2021, that the gazette copy of 1963 law be dug out by Abubakar Malami, the minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, in order to reinstate cattle grazing routes and grazing reserves was disturbing to many patriotic Nigerians. According to Eluemunor (2021, p.18) "until details emerge, I fear the 1963 gazette on cattle routes may have passed through the State House, Abuja. So, will the Buhari led government pull down the Aso Rock Villa? If the 1963 cattle route passed through it? And what if it was even a grazing reserve? These are some of the questions for the Presidency". The quest to restore cattle routes and grazing reserve in contemporary Nigeria is a nagging issue. This is because freedom of movement of human beings across the Nigerian State should not be applicable to freedom of movement for cattle. Cattle are not human beings. Many Nigerians were alarmed, confounded and ruffled when on Thursday, June 11, 2021, President Buhari said his administration would re-instate cattle routes and grazing areas across Nigeria to ensure that herders have free access for



their animals. Buhari's vow and insistence to reinstate cattle route and grazing areas across the country was a clear opposition of the Southern Governors Forum meeting held in Asaba, Delta State, top on their 10 points agenda was the ban of open grazing in Southern Nigeria to stem the excesses of the armed herds men carrying AK47 and killing the indigenous farmers.

The southern governors argued that the incursion of armed herders, criminals and bandits into southern Nigeria has presented a severe security challenge such that citizens are not able to live their normal lives including pursuing various productive activities leading to a threat to food supply. Consequently, the meeting resolved that open grazing of cattle be banned across southern Nigeria and also noted that development and population growth has put pressure on available land and increased the prospects of conflict between migrating herders and local population in the South. (Eya, 2021, P.13).

Based on the above explanation, the government policy and programme to re-open grazing routes and reserves in the 21st Century Nigeria created a faceoff between the Federal Government and the States over grazing routes. This was because the policy was archaic, obsolete and old-fashioned pastoral practice that will cause anarchy, pandemonium and rebellion between herders and indigenous crop farmers in Nigeria. Like the usurpation of ancestral lands and water ways in the Middle Belt and Southern regions by the Fulani herdsmen is disturbing.

Historically, cattle routes were the early course ways or path herders and their livestock used to trek from North to South, or East to West, they had to go through there by foot; if a herder allowed its cattle to stray into any farm the herder is arrested. The farmer is invited to submit his claims. The Khadi or the judge will say, pay this amount and if the herdsman can't, the cattle is sold. And if there is any benefit, the farmer is compensated for the damage. This enable herdsman to be serious to control their cattle. In the grazing area, dams, windmills were built and put in strategic places. There were also veterinary department, then herders were limited and friendly to host communities. Likewise grazing routes and reserves were known. Today in Nigeria, the grazing route and grazing reserve has been overtaking by population explosion and development. Hence, the clashes between herdsmen and indigenous farmers have increased.

To curb the farmers and herder's crisis in the recent history of Nigeria, the government requested that the old-fashioned grazing route and grazing areas were dug up to make sure that those who encroached were dispossessed of it. This is to ensure that some order is back into cattle grazing. Unfortunately, the request by the government to restore an ancient grazing routes hit up a fire across the South and the North central ... as the Federal



Government prepares for reopening grazing routes. The issue continued to generate a national furor, commotion, outburst, and outcry because population explosion and developmental exigency and constraint across the six-geopolitical zones had overtaking the archaic and ancient system of grazing routes and grazing reserves. It is unfortunate to note that with ... insistence of the federal government to create or re-open grazing routes for herdsmen to have access to feed their cattle will cause new dimensions of crisis between herdsmen and crop farmers in Nigeria of the 21st century. The best way to go is ranching, this is because violent conflict between nomadic herders from the north of Nigeria often referred to as Fulani herdsmen and sedentary indigenous agrarian farming communities in the central and southern parts of the country have assumed frightening dimensions in the recent past, threatening national peace, unity and stability. In 2016 alone, the clashes recorded an estimated death toll of 2,500. The fatalities are increasing with each passing year. As the federal Government insist on reopening grazing routes across Nigeria panic continues to spread across southern Nigeria and the Middle Belt region. This is because indigenous farmers believe the clashes between herdsmen/farmers will increase in a new dimension; as the herders from the far north are challenged with environmental issues of drought and encroachment of the desert, their quest for land hunger and water down south to feed their cattle will generate crisis.

