

# Planning Implications of Emerging Trends Impeding Effective Rural Agricultural Practices in Selected Food Baskets of Rivers State Nigeria

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## Abstract

Agriculture prior the discovery of petrodollars has been one of the major sources of rural livelihood and income streams in Nigeria. Nigeria once thrived with agriculture but in recent times this trend has incrementally declined and impeded rural agriculture in the society. The once thriving agrarian society tend to lack food sufficiency and now imports food from other countries which can be attributed to several emerging trends. This study tried to identify the emerging trends impeding effective rural agricultural practices in selected food baskets of Rivers State, Nigeria with a view to making recommendations that would enhance and encourage participation in rural agricultural practices. The study adopted the multi-stage sampling techniques to identify the food baskets in Rivers State, identifying potential participants for key informant interviews for the study and data was got using unstructured questionnaire. A total of sixty-three (63) respondents were randomly interviewed based on availability and willingness to participate. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data into themes and the predominant themes were identified as the emerging trends. The study found out that besides the generic trends, several other emerging trends occur in Rivers State which include: political conflicts, herdsmen invasion, sea pirates attack, inundation, community development, spills from pipelines, poor accessibility and others. The planning implication of these incursions tend to lead to failure of public facilities, dotting of the city scape by emerging squatter settlements which adds enormous pressure on both financial and other resources of the government and individuals. The study further recommended that there should be urgent need for the government to protect the waterways against sea pirate attacks, introduction of ranching as against open grazing currently practiced, sustainable urban development, rural roads should be maintained properly.

**Key words:** Agriculture, Emerging trends, Food baskets, Livelihood, Rivers State, Rural agriculture.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria prior the emergence and reliance on petrodollars, the economy had thrived for several years of rural agriculture. Rural agriculture had been a source of direct and indirect employment for many rural dwellers in Nigeria and had drastically reduced the trigger for rural – urban migration with its attendant urban and rural challenges.

It is evident that most of the inhabitants of rural areas in Nigeria are engaged in small-scale subsistence rural agriculture which collectively forms the bases for local economic growth in the rural areas. Rivers State by the geography of its local governments is predominantly agrarian in nature. Most of the rural dwellers engage in rural farm produce which include but not restricted to: fish, maize, cassava, plantain, Banana, Pineapples, yam, cocoyam, other staple foods and game as a source of protein and income.

These farm produce are income generating ventures for the rural farmers and at the same time are highly perishable low-priced goods which are bulky in nature. There is the need for these products to be conveyed to the urban areas where it will get to the end users with minimal difficulty and maximum efficiency.

In the opinion of [1] rise in transportation cost and poor road network had necessitated high cost of food stuff and insufficient supply and distribution.

In the past decade, most urban centres in Nigeria especially in Rivers State has experienced incremental surge in the prices of basic food items and cost of living over some inexplicable reasons despite being surrounded by food baskets.

The surge in food prices could be traced to poor transportation network, paucity of investment funds and other natural and man-made causes. It is imperative to assert that the situation in Rivers State has surpassed the mere rhetoric mentioned above. It has assumed an alarming dimension such that only

the privileged few are able to afford the high price of goods and services.

Agriculture has been the key indicator in the growth centre strategy in regional development and it entails all able-bodied individuals to engage in agriculture to achieve sustainable food production, improved socio-economic advancement and personal satisfaction

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There has been a palpable decline in rural agriculture engagement by able bodied individuals in the state and this has caused shortage of agricultural produce from the rural areas, increased cost of basic food items produced within Rivers State increased which is known to be a food basket.

These impeding factors which has not been addressed over time has led to the reduction of the quantity and quality of farm produce, the social and economic accruals, land tenure system, communal skirmishes, social vices and other related disturbances.

Another dimension to these emerging trends have been the failure of the government of Nigeria at all the tiers to meaningfully engage the services of town planning and town planners alike. The dynamics of land use allocation and change is vested within the purview of urban and regional planners.

### A. Aim of the research

To identify emerging trends impeding engagement in rural agriculture in the study area and make recommendations that would enhance agricultural production.

