

EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN THE MANAGEMENT OF FARMERS-HERDERS CONFLICT IN OYO SOUTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The persistent farmers–herders conflict in Nigeria has exposed the limitations of conventional, state-centric policing, particularly in rural communities. This study examined the effectiveness of community policing in managing farmers–herders conflict in Oyo South Senatorial District, Oyo State. Adopting a mixed-methods research design, quantitative data were collected through 384 questionnaires administered to farmers, herders, community leaders, security personnel, vigilante groups, and civil organizations, while qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with selected stakeholders. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, alongside thematic analysis of interview responses. Findings reveal that community policing has contributed significantly to reducing the frequency and intensity of farmers–herders clashes through improved information sharing, enhanced community–police collaboration, timely response to threats and increased public trust in security agencies. However, its effectiveness is constrained by inadequate funding, insufficient training, institutional mistrust and weak coordination between formal and informal security actors. The study concludes that community policing remains a viable and sustainable conflict-management strategy when properly institutionalized supported and recommends strengthened community police partnerships, adequate resource allocation and the integration of local conflict dimensions into security planning to ensure lasting peace in rural Nigeria.

Keywords: Community Policing, Farmers-Herders Conflict, Conflict Management, and Rural Security.

1. Introduction

The increasing level of farmers-herders conflict in Nigeria has intensified discussions regarding the effectiveness of present security mechanisms, particularly the capacity of traditional policing to manage intricate, community-based conflicts. Alemika (2022), Okoli & Ogayi (2022) claim that Nigerian policing has always been characterised by a militarised, centralised and reactive approach that has proven inadequate in settling localised conflicts driven by competition for land, water and other natural resources. In response to these shortcomings, community policing has emerged as an extra security strategy designed to foster collaboration between local communities and law enforcement agencies in the domains of conflict resolution and crime prevention (Adeleke, 2018; Gürsoy, 2019).

Collaboration, proactive engagement and problem solving between the police and the community form the cornerstone of community policing. Compared to traditional policing techniques which prioritise enforcement and coercion, community policing focusses more on building trust, local involvement and shared ownership for security outcomes (Kpae & Eric, 2017). This strategy particularly relevant in conflict-prone rural situations such as those affected by farmers-herders disputes, because it integrates indigenous knowledge, informal security institutions and early warning mechanisms into official security governance (Adebayo, Olagoke & Eyiemi 2025).

In Oyo South Senatorial District, particularly in the Ibarapa Area, frequent disputes between farmers and herders have resulted in deaths, destruction of Agriculture, displacement and escalating ethnic animosity . The apparent inability of the Nigeria Police Force to provide timely and effective security responses has led to an increase in community-based security initiatives such as neighborhood watches, vigilante groups and the South-West regional security organisation Amotekun (Adeoye, 2023). These modifications are a part of a broader movement towards community policing as a pragmatic response to rural insecurity and state capacity shortfalls.

Empirical study reveals that community police can effectively manage communal conflicts by enhancing intelligence gathering, promoting communication between disputing parties, and enabling prompt response to security issues (Agbibo, 2020; Bashir, 2023). Through coordinated interactions with local vigilantes, farmers' associations, herders' representatives, and community leaders, community policing creates platform for conflict de-escalation and preventive intervention. However, its effectiveness still depends on institutional support,

community trust, enough funding, and collaboration between formal and informal security actors [Ome & Ndukwe 2016).

This study assesses the effects of community policing on the management of the farmers-herders conflict in the Oyo South Senatorial District. It examines the extent to which community policing initiatives enhance security cooperation, reduce conflict and boost public confidence in law enforcement. By doing this, the study provides factual data regarding the viability of community policing as a long-term strategy for resolving conflicts in rural Nigeria.