The federal government insistence on restoration of grazing route and grazing reserve will seriously clash with the diverse indigenous groups in the South and Middle belt axis that are witnessing population explosion and need for more land and water for sustainable development. The land and water space to be allow for grazing routes and reserve is not possible to sustain the exodus and long march of cross-border movements of armed herders and cattle rustlers ... these are some of the factors that will trigger off crises that hinder the re-opening of the ancient grazing routes up south and the middle belt region. Therefore, the guest and the in road to restore grazing routes and grazing reserve in Nigeria in the 21st Century is a tough impasse and dead end. According to the grazing reserve law of 1965, Nigeria has 415 grazing reserves but only about one third of it is functional. Others have been encroached on through infrastructural development (houses, roads, etc.) or being used for crop farming. About 141 of the grazing routes are officially logged or gazette, but less than 20 of them are currently suitable for use by pastoralists.

For some people the President's order to re-open the grazing route and reserve is a long awaited, needful and a product of substances; others especially in the South and the Middle Belt region see it as unlawful and an attempt to stir up tempers. (Obineche, C. 2021, p.18) previous attempts at Federal Government re-opening the grazing routes, started in 2009, then the Federal Government embarked on a programme that gulped a whopping \$247 million to mark out grazing reserves across Katsina and Bauchi as well as Abuja.



Establishing these resources which were deployed to attend to the need of more than 15 million pastoralists entailed demarcating 175,000 hectares of grazing land, building veterinary units and constructing settlements for nomads to use on their way through. Government also launched the demarcation of a 1,400km livestock route from Sokoto State in the Northwest to Oyo State in the Southwest, and another 2000km route from Adamawa in the Northeast to Calabar in the South-south. In addition to these grazing routes the Federal Government budgeted \$ 10billion for what is called Great Green Wall Programme (GGWP) geared towards combating desertification, which is one of the major factors pushing pastoralists from the far north to the south in search of greener and rich grazing. The violent clashes between herdsman and farmers indisputably revolved around encroachment and the setting aside of designated grazing areas for herders. (Obineche, C. 2021, p.20).

The challenge facing the reopening of grazing route and reserve in Southern Nigeria and the Middle Belt is that you can't ask people in the agrarian area like Benue and Enugu to cut-out areas and designate them as grazing precincts just to avoid incessant conflicts with herders. The proposal is simply provocative. Grazing routes and grazing reserve fields means less farmland and farm yields for a people who are mostly farmers and hamper food security and deplete the agricultural profile of these agrarian states. Moreover, the constant clashes between herdsman and farmers is an end to the search for grazing routes across Nigeria because farmers will never be ready to key in such vision. Apart from suspicious and political coloration of the efforts to sanitize pastoralism, other impediments have also combined to obstruct its progression, chief among them was the Land Use Act, 1978. Section I of the act says. "Subject to the provisions of the act, all land comprised in the territory of each state in the federation are hereby vested in the governor of that state" There is also the existence of a 1969 ruling by Justice Adewale Johnson which declared that "there is no grazing route established by law and protected by law" that judgment has not been set aside till today. The grazing routes gazette as recognized by law existed only in states created from the old pre-1966 northern Nigeria. Even at that, the laws recognizing grazing routes are state laws and therefore inferior to the Land Use Act which is a federal law that enjoys protection in the constitution. Besides, open grazing of cattle is banned in the south of Nigeria and backed by State laws. The 141 gazette routes cover only 2.7million hectares of land, while the grazing reserves cover 4,275,326 hectares. The land mass covered is infinitesimal to make any progress or impact (Obineche, C, 2021, p.18).