### B. Objectives of the research

1. To identify the underlying factors aiding the decline in engagement in rural agriculture in study area
2. To identify the impact of these factors on food production in the study and the state in general.
3. To ascertain how these trends can be curbed and encourage rural agriculture.

### C. Scope of the study

The scope of the study spans through the major food producing areas (*food baskets*) of Rivers State which include: Abua/Odual, Ahoada East, Ahoada West, Akuku-Toru, Andoni, Degema, Emohua, Etche, Gokana, Ikwerre, Khana, Okrika, Opobo/Nkoro and Tai local government areas where most of the populace engage in rural agriculture as a source of livelihood and income.

Agriculture has been viewed as sources to generate income streams in Nigeria and globally. But in Rivers State there has been a steady decline in youth engagement in rural agriculture over the years and the revenue accruals from agriculture has nosedived to an all-time low.

In recent times, there have been several studies trying to identify the inherent causes of inadequate food production and supplies in most Nigerian rural and urban centres especially in Rivers State. Some schools of thought have opined that poor rural road network and improper land use planning are part of the causal factors of declining food production.

A cursory view at some of these rural roads shows that they are mostly very narrow, not surfaced and sometimes poorly executed with substandard materials, with reduced bearing capacity of heavy duty machinery and not maintained. This has discouraged most of the rural farmers who are compelled by circumstances to convey farm produce to end user through manual portering.

Another critical look at the rural agricultural sector confirmed that poor transportation services are responsible for the sluggish increase in competence for on-going subsistence farming in most rural areas in Nigeria.

However, [1] asserts that transportation also influences the manufacture, circulation, promotion and consumption of agricultural produce in several ways; especially in the purchasing power and cost of the produce.

Agriculture in Rivers State is viewed as but not limited to engaging women, rural development strategy with the involvement of transportation components.

### D. Women in agriculture

In rural Nigeria as obtained in Rivers State presently, women are mostly engaged in rural agriculture. And it is very evident that most women and a few men are engaged in a variety of productive ventures that are crucial to the sustenance of households, economic growth and agricultural productivity. These roles played by women in agriculture are grossly underreported and rarely acknowledged due to the patricentric nature of the typical Nigerian society.

There have been subtle role reversals as women in some agrarian communities are the bread winners. This is achieved due to their resilience and nuances in subsistence agriculture which most men folk have shied away from over the years.

### E. Agriculture and Rural Development

Agriculture has been the driver of rural development in most developing economies and the notion of rural development is all embracing concept because it involves the application of requisite skills and knowledge of professionals in practice of rural and regional development. These skills are in the form of indigenous knowledge which serves as a guiding post.

The process of rural development most times culminates into organizing lasting improvements of

the rural areas with respect to productivity and increased output, advancement in techniques and technologies of agricultural production and transformed standards of living of the rural poor[2].

It is not out of place to assert that rural development should be viewed as a multifaceted scheme with its primary focus to bring rural-urban migration to the barest minimum by the creation of employment, improved physical environment and increase in average income earnings in the rural areas. Thus, making workers and residents alike in rural areas experience conducive and very attractive environment. This will further be a pull factor to the elites and educated youths to invest time and resources to enable them to reside in these rural areas and engage in agriculture. This will further reduce rural-urban drift and save the urban environment from overpopulation and the rural environment depopulation.

Going by these assertions there is the need for radical improvements in all facets of agriculture especially socio-cultural interactions that are concerned with; the tenure of land, access to land, labour, technology, physical infrastructure, contact with inputs and services and the socio-political structure of the society must be changed over the years.

However, there is a thin line separating rural development and public participation in the rural areas. Rural development in the study area encourages public participation because in most rural areas, there is communal involvement geared towards alleviating the plight of the people mostly in agricultural endeavours.

It is worthy of note that several scholars have attempted to view rural development in Nigeria in positive venture but failed to proffer solutions to the myriads of challenges plaguing the rural areas.

#### **F. Transportation and Agriculture**

Transportation explicitly stands out as an indispensable component in the agriculture value chain in any economy. it serves as the fulcrum in spatial relations between economic and regional activities about the farming population and the global community.

Its role is multifaceted service delivery in all spheres of any economy which spans across political, environmental, social, historical and economic sector of any economy.