2. Conceptual Clarification

This section reviewed previous literature and studies relevant to understanding the effect of community policing in the management of farmer-herder conflict. To better understand this subject matter, the study clarified some concepts such as conflict, farmer-herder conflict, community policing and effectiveness of community policing in management of farmer-herder conflict

2.1 Conflict

The word “conflict” actually comes from the Latin word “confligere,” which means “to strike together.” Despite the fact that different people have defined it in different ways, they have all reached the same conclusion. This means that disagreements are not a question of personal definition but are instead dictated by societal structure. According to Ofuoku and Isife (2019), conflict is the simultaneous presence of two or more opposing desires or motivations. Conflict, according to Mitchell, occurs when two or more people have objectives that they think can be accomplished by one but not both of them. Explaining that there must be at least two parties that mobilise energy to accomplish a goal, a desired object, or a scenario and who each see others as a hindrance to that aim might help to clarify this succinct definition (Okoli, 2014; Doyle, 2017).

In Nigeria, the conflict between nomadic herdsmen and farmers is a leading resource-used conflict. This is because it borders basically on the competition for access to land and water. Conflict is a phenomenon that is ubiquitous in occurrences, yet a diversely defined concept. As stated by Stein (1976), scholars generally divide their conceptualisation of conflict into two categories: nature-based and generic approaches. According to Pin and Diez (2007), conflict is defined as a “context or struggle between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals”. Fisher (2000) states that conflict occurs when two or more individuals in a relationship attempt to control one another, feel hostile towards one another, and have differing aims or values.

2.2 Community Policing

The concept of community policing emerged prominently from Wilson and Kelling’s (1982) Broken Windows theory, which argued that visible signs of disorder-such as unrepaired broken windows-signal neglect and eventually invite further criminality. This perspective reframed policing toward preventing disorder before it escalates. Although the terminology is modern, community policing practices pre-date colonial governance in Nigeria, where communities relied on informal institutions for security, conflict management, and social order (Thamos, 2008; Kwaja, 2019; Shiyabade et al., 2025). Fundamentally, community policing integrates cooperation between the police and citizens, emphasizing joint responsibility for crime prevention and public safety (Stipak, 1994; Rotimi, 2014; Lamidi et al., 2023; Shiyabade et al., 2025).

In Nigeria, community policing gained formal prominence in 2004 under Inspector-General of Police Tafa Balogun during President Olusegun Obasanjo’s administration (Ndukwe, 2018). Ikoh (2013) argues that the policy emerged to address rising crime levels and limited police capacity through partnership with community actors such as traditional leaders, civil organizations, and vigilante groups. This aligns with Goldstein’s (1993) advocacy for problem-oriented policing, which requires sustained application of local knowledge and data-driven crime analysis.

2.3 Global View of Community Policing

Scholars on community policing in Africa shows that an attempt to adapt a global policing philosophy to the continent’s unique socio political activities including weak state capacity, communal identities as well as the recurring resource based conflicts such as farmer herder crises. Onwudiwe in his (2009) work argues that community policing in Africa cannot be transplanted wholesale from Western side but must be domicile in indigenous systems of authority and social organization. He emphasizes that traditional rulers, community leaders, and informal security structures play a crucial role in intelligence gathering and dispute resolution, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of policing efforts. His contribution is significant in showing that community policing in Africa thrives where there is synergy between formal law enforcement institutions and existing local governance structures.

In a related contribution, Wisler also writing in (2009) highlights that African experiences of community policing demonstrate the importance of local ownership and participation in security governance. He notes that where communities are actively involved in decision making processes, there is greater trust in the police and improved conflict management outcomes. This perspective is particularly relevant to rural conflicts, as it underscores the need for culturally sensitive and community driven approaches to policing.

Furthermore, Alice (2014) examines policing in fragile African states and argues that community policing initiatives often emerge as pragmatic responses to state weakness rather than purely reform driven strategies. She contends that in many African contexts, community policing is intertwined with informal and hybrid security arrangements, which can either strengthen or undermine state authority depending on how they are managed. Her work contributes to understanding the complexities and contradictions of implementing community policing in environments characterized by limited resources and institutional fragility.

Similarly, Alemika in (2013) provides a critical Nigerian and African perspective by arguing that community policing is essential for democratic policing but is often hindered by issues such as corruption, lack of training, and poor police public relations. He maintains that for community policing to be effective in Africa, there must be institutional reforms that promote accountability, professionalism, and citizen engagement. His analysis is particularly useful in linking community policing to broader governance challenges and conflict management in Nigeria and beyond. Taken together, these contributions reveal that community policing in Africa is shaped by the interplay between formal institutions and informal community structures, the need for trust and legitimacy, and the broader political and institutional environment (Ojo et al., 2019). They collectively demonstrate that while community policing holds significant potential for managing conflicts such as farmer herder disputes, its effectiveness depends largely on context specific adaptations, inclusive participation, and sustained institutional support.