It is also important to note that when the grazing reserve law came into being in the 1960's, the population of Nigeria was about 56million people, the livestock population was around 3 million. The livestock population started increasing as human population grew too. The pressure to have corridors connecting cattle from one reserve to another increased too.



Today in Nigeria, it is sad to note that infrastructural development, farmlands, estates have encroached on the grazing routes and reserves, if we assume that the Nigeria's economy is growing fast enough to create new opportunities for the rapidly growing population. Wisdom demands and reveals that the reopening of grazing routes and reserves have no place in the Nigerians land mass, especially in southern Nigeria where there is a challenge of land hunger because of the rapidly growing population. The guest and insistence on creation of cattle grazing routes and reserves is not key to achieving infrastructural development outcomes such as job creation and poverty reduction in the light ... a fragile recovery of the scarce land space in Southern Nigeria and most part of Northern Nigeria in recent time.

Modern ranching system should be a deliberate government effort towards making the livestock business environment more conducive for herders, large corporates at national, subnational and local government levels to be seriously engaged. Ranching will address the structural bottlenecks and regulatory constraints that cause herders/farmers conflict in contemporary Nigeria. A supportive and conducive private investment in ranching is critical in facilitating private sector involvement in livestock business rather than forcefully recovery of cattle grazing routes across the Nigerian state.

It is unfortunate to note that the herdsmen you see with cattle are not the owners. The owners are the Northern elite they are in background. They are the ones who are arming them to protect their stock because to the Fulani Cattles are hard money, capital, valuable currency, assert, hand cash, legal tender, money of account, pride, blessing, strength, riches wherewithal, mobile-wealth and virtue. To a Fulani elite the re-opening of cattle routes and grazing reserve is a very important priority than construction of good road and modern railway to transport cattle from North to South. Unfortunately, insurgents and terrorists often use grazing routes to migrate to neighbouring states and communities in the South. Insurgents know the grazing routes used by Pastoralists, they also used it afflict pain on their enemies and indigenous farming communities, hence, the cattle herders/farmers conflict escalate without adequate check and prevention. These are some of the reason many States in the Middle Belt and Southern Nigeria opt for ranching and oppose efforts to reopening grazing routes. Even in Northern Nigeria, owing to the fear of insurgency, the reopened routes and grazing reserves in Borno State have been abandoned, as insurgents has displaced most of the Pastoralists. (Obineche, C. 2021, p.19).

There are 415 grazing reserves in 21 States and 141 are gazetted while only two are in the South Oyo and Ogun. Unfortunately, as the livestock population increases, the graze able land is decreasing. This led to the increasing tension between herders and farmers. The crisis has claimed no fewer 2000 lives, 16,000 houses, multiple rapes of females,



kidnapping for ransom and other heinous crime. Ranching is the best way to go and not reopening of cattle routes, when the Southern Governors and some Middle Belt Governors are insisting on banning open grazing. The trouble of cattle grazing took a turn for the worse at the beginning of the current democratic dispensation in 1999 and gravely threatened the corporate existence of the Nigerian State. By 2015, the herder's/farmers crisis heightened with bloodletting. The government in 2018 conceived the policy of building cattle colonies for the herders, but it was resisted by many Nigerians and State governments mainly in the South, who were suspicious that it was a grand ploy to grab land for the Fulani. Likewise, the Government's insistence to re-store cattle grazing routes and grazing reserves is conceived with mistrust. The best option is ranches. The recent southern Governors meeting demanded that the September deadline should be fixed for the enactment of law on open grazing ban. The Southern Governors move was a bold and patriotic move that would end the menace of armed herdsmen in the region and deadlock to the Buhari's government insistence to re-open the ancient grazing routes and grazing reserve across Southern Nigeria and Nigeria at large. The checking of our porous border infiltration of alien killer herdsmen will curb the challenge open grazing phenomenon in Nigeria.