[3]assert that transportation is a key component that influences spatial variation in economic and social endeavours in any economy.

In view of the above assertion, the widely used mode of transport of agricultural produce is the road transport system because it increases: access to

market and end-users, the range of mobility of the produce and benefits associated with reduced spatial isolation [4].

The adoption of road system of transportation for conveyance of agricultural produce is due to its relative advantage with respect to its flexibility, accessibility and road networks over other modes of transportation.

It is imperative to state that in the study of challenges of food production in rural Nigeria, [5]asserts that the role transportation plays in the production, conveyance and distribution of farm produce can neither be downplayed nor exaggerated because it poses a greater challenge than other factors in the agricultural sector of Nigeria.

However, there is the need for provision the modern technology with respect to preservation and storage facilities in addition to better access roads to reduce the menace of food rot associated with head portorage by most of Nigerian farmers. These farmers often transport only a handful of their produce at a time leaving most of other harvested produce at the mercy of the vagaries of weather elements and/or marauders at the farms or along the farm path.

Also, [5]further asserts that Nigerian agricultural sector has obvious uneven but dynamic social and economic diversity because it is hardly static and precise.

#### **G. Challenges of Agricultural Production in Nigeria**

In recent times, the Nigerian agricultural sector has witnessed marginal improvements which could be attributed to the continuous research and interventions done by local farmers, researchers, occasioned by the vagaries of the physical, climate variations, environmental and social conditions of the farm environment. This has brought with it some measure of structural and economic growth despite the myriad of challenges faced by the modern-day Nigerian farmer.

To this [5]identified;inefficient operational system,environmental and technological constraints, [6] identified poverty and [7] identified fragmentation as some key challenges that have impeded the development of rural agricultural sector in Nigeria over the years.

##### **1)Inefficient operational system**

The system of cultivation and production of food in Nigeria has not been effective enough to bridge the gap between demand and supply of food in Nigeria. The predominant practice has been subsistence in nature with shifting cultivation and mixed cropping.

2) Environmental and technological constraints

The present-day Nigeria has not developed an efficient system and technology to combat the menace of ecological factors like drought, disease infestation and pest attack on plants to reduce the severity of such threat to food production.

3) Poverty

Poverty is one of the characteristics of Nigerian peasant farmer because the bulk of the agricultural produce in Nigeria adopts the traditional system of farming devoid of mechanical operations. This is fallout of the type of holdings by the typical Nigerian rural farmer whose holdings are usually smaller hectares cultivated based on the tenure system applied too.

4) Fragmentation

There is a rising trend in the practice of land fractionalization and fragmentation in Nigeria. This is mainly due to the prevailing soil catena characteristics and land tenure system in most rural Nigeria. Although this has triggered government intervention by the provision of incentives to improve the plight of the rural farmers.

These challenges are seemingly generic to the Nigerian society but there are nuances peculiar to the farmers in Rivers State. And these have continually affected every facet of rural agricultural engagements.

III. METHODS

This paper identifies the repeated and/or generalizable trends impeding rural agricultural engagements in the food baskets of Rivers State. A common approach adopted in the study was to go beyond case studies and work to distinguish between specific and generic emerging trends impeding engagement in rural agriculture in the study area.

The study adopted the multistage sampling technique by firstly identifying and listing major food production local government areas (food baskets) in Rivers State. Identification and listing of potential respondents who are mostly farmers, fisher folks and traditional rulers from these identified food baskets based on request for interview schedule from those willing to participate in the study. Interviews were done using the unstructured interview with the snowball technique.

A total of sixty-three (63) respondents were randomly interviewed based on availability and willingness to participate. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data into themes and the predominant themes were identified as the emerging trends.