2.4 Interrogating the Effectiveness of Community Policing in managing farmers-herders conflict

Community policing is a well-known tactic for addressing insecurity in a range of contexts worldwide. In recent years, there has been an increased focus on assessing the effectiveness of community policing initiatives, particularly in the conflict-affected Ibarapa districts of Oyo State, Nigeria's Oyo South Senatorial District. Examining the research and scholarly discourse on how community policing could enhance security and foster resilience in such circumstances is the aim of this review of the literature. The positive correlation between crime prevention and community policing has been shown in numerous research.

Recent studies by Agbibo (2020) and Shiyabade et al. (2025) have reaffirmed that the reducing crime rates and enhancing public safety can be achieved through community involvement, problem-solving, and partnership building. Ikenga (2023) also comes to the conclusion that Nigerian police cannot provide governments and communities with the protection they need on their own. This is the conclusion of a study on community security and policing that was carried out in Nigeria. Nevertheless, he concluded that community policing has grown to be an effective weapon in Delta State's war on crime. He went on to explain that the impact community policing has had on the Nigerian police force's work over the years cannot be overstated.

Another study by Bashir (2023) on the role of community engagement in crime prevention and control, evidence from the city of Bauchi demonstrated that community crime prevention was beneficial in lowering crime. According to the study, most community members believed that crime prevention should be the responsibility of the local community. It was also noted that towns in the study area employed a range of strategies to lower crime and improve security. Community policing has continuously demonstrated promise in the fight against insecurity. Igangan, Igboora, Ayete, and other neighbouring communities in the Ibarapa region were able to fight insecurity by collaborating with the military through community policing (Ojo et al., 2020; Shiyabade et al., 2025).

According to an interview with a resident, "there have been a number of attacks within the Igangan community, including land encroachment, kidnapping, and attacks on police stations that have resulted in the death of Divisional Crime Officers (DCOs) and a suspect who was detained there." Furthermore, it was asserted that during the assault, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), an inspector, and further suspects were shot and killed (Sahara reporter, 2022). However, it was evident that a small number of indigenous people controlled the effective operations of these terrorist groups. To assist the government security forces in the Ibarapa area, the Amotekun Corps and other effective community policing organisations were established.

Another Fulani herder takeover attempt was successfully prevented by the state security enforcement agency (Operation Burst) and the community police apparatus (Amotekun Corps and other vigilante organisations). This incident took place at Igangan in September 2022. As a result of this effort, the Igangan community and the Ibarapa Local Government Areas presently experience a high level of security stability. Evidence thus far indicates

that areas actively implementing the community policing model have seen a considerable decrease in crime and violence. The increasing cooperation and confidence between the police and the community can be used to explain this. This implies that cooperation and confidence between the people and the police are crucial for community policing to be effective in lowering crime

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Community Policing Theory

This study is anchored in Community Policing Theory, which conceptualises public safety as a collective outcome generated through sustained collaboration between law enforcement institutions and community stakeholders. The theoretical foundation draws from the classical policing principles associated with Sir Robert Peel, which emphasise that the legitimacy and effectiveness of policing are rooted in public trust, consent, and voluntary cooperation rather than reliance on force. Contemporary interpretations extend this normative foundation by framing community policing as a governance-based model that prioritizes partnership, decentralisation, shared responsibility, and problem-oriented engagement, particularly in settings characterised by institutional fragility and complex security challenges (Tankebe, 2020; Akintola & Amusan, 2023).

Central to this theory is the assumption that communities are not merely beneficiaries of security services but are active co-producers of safety and social order. Citizens are expected to participate in identifying local security concerns, contributing contextual intelligence, and collaborating with law enforcement in the formulation of context-specific responses. This approach aligns with plural security governance perspectives, which recognise the complementary roles of formal policing agencies and non-state actors, including traditional institutions, vigilante groups, community development associations, and civil society organizations, in shaping local security outcomes (Egbo & Akan, 2021; OECD, 2021; Lamidi et al., 2023).