1.2 Probing Federal Government's Quest and Insistence to Reopen Grazing Routes in the 21st Century

The idea of reopening grazing routes was rejected by many people because it was out of date, primitive and a pre-independence arrangement, which has been overtaken by population explosion and its attendant development. Thus, grazing route restoration policy have been overtaken by rural and urban development. Meanwhile, the National Publicity Secretary, Middle Belt Forum, Dogo/Suwa (2021, p.7) said the president statement on restoring grazing routes should not be taken seriously because apart from the Southern governors, Benue governor and some governors in the North have all banned open grazing. In Buhari's efforts to restore grazing route, he has a choice to support the governor's ban on open grazing or waging an avoidable war against the Nigerian people who do not want the restoration of grazing routes and grazing reserves for the sectional interest of the Fulani cattle rearers.

According to Ozekhome (2021, p.31), "Although the right to movement in section 42 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as altered), appears on the surface to have been violated by the anti-grazing laws and the Southern Governors Stance, Section 45 of the constitution allows any law to override it if such a law is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health. Considering the incessant cases of Boko Haram killings, maiming, stealing, kidnapping, rape, banditry and robbery foisted on the Southern part of



the country, southern leaders have rightly taken it upon themselves to put into place laws and measures that will protect their citizens, to this end, it is safe to assert that individual rights to movement have not in any way been violated by the anti-grazing laws because the laws were enacted in the interest of public safety, public order, public defence and public morality. The laws and declaration are also to protect the peace, privacy, and homes of southerners as highlighted in section 37 of the 1999 constitution. They are also for the protecting the rights and freedom of other persons. (Ozekhome, 2021, p.30). In this light, the government quest and insistence to reopen grazing routes and reserves across Nigeria in the 21st Century is disturbing and it will cause more conflict for the herders and farmers in the contemporary history of the country.

The national drive to reopen the ancient and outdated grazing routes and grazing reserve in Nigeria in the 21st Century will ginger Fulani cattle rearers across the Sahel Region to migrate into Nigeria to contend for space. It means that the Federal Government need to call for more contracts to construct free herders' havens. This national drive will keep our indigenous farmers and people in a tight corner of sorrow, down trodden, abused, distressed, exploitation, oppression, subjugation, and trampled on by the killer herdsmen. Thus, the quest to reopen the grazing routes and grazing reserve must have tyrannized and victimized the indigenous farmers who will go into hidings for safety and survival. By then, the killer herdsmen would have crawl, linger, and yank into the abandoned farmlands with their herds without any opposition. The foreign breeds of herdsmen that have infiltrated Nigeria in the recent time are aggressive, ruthless and jihadist expansionist if they encounter weak neighbours and defenceless indigenous tribes that are cowardly, toothless, unguarded, feeble, helpless and powerless. To such leaders and communities their story will be that of conquest, displacement of indigene, land grabbing and occupation of the vacant territory for their settlement and grazing of their herds with impunity, and license to kill indigenous farmers who oppose them. Killer herdsmen when challenged they can easily be provoked to kill their victim who stand on their way when feeding their cow. Their herds are more valuable to them than any human obstruction to liberty to graze openly. Thus, a serious indigenous farmer would not tolerate any trespass of herders on his farmland.

This challenge explains the danger of open grazing and the need to ban it in Nigeria in the 21st century to save the lives and properties of herders and farmers. Ranching is the right way to go and it a private business that call for its owners to buy land to establish ranch to rear their cattle in a modern mechanized style to avert the trouble of trespassing into a farmer's farmland. Meanwhile, in Abuja, South-south Governors, Socio- political regional organizations and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) on Sunday, June 20, 2021 after a meeting rose against the Federal Government's insistence on recovering grazing



routes for herders in the country. The regional groups include Afenifere, Ohanaeze Ndigbo, the Pan Niger Delta Forum, (PANDEF) and Middle Belt Forum (MBF).