Table 1: Interview schedule in the study area.

s/n	Local govt area	Major type of food produced	No of interviews
1	Abua/Odual	Plantain, Banana,	8

		Cocoyam, fish, yam	
2	Ahoada East	Yam, cassava, game, fish	4
3	Ahoada West	Yam, cassava, fish, game,	5
4	Akuku-Toru	Fish, crabs, periwinkle, crayfish, lobster, prawns,	4
5	Andoni	Fish, crabs, periwinkle, crayfish, lobster, prawns, game	3
6	Degema	Fish, crabs, periwinkle, crayfish, lobster, oyster, prawns	3
7	Emohua	Yam, Game cassava, maize, plantain, vegetables, cocoyam cucumber, garri	4
8	Etche	Yam, game, garri, vegetables, orange, breadfruit, cassava	5
9	Gokana	Yam, cassava, maize, garri, game, Fish, banana	6
10	Ikwerre	Yam, Cassava, maize, garri, game, cocoyam, cucumber, vegetables.	5
11	Khana	Yam, Cassava, maize, garri, game, banana, vegetables, orange, breadfruit,	5
12	Okrika	Fish, crabs, periwinkle, crayfish, lobster, oyster, prawns	2
13	OpoboNkoro	Fish, crabs, periwinkle, crayfish, lobster, oyster, prawns	3
14	Tai	Yam, cassava, maize, garri, game, vegetables, orange, breadfruit.	6
	Total		63

Source: Authors Field survey, 2017

To achieve this, the study adopted qualitative research approach with unstructured interviews. The population of the study was 63 respondents who indicated interest to participate in the research to grant interviews.

IV. FINDINGS

A) Emerging trends impeding rural agriculture in Rivers State

From the foregoing, there are several impeding factors besides the generic factors identified by [6][5][7] as inefficient operational system, environmental and technological constraints, poverty and land fragmentation. Amid these generic emerging

trends, the nuances of the Rivers State experience of factors impede rural agriculture are based on the findings from the field and they include:

- 1) Political conflicts
- 2) Youth restiveness
- 3) Herdsmen invasion
- 4) Changes in cultural value
- 5) Distortion of rural livelihood chain
- 6) Spillage from pipeline
- 7) Poor accessibility
- 8) Inundation
- 9) Physical development and community expansion
- 10) Sea pirate attacks

## V. DISCUSSIONS

### A. *Political conflicts*

This was identified as one of the emerging trends limiting agricultural production in the rural areas of Rivers State. All the respondents affirmed in varying degrees skewed to the negative that during political season (electioneering process) there are more conflicts which most times results in more deaths in communities with strong affiliation to political office holders and aspirants.

In some cases, the crises ridden communities are left deserted to neighbouring communities as displaced people while some migrate to urban areas. This trend has been a recurrent phenomenon during electioneering process and it does not matter how small the political position being contested for but there is a common interest personality among youths in the study area. According to some respondents' unanimous assertion:

"...we don't know what causes the trouble ... what we see are the burning down of houses of perceived opponents... we begin to run around for safety and abandon our farms and other properties...."

This trend has not been checked by relevant agencies to reduce it to the barest tolerable limit. This has considerably reduced the number of persons interested to engage in rural agriculture during political seasons because they see it as an exercise in futility. This perception has dissuaded several rural farmers whose sources of income and food supply is tied to rural agriculture. Besides there is this palpable coincidence that most election season either falls during planting or harvesting season.

### B. *Youth Restiveness*

This is another trend that was identified during the field trip. All the respondents in the study area confirmed that youth restiveness is prevalent in their communities. They manifest in the

forms of rural gangs, rival cult activities, political affiliation, community agitations, fallout of youth election, chieftaincy tussles and brigandage.

This has led to the death of several persons who are either perceived rivals themselves and/or even relations of diverse cult group members during such attacks and counter attacks.

Another serious issue that was raised during interview session was that individuals hide behind the cloak of communal agitations and commit heinous crimes against perceived enemies. Why these disturbing trends prevail is that these different cult groups hide in the forest, farmlands and attack mostly unaffiliated and unguarded innocent farmers. According to a prominent farmer in one of the communities:

"... they chased away my wives, children and labourers working on my farmland because they said I did not support 'their agenda' ... I should not farm since they are also on the run from the community... I wonder how they want my family to survive and for how long..."

With these occurrences in most agrarian communities, the result has been farmers apathy leading to food shortages, hunger, economic losses and other associated negative agricultural consequences. There were reported cases of human beings beheaded on their farms and/or on the way to their farms thereby discouraging people from going to farms.