The theory further maintains that institutional proximity and continuous engagement between police officers and community members reduce social distance and foster mutual understanding. Through routine interaction, joint initiatives, and consultative platforms, law enforcement agencies develop relational legitimacy, whereby they are perceived as impartial facilitators of collective security rather than distant agents of state authority (Tankebe, 2020). This dimension is particularly significant in rural and conflict-affected environments, where perceptions of bias, exclusion, and historical marginalization often shape responses to formal institutions.

3.2 Relevance of the Theory to the Study

In relation to farmers-herders conflict, Community Policing Theory provides an analytical framework for understanding how localised and participatory security mechanisms contribute to dispute management and violence prevention. These conflicts are commonly driven by competition over land, water and grazing corridors, exacerbated by weak institutional mediation structures and limited state presence in peripheral communities (Akinyemi & Olaniyan, 2022; Benjaminsen & Ba, 2021). The theory posits that embedding policing practices within community networks enhances the early identification of grievances, facilitates timely intervention and promotes negotiation-based conflict resolution processes that reflect local socio-cultural norms.

Recent empirical literature reinforces the theoretical assertion that participatory and partnership-based policing models enhance public confidence and improve security outcomes in rural and conflict-sensitive settings. Bashir (2023) demonstrates that structured community engagement and cooperative crime-prevention strategies are associated with reductions in criminal activity and increased trust in law enforcement. Similarly, Akintola and Amusan (2023) contend that community policing contributes to improved security sector governance by strengthening accountability, institutional responsiveness and citizen participation, particularly in contexts marked by limited state capacity.

Within the context of this study, Community Policing Theory informs the expectation that mutual trust and shared ownership of security processes mitigate the intensity and recurrence of farmers-herders conflicts. The framework suggests that when affected groups perceive policing institutions as accessible, neutral, and inclusive, they are more inclined to report emerging threats, adhere to mediated settlements, and refrain from retaliatory actions (Lamidi et al., 2023). Consequently, improved conflict management outcomes-such as enhanced communication, reduced fear, and sustained cooperation-are understood as products of collaborative governance rather than solely the enforcement of formal legal authority.

4. Methodology

A mixed method research design was employed, utilising both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Primary data were gathered through structured questionnaires administered to residents and in-depth interviews

with farmers, herders, community leaders, and security personnel. While quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis.

The study was carried out in Ibarapa North, Ibarapa South and Ibarapa East Local Government Area. The study purposively selected the three Local Governments to form part of this study being the flashpoint of the conflict in the Senatorial District. The sample size for this study was determined by using the Taro Yamane formula of 9600, the formula involves summing the entire population and dividing by the margin of error and the margin of error was 0.5% while confidence level was 90% as such a total of 384 samples were selected and that captured the farmers, herders, community development organisations, vigilante groups, security personnel and other stakeholders. This study adopted a multistage sampling technique. Purposive sampling was employed to select the communities to be studied within the senatorial district. The choice of purposive sampling procedure was due to the nature of the research as community development association, traditional rulers, security personnel and community leaders, among other stakeholders have different level of knowledge on the capacity of community policing in managing herdsman-farmers conflict. Random sampling was used to select the respondents that formed part of this study. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire interview guide. The questionnaire was divided into five sections: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Strongly Disagree and Disagree, while the qualitative was carried out through thematic analysis. The literature and journals were reviewed as part of the secondary data. The primary data generated for this study was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics analysis with the data presented using tables while secondary data was subjected to content analysis. The qualitative data generated for this study was analysed using thematic analysis.

5. Analysis of Community Policing Management on Farmer-Herder Crisis

The effects of community policing in handling the farmers crisis appear in Table 1 with both identified areas of success alongside the identified areas in need of improvement. Community policing strategies in Oyo South remain subject to multiple assessments by those surveyed according to the data collection results. The surveyed individuals showed strong support for community policing strategies which helped decrease violent confrontations since 40% expressed agreement in addition to 24.4% reporting full agreement. Forty-three point three percent of participants showed strong disagreement about the effectiveness of these strategies to reduce violence according to the respondents. The study showed mixed results about community policing outcomes as it performed effectively in some areas but failed to do so in others.