It should be recollected that an official of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture had re-echoed President Buhari's Directive to the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami (2021, p.8), to recover all grazing routes nationwide for the purpose of checkmating farmers'/herders' crisis in Nigeria, saying there was no going back on it. The posture of the Buhari-led government on the issue of insisting on recovering grazing route for the herders was recalcitrant, defiant and stubborn to the southern governors, and some northern governors and their people who had ban open grazing. Nevertheless, reacting to the issue of restoring grazing routes across Nigeria, Chairman of South-south Governors Forum, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa (2021, p.8) argued that "Well, I think that it where the test of the Federating units would be carried out because Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers State has said that now that parliamentary workers have ended their strike, he will take a bill to the State House of Assembly on the ban on open grazing. It is important to note that the ban on open grazing is already in existence in some States, for example Benue State has it, Ekiti State has it, and many States are ready to take the anti-grazing bill to their House of Assembly. The question before the current government is how can it stop them. If they are not going back on their own. The Federal Government cannot stop states from putting a law and enforcing the law that make it difficult to restore grazing routes across the Nigerian State".

Governor Okowa (2021, p.8) aptly explains that "If there grazing routes that were there more than 50years ago, now they want to take them back. I don't know whether that one is progressive the entire country is opposed to it. So, if the Presidency wants to operate it in area that the presidency alone controls, we will watch and see. But I know that the governors of the Southern States cannot go back on it; they are for ban on open grazing and that they will do; I know".

Furthermore, in its reaction against restoring grazing route by the Government, Afenifere's National Publicity Secretary, Jare Ajayi (2021, p.8), said "The Federal Government's insistence showed disdain and contempt it had for the people The insistence of the present administration on reopening the so-called grazing routes shows the duplicity, dishonesty and the draconian tendencies of the Government. The insistence also further underscores the extent of the disdain and contempt this administration has for the people". It is important to understand that government policies and programmes are supposed to be driven for the people. Majority of the people across the country have embraced ranching. Even the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Nanono (2021, p.8) disclosed that 22 States plus the Federal Capital Territory have agreed to provide land for grazing. Majority of



opinion across Nigeria is to go the modern way, advanced way, innovative way, inventive way, and the twentieth century, which is up to date. Why should the Government insist on resuscitating, reinvigorating and resurrecting an ancient practice which has become anachronistic and chaotic?

It is also a challenge to note that grazing routes did not exist in all the States in the country. Winnie Solarin (2021, p.8) a director in the Ministry of Agriculture aptly pointed out that the areas where structures have been erected would be spared. In practice, this cannot happen once they have started, they may not stop. They would want to go the whole hog, to avoid crisis in Nigeria, re-opening the grazing route is unacceptable, displeasing improper, unpleasant and unwelcome by majority indigenous people of the Nigeria State (Okoli, A and Akinrefon, 2021, p.8).

According to Prof. Tunde Adeniran (2021, p.25) “I don’t know how Federal Government policy to reinstate cattle grazing routes across the country is going to work in this 21st century. Any attempt to do that may not only boomerang but will take us moving us backward as a nation. It will result to anarchy. Ranching is the thing now globally, and majority of Nigerians have overwhelmingly voted for ranching” the idea of re-storing the grazing route is a tragedy, for example, what if the cattle route passes through the Government House or even Aso Rock, are they going to demolish those places? Because they want to establish cattle routes. That is taking this country backward to a situation we left behind ages back several decades before independence. (Adeniran, T, 2021, p.25).