### C. *Herdsmen Invasion*

The activities of herdsmen who migrated from the northern region into the southern region of Nigeria especially the uplands where farming is the predominant occupation of the people in search of pasture for their herds. According to the respondents:

"...these Hausa people (herdsmen) come with cows to eat all of our crops, destroy our farmlands, rape our women going, working and/or returning from our farms, sometimes even fight with our men... the government is not doing anything about it...we are dying silently our people are afraid of farming".

The incursion of these Nomads into farmlands in this region of the country have caused colossal irreparable loss in several communities, they keep counting their losses even the loss of human lives and property. The implication of this activity in these agrarian communities have considerably reduced the intensity of farming and food production.

### D. *Changes in Cultural Value*

This is another trend that has highly affected rural agriculture negatively. A female

respondent who doubles as a farmer and academic assert that:

“in our ... nobody wants to farm again; modernity and misconstrued civilization has eaten deep into the youths. Farming is now synonymous with suffering and backwardness ... wants to eat processed food. Local foods that portray our culture and farming prowess have gone into extinction ... it is indeed worrisome these days.”

Also, the fisher folks are not left of these lamentations as a respondent assert that:

... fishing used to be our pride as people from the riverine communities ... you can hardly find young men and women interested in fishing in our communities... the quest for quick money has made them...”

These were the perceptions of most of the respondents. From their responses it was evident that western education and the illusive quest for white and blue-collar jobs are now the parameters to measure greatness as against the number of farmlands, yam barns, games hunted by the great hunters of old that measure wealth.

Farming is highly de-emphasized by this generation and attention is being diverted to other non-agricultural sectors of the society like banditry, politically induced violence and pipeline vandalism as means to access quick cash.

## VI. DISTORTION OF RURAL LIVELIHOOD CHAIN

This was another trend identified that has impacted negatively on rural agriculture. From the respondents it was clear that the ecosystem has been destroyed.

“Our farmlands and rivers have been converted to other uses...see that building there used to be my husband’s farmland ... it is now skills acquisition centre for the community, how do they want me and my children to survive?”

This was a response from a widow. If nothing is done to avert this trend, there may be no more livelihoods for the rural dwellers.

Another male respondent asserts that:

“...I grew up hunting in that forest with my father ... today there is a road and school building there. Sometimes I think where will I hunt to take care of my family... only me but most people from my community as also complaining about it...”

Also, a fisher folk stated that:

“my neighbour ... and I were fishing best of friends in our younger days and ... today our children are not interested in fishing, they have failed to remember

that we trained them with what we sold from fish sales...”

It is imperative to assert that the incremental decline in rural agriculture over the years have had negative consequences on food production and income generation. More rural dwellers have been living below the poverty line based on their levels and streams of income available to them.

### A. Spillage from Pipeline

The discovery of oil has done more harm than good to the Nigerians. Apart from exposing many to wealth that they did not work for, a lot of the farm lands and rivers are heavily polluted. Many communities have lost farmlands to oil spillage there by rendering the lands useless for any form of agriculture. A respondent from the Ogoni extraction said her family farm lands were all affected by the oil spill.

“...they told us they will clean up the land, we are still waiting, compensation will not solve the problem. Will money restore the fertility of the soil and ....?”

The fisher folks are not left out of the lamentation as a respondent lamented thus:

“Before this time we used to fish and the catch will surprise you, but today we toil night and day with nothing to show for it because of the activities of oil spills in the river... we have been begging our youths to stop pipeline vandalism, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) to protect their facilities and the government to secure our community ... we are praying to God...”

### B. Poor Accessibility

Lack of road infrastructure has been a major challenge limiting rural agriculture in Nigeria especially in the study area. A lot of communities in the rural areas lack good access road. According to a respondent:

“...it is difficult to transport our produce to nearby markets due to lack of roads, people cannot come to us, what we carry to the markets with our bicycles, motorcycles and our heads are too small when compared to what we produce”



**Plate 1: Showing a farm road in the study area**  
Source: Authors field survey, 2017

Another respondent who is a traditional ruler in the community reiterated thus:

“You see the road you came from, it has been like this for more than 25years and we promise upon promise from politicians to fix the road but nothing has been done. We are so neglected that sometimes we regret being....”