A majority of 70.4% individuals together with 20.6% more strongly agreed that police-operated farmer-herder partnerships effectively shape the crisis’s dynamics. The collaborative work between stakeholders supports positive changes in crisis management since different parties join forces successfully. Such partnerships received positive feedback from participants since

5.8% strongly disagreed and 3.2% disagreed with their effectiveness. Community policing has successfully built law enforcement-community relationships based on mutual understanding according to 38.5% of participants who agreed while 31.1% strongly supported this improvement. Trust-building initiatives face difficulties in certain areas because 16.6% of the respondents disagreed while another 10.8% strongly disagreed. The support for training and resources by community policing met positive outcomes according to 64.1% of respondents along with 7.1% while 20.6% showed strong disagreement about potential shortcomings in this area. The survey revealed mixed results regarding the effectiveness of community policing approaches against socio-economic and environmental and political drivers since 38.3% strongly agreed and 22.7% agreed yet 21.1% strongly disagreed about the proper resolution of underlying causes. Research findings show that community policing effectively helps reduce Farmer-Herder conflicts since 80% of respondents see such efforts as very beneficial. A total of 93.1% of subjects believed that community policing is responsible for reducing farmer- herder crisis-related offenses after its implementation. The decline in crime following this approach strengthens its position as an excellent management instrument for the crisis.

Table 1: Effects of Community Policing Management on Farmer-Herder Crisis

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Implementation of community policing strategies have reduced incidence of violent clashes	164(43.3%)	38(10.0%)	14(3.7%)	100(40%)	61(24.4%)
Community engagement and partnership between the police,	22(5.8%)	12(3.2%)		267(70.4%)	78(20.6%)

farmers and herders have influenced dynamics of the crisis					
Community-oriented policing initiatives has improved trust and cooperation between the police and local communities	41(10.8%)	63(16.6%)	-	146(38.5%)	118(31.1%)
Training and resources are provided to law enforcement for effective policing	78(20.6%)	22(5.8%)	9(2.4%)	27(7.1%)	243(64.1%)
Community policing approaches have addressed underlying socio-economic, environmental and political drivers of the crisis to high degree	80(21.1%)	20(5.3%)	48(12.7%)	86(22.7%)	145(38.3%)
Community Policing has impacted trust between local communities and law enforcement in your area	50(13.2%)	82(21.6%)	8(2.1%)	106(28.0%)	133(35.1%)
Community Policing has contributed to resolving conflict between farmers and herders	3(0.8%)	68(17.9%)	5(1.3%)	123(32.5%)	180(47.5%)
There has been change in crime rate related to farmer-herder crisis since introduction of community policing	3(0.8%)	13(3.4%)	10(2.6%)	63(16.6%)	290(76.5%)

6. Source: Field Survey, 2025.

6.1 Test of Hypothesis

H₀: There is significant relationship between community policing and farmers-herder crisis in Oyo South Senatorial District

The regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between community policing and Farmers-Herders crisis in Nigeria. The results revealed an R-squared value of 0.141, signifying that community policing accounts for 14.1% of the variance observed in the occurrence or management of the crisis. The model's F-statistic of 61.891, with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, indicates that the regression model is statistically significant and that community policing is a relevant predictor in explaining the crisis dynamics. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient ($R = 0.376$) suggests a moderate positive relationship between the variables, implying that increased implementation of community policing strategies may contribute to mitigating the farmer-herder conflict. However, the relatively low R-squared value also points to the presence of other unexamined factors influencing the crisis.

Table 2 Regression Analysis showing the relationship between Community Policing and Farmer-herder crisis in Nigeria

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	R-Square	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	117.391	1	.141	117.391	61.891	.000 ^b
Residual	715.068	377		1.897		
Total	832.459	378				

7. R: (0.376)

8. Source: Field Survey, 2025

9. Discussion of Findings

The efficiency effectiveness of community policing in lowering conflict was assessed in the study. While qualitative data demonstrated that police and communities were more responsive, information flowed better

and collaborated better, quantitative research showed that 93.1% of respondents believed there was less violence following the implementation of community policing units. These patterns align with participatory policing models (Bashir, 2023) and Ikenga's (2023) findings, which demonstrated that community policing in Delta State assisted in reducing intercommunal conflicts.