Conclusion

Ranching is what majority of Nigerians appreciate at this point, without it, cattle rearing across Nigeria will not be stable and move forward. Ranches means progress and development to take place in the livestock industry. Ranching will help herders and their Family to function properly. Open grazing brings wobbling and deformity in the livestock industry. Open grazing will not make the Fulani herdsmen to stand firm and to be able to move forward with other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Open grazing will continue to make the Fulani herdsmen have conflict with indigenous farming communities in contemporary Nigeria. The Federal Government should force the Fulani herdsmen to appreciate the essence of modern ranches as the right way to go this 21st Century. Ranches will give the Fulani the room to develop their livestock and to develop the potentials of their children by allowing them to go to school like others; rather than wondering in the forest with cattle in primitive nomadic lifestyle. Ranches will give the herders quality and productive livestock; both in the quality of meat and milk production. With ranching meaningful development will take place in the livestock industry. More so, general, insecurity ravaging the indigenous farming communities will end. Ranches will help us tackle those evil



herders who are infiltrating our borders. Security in the ranches will help repelled killer herdsman and criminals' elements that are making life unbearable for Nigerians. Whereas the restoration of grazing routes and grazing reserves across the Nigerian States will continue to expose herders and farmers to increase conflict. Reopening grazing routes is not the solution to the problem of herders and farmer's crisis. The solution is ranching, ranching will be able to stabilize the livestock industry in Nigeria; that will be just and fair to all Nigerians, that will develop the country. Ranching will end the confidence and loyalty to all the ethnic groups to the Federal Government Ranching will ensue national unity and for equality for all Nigerians to participate in the livestock industry. One that would not allow a farmer's rights and liberty to be trampled upon anyhow by a killer herdsman but the insistence of grazing routes across the Nigerian State in the 21st century will Jeopardized farmers and our existence as a people and our God given rights to live. Ranches will make sure that both farmers and herders are safe and secure to practice their profession. Buhari's insistence on re-opening grazing routes and grazing reserves across the Nigeria State whereas majority of Nigerian never wanted it is a faulty policy drive of his government and to democracy. It symbolized that he is distant to and disconnected from his people. He does not care, does not listen to the cries of indigenous farming communities. He ignored their pains, woes, tears, sorrow and blood. He cares not about their genuine yearnings and desires.

No ruler in history has ever perpetually dictated to, or held down his indigenous people with sheer jackboot. Musolons, of Italy woefully failed, just like Adolf Hitler of Germany and Idi Amin of Uganda failed. The Buhari-led government should learn from history to enthrone social justice, equity, egalitarianism, interethnic tolerance and respect for the diverse ethnic groups and people who do not want cattle grazing routes and grazing reserves in their States and Communities across the Nigerian State. Buhari led government insistence to restore grazing routes across Nigeria for the Fulani Cattle herders at the expense of the desire of other tribes, states and regions was dear manifestation of nepotism and ethnic politics. The policy was bias, parochial, primitive, sectional, archaic and uncivilized to the need of a modern Nigerian State. Flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves, the government should learn that living for others is a rule of natureLife is good when you are happy but much better when others are happy because of you. A government that cannot protect its citizens has no due of leadership.

Meanwhile, Ohanaeze Ndigbo in a statement by the spokesman, Alex Ogbonna (2021, p.8) said "concerning the Federal Government drive to reinstate open grazing routes across Nigeria, it is funny, it is difficult to understand what the presidency wants to do, to revalidate grazing routes, for what? It is like revalidating slave routes. Our president is back pedalling. We say the world has changed. We have come to a critical juncture



whereby any decision we take, we look back to assess it and we must look forward. Our President is back pedalling, which is unfortunate” also reacting, Alaigbo Development Foundation, ADF, in a statement by the spokesman Abia Onyike (2021, p.8) the group said, “the President and his executive have no right to impose their parochial interests on reopening grazing routes on the Nigerian nation.... Let the Southern Governors be fast in getting their Houses of Assembly to make laws on anti-open grazing and let us see what Buhari and his Attorney General would do, the best they can do is to go to court. Their lawlessness and unbridled dictatorship in defence of Fulani herdsmen has become a national tragedy. Nigerians must resist them” In its reaction, PANDEF, in a statement by its national Chairman, Senator Emmanuel Ibok Essien (2021, p.8) argued that re-opening grazing route is not possible because people have built on most of those grazing routes used during the first Republic. So, people, who are into livestock-poultry, piggery, cows should do it as a business, if you are into cow business, buy land and build your ranch, it is your business, so you have to go and buy your land. I have a piggery farm and I bought the land for the farm “The reopening of grazing route is a problem. Ranching is the solution and the way to go in the 21st Century all over the world.