**Plate 2: Showing a failed road in the study area**  
Source: Authors field survey, 2017

From this report, it is obvious that roads are important to rural agriculture. The implication of this is that they will limit their production to personal consumption which will not add to the nations GDP.

### C. Inundation

This manifested in form of flooding. The study area is a flood prone terrain. Every year between July and September, farmers experience flooding such that crops are destroyed before maturity. There are years when these are experienced more according to a respondent, this 2017 there were lots of flooding experiences following the July rain.

The implication of this is that there will be serious famine during the succeeding year.

The farmers assert that:

...see in this our farm (sic), we have been forced to harvest them hurriedly because the rain come (sic) with flood and soaked our farms and crops especially the cassava, plantain, yam, and cocoyam. We cannot produce garri (processed cassava) and other foods for sell (sic) ... life is so difficult for us here...



**Plate 3: Prematurely harvested cassava due to inundation**  
Source: Authors field survey, 2017



**Plate 4: Prematurely harvested plantain due to inundation**  
Source: Authors field survey, 2017

### D. Physical Development and Community Expansion

This is a serious threat to rural agriculture. From the respondents it was clear that farm lands are converted to residential and commercial uses on a regular basis

“our farmlands have been converted to built-up areas, wetlands and water bodies are being reclaimed.

Nobody is doing or saying anything about it. My children, since you have access to the people in power; please let them know about what we have said”

That was a response from a group. The fact remains that, if urbanization is not positively controlled, farming may go into extinction.



**Plate 5: Wetlands sand filled and converted to other land use due to urban expansion.**  
Source: Authors field survey, 2017

### ***E. Sea Pirate Attacks***

In recent times the coastal communities in the study area and by extension Rivers State has been experiencing increasing sea pirates attack. This factor is very peculiar to the riparian communities. Those that ply the waterways at night and day are vulnerable to sea pirates attack, they include market women who buy and sell wares are robbed, raped and their belongings carted away, the fisher folks experience theft of fish catch and other valuables.

These phenomena have over the years inhibited people from these riparian settlements afraid of using the waterways. People resort to self-help as the rivers which is the source of their livelihood and economic mainstay has become a nightmare.

Some of the respondents assert that:

“...we cannot go out to do our business again...everyday they (sea pirates) come to attack us and take our property (wares)... the JTF (Joint Task Force) patrol the rivers before we can go out... we are tired of living in fear for our lives....”

Another respondent who is a resident cum boat owner conveying foodstuffs and passengers assert that:

“I am tired of this community because I now live in fear everyday some of my boats and 75hp outboard engines have been taken away by these boys (sea pirates) ...one of my boat drivers was killed, they offload the passengers in the mangrove and left with the goods inside... only God can save us from these boys (sea pirates) the JTF (Joint Task Force) is not helping us at all...”

The fisher folks are not left out of the menace as they have also borne the brunt of these sea pirates attacks in recent times.

Some fisher folks respond thus:

“ ...my children we cannot fish again in the river because these bad boys (sea pirates) attack us regularly and collect everything we catch ... take our money, food items and beats us with their guns if they see nothing with us. We have report (sic) to the government through the Local Government Chairman and the JTF (Joint Task Force) commander but nothing has been done till today. We stay here with fear for our lives and hunger is part of our problems now...please help us tell the government to come and help us from these bad boys....”

## **VII. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

From the inception of the profession, Town Planners have been viewed as the managers of both urban and rural growth in several developed countries.

In most of these countries, the professional town planners are either engaged in the public sector by the government or some non-governmental agencies as advocates, and in some cases the private sector as agnostic and apolitical planners.

They are generally charged with the responsibility to order the use and/or control, monitor the activities and trends on the land within the town and urbanscapes to achieve economic growths and reduce conflicts relating to land uses.

However, the Nigerian example of town planning which by extension Rivers State falls is a failed situation and has been encumbered by several outdated, inordinate laws and traditional land tenure systems that makes mockery of the profession of town planning.

The town planner, the planning profession and the Nigerian State is at cross roads on which direction to tread because the laws governing urban



and rural development are mere archival documents that are seldom put into practice for implementation and monitoring.