Nevertheless, the inquiry discovered some significant flaws. Despite noted gains, 43.3% of respondents questioned if community policing interventions could be sustained, citing persistent mistrust, a lack of authority, and insufficient funding. This pessimism is similar to Agbiboa's (2020) assertion that, in the absence of significant reforms, community policing may end up being shallow. Interviews indicate that when community police systems get politicised or lose their neutrality, they become less effective. This insight supports the literature's argument that training, institutional reform, and ongoing engagement with local realities are equally as crucial to the transformative potential of community policing as deployment (Lamidi et al., 2023; Shiyabade et al., 2025).

10. Conclusion

The findings of this study shed light on the escalating conflict between Nigerian herders and farmers, which has resulted in a devastating loss of life and property and has now permeated the southwestern part of the country. This research evaluated how community policing practices affect the reduction of farmer-herder conflict in Oyo South Senatorial District through detailed examination of Ibarapa North Local Government Area. This research study derived practical knowledge from respondents which include both law enforcement personnel and community members along with local leaders through first-hand accounts about grassroots security operations in intricate socio-cultural environments. Community Policing becomes a fundamental safety improvement tool for farming communities through its successful combination with traditional rulers and Community Development Associations (CDAs) and vigilante groups. The research concludes that community policing provides budding opportunities to achieve peaceful coexistence specifically in rural areas experiencing continuous conflicts. Sustainable long-term operation of this project depends on three essential elements: continuous community involvement, proper funding support by the government and intentional trust-building between every stakeholder. Fixing these gaps in a comprehensive manner is essential for developing a peaceful and productive rural society within Oyo and Nigeria at large.

11. Policy Recommendations

Community policing initiatives should be formally institutionalised within local government and community governance frameworks in Oyo South Senatorial District. This needs a legal recognition and operational integration of Police-Community Relations Committees, community development associations, vigilante groups and traditional institutions into the local security architecture. Institutionalisation will clarify roles, reduce overlap between formal and informal security actors and ensure continuity of community policing efforts beyond ad hoc or politically driven interventions.

Federal and state government should establish dedicated funding to support community policing programmes. Adequate financial provision is necessary for logistics, communication equipment, patrol mobility, stipends for community volunteers and operational coordination. Sustainable funding will address one of the major constraints identified in the study and enhance the capacity of community policing units to respond promptly and effectively to emerging farmer-herder tensions.

Targeted and continuous training should be provided for police officers, Amotekun operatives, vigilante members and community leaders involved in community policing. Training programmes should focus on conflict mediation, early-warning intelligence gathering, cultural sensitivity, human rights and non-violent dispute resolution techniques. Capacity building will improve professionalism, reduce bias, and enhance the credibility and neutrality of security actors in managing farmer-herder conflicts.

Deliberate trust-building strategies should be implemented to improve relationships among farmers, herders, community leaders, and security agencies. Regular dialogue forums, joint security meetings, and inclusive mediation platforms should be established to address grievances, clarify misconceptions, and foster mutual understanding. Effective communication channels will encourage information sharing, reduce suspicion, and promote collective responsibility for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Security interventions should be context-specific and informed by local realities such as land-use patterns, migration routes, seasonal farming cycles, and cultural norms. Policymakers and security planners should incorporate indigenous knowledge and community-generated intelligence into security strategies to ensure relevance and effectiveness. This approach will improve early detection of potential conflicts and allow for preventive rather than reactive security responses.

There should be improved coordination between the Nigeria Police Force, Amotekun Corps, vigilante groups, and other community-based security initiatives through clearly defined command structures and accountability mechanisms. Government agencies must provide oversight to prevent abuse, politicisation, and human rights violations, while ensuring that community policing remains impartial and community-oriented. Effective coordination will maximise the strengths of each actor and promote a unified approach to managing farmer-herder conflicts.

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