Therefore, PANDEF condemn the Federal Government insistence of re-opening grazing routes because times have changed. Herders don’t have to destroy another man’s business because of their own.

Similarly, Middle Belt Forum, MBF, in its reaction signed by the National President, Dr Pogu Bitrus (2021, p.8) explain that, “grazing routes not constitutional feasible, states own land not Federal Government. We are advocates of ranching, which should be community-based because every community known its local Fulani We had in the past rejected the programme of Livestock Transformation, RUGA, cattle colony and now the latest which is Cattle routes”. The people rejected all these programmes and policies of the Federal Government because it is archaic and it is also problem driven. It should be ranching which is the solution. There should be restructuring of the federal system so that land ownership should be vested on the people and state governors and local government chairman hold it in custody for the people. The federal government does not have land. So, he who owns the land is the one that would determine whether there is a cattle route or not and not the Federal Government. Likewise, reacting to the issue Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, in a statement by the Vice Chairman (Northern Region), Rev. John Hayab (2021, p.8) asked the Federal Government to Listen to the cries of Nigerians and suspend the recovery of grazing routes. The government must not violate our laws to please some people Recovery of grazing routes and reserves will only add to our many conflicts. If it is true that the Buhari – led government can nurture this democracy, then the government must learn to listen to the opinion of citizens. The government should do only what will



give peace a chance. Owners of the cattle are wealthy they can afford ranching which is the modern way to go, so that peace will return to Nigeria.

Recommendations

This paper has come forth with the following recommendations on the way to go concerning Federal Government's insistence to re-open grazing routes in Nigeria in the 21st Century.

1. The Buhari led government should respect the position of the Southern States and the Middle Belt region that grazing routes are no longer tenable, fashionable or ideal as may be contained in the said Gazette. The gazette may not have been a product of an agreement willingly entered into by all the founding fathers of Nigeria. Let the modern way of cattle rearing in developed societies be adopted, which is ranching to avoid conflict. The Federal Government should not use dictatorial powers to impose the restoration of grazing routes and grazing reserves on unwilling societies, states and regions across the Nigerian States. (Anuayiagu, A, 2021, p.5)
2. It is also important to recommend that farmers – herders' parley is essential and the right thing to do since conflicts are a fact of life and dialogue helps in no small measure to resolve them; rather than for the Buhari – led government insisting to reopen grazing routes across the Nigerian State by force. Mutual understanding to embrace ranching must become a culture in tackling those challenges that comes with rejection of the grazing route policy and programme in the recent history of Nigeria as population growth and developments has over taken the old fashion need of grazing routes in 21st century Nigeria. Ranching is the right way to go and if herders adopt ranching. It will help the cows, it will help the herders, and they will have better yield, better meat, and better milk for the people. Modern ranches would stand as a template for other herders to emulate in livestock farming in Nigeria, not to re-open grazing routes across the Federation for herders to feed their cattle; which is already conflict and crisis driven.
3. The National Assembly should also resolve to act in the interest of the people in the farming communities and Nigerians in general as against personal and selfish ambitions. Supporters of anti-grazing routes re-opening should resist any intimidation or distractions from sworn enemies of progress, justice and equity in the Nigerian project. The paper also appeals to governors in Southern Nigeria which had not yet ban open grazing to do so to endeavour to meet September 2021 deadline agreed by southern governor's forum. This has become necessary as any defaulting state may have to explain to the people of the state.



4. The government should emphasize the need for ranching to pursue critical modern farming reforms to booster confidence in the economy and accelerate post pandemic recovery and alleviate poverty among the youthful population. The government should be well coordinated in promoting growth enhancing and confidence policies that would encourage private and foreign capital inflows into the country.

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