Even when implemented, there is the lack of political will and interferences, community disruptions and poor funding if it commences that discourages practitioners to work effectively.

The planning principles as enshrined in various planning documents which is perceived as the antidote to land use conflicts have failed to be implemented in Rivers State.

A cursory glance at these laws and concomitant activities reveal that: the zoning ordinances imbedded in most Master Plans have never been put into use.

The government has failed to yield to planning tenets and there is herdsman and farmers clash due to the failure of clearly defined grazing line and/or failure of government blatant efficiency in introducing ranching. This trend has reduced the quantity of rural agricultural practices and farmers are increasing becoming apprehensive of herdsman and the crops destructions associated with them.

The failure of effective planning in the agriculture sector (aquaculture) has led some dissatisfied youths into carrying of arms along the waterways to terrorize users of the waterways; from fisherfolks, traders and other users of water related activities.

Accessibility which engenders growth at both rural and urban areas hardly engage town planners in both public and private sectors to be part of the planning, aligning function and size of roads at both urban and rural areas.

The fallout has been the outright neglect in Nigeria and by extension Rivers State by successive governments. Since agriculture in Rivers State is ninety-percent 90% a rural endeavour, with poor access roads there is the tendency for food shortage in the urban areas, because there are no storage facilities to protect perishable farm produce.

If the yields are found most times they are at the transformation stage: from good to bad. This by implication has adverse effects on the health and general well-being of the citizenry who consume such crop yields.

This has a far-reaching implication on physical planning as it adds pressure to the existing few health and other social facilities within the urban and rural areas.

There is also give room for uncontrolled physical development around the cityscape as many residents and farmers alike tend to meet at a common ground to sell off their produce while the end-users tend to get fresh from farm produce. This has led to the emergence of squatter settlements dotting the cityscape and has caused the city managers so much in terms of human and other scarce resources to control such growth.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The challenges of rural agriculture are enormous and their effects far reaching. The study adopted the multistage sampling technique and identified several trending factors that have limited agricultural engagement; they include Political conflicts, youth restiveness, herdsman invasion, changes in cultural value, Distortion of rural livelihood chain, Spillage from pipeline, poor accessibility, inundation, physical development and community expansion and pirate attacks.

The study recommended amongst other that Nigerians must as matter of urgency begin to play politics without violence, political office seekers and holders should understand that politics is not a do or die affair. No one should be imposed on the populace. Government should empower the teeming unemployed youths with valuable skills. The environment should be conducive for the youths to express their creative ideas rather than express them through violence and political lackeys.

Also, the activities of the Herdsmen should be monitored to curb breakdown of law and order. People should not allow borrowed cultures to destroy their rich cultural heritages. Other cultures should complement and not to destroy.

Furthermore, oil spills must always be properly cleaned up before causing any colossal damage and post environmental impact assessment carried out at intervals to evaluate the impact of oil exploration activities on the host communities.

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

***The study has made the following recommendations:***

**1** Nigerians must as matter of urgency, begin to play politics without violence, political office seekers and holders should understand that politics is not a do or die affair. No one should impose himself on the populace to spark communal crisis.

**2.** Government should empower the teeming unemployed youth population. The environment should be conducive for the youths to express their creative ideas rather than expressing their violent prowess.

**3.** Herdsmen activities should be monitored, and movement of animals should be restricted especially areas where nomadic agriculture is not practiced.

**4.** The government should as a matter of urgency establish ranches and grazing reserves to replace the open grazing that has caused hardship and violence.

**5.** People should not allow borrowed cultures to destroy their rich and good cultures. Other cultures should complement and not to destroy.

6. Oil spills must always be properly cleaned up before causing any colossal damage and post environmental impact assessment carried out at intervals to evaluate the impact of oil exploration activities on the host communities.
6. Government should create good and accessible roads down to agricultural areas to ease the burden of farmers conveying harvested farm produce.
7. There should be sustainable urbanization to reduce the incursion on farmlands within the urban fringes to promote agriculture in the urban areas.
8. Natural and artificial drainage channels should not be blocked, and artificial drains should be created for storm and waste water evacuation.
9. The protection of the waterways of coastal communities should be prioritized to encourage interactions among traders, fisher folks and other users of the waterways.

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