



# Insecurity and Deterioration of Farm Settlement Scheme in Edo State

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines insecurity and the deterioration of the farm settlement scheme in Edo State from 2007 to the present. The scheme is a government initiative aimed at promoting rural development, increasing food production, and providing employment opportunities for unemployed young school leavers. Historically, the scheme significantly reduced unemployment in Edo State by creating jobs and income for settlers and nearby communities, thereby contributing to the state's economic development. Over time, however, the scheme has deteriorated largely due to insecurity, among other factors. Relevant literature on the subject was reviewed. The theoretical framework is anchored on the Frustration-Aggression Theory developed by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears in 1939, as well as Karl Marx's Conflict Theory in 1867. The study relied on secondary data obtained from the researcher's previous work on the revitalization of the farm settlement scheme and unemployment reduction in Edo State, along with other sources such as the internet, online journals, and publications. The data were analyzed thematically. The analysis revealed that the farm settlement scheme in Edo State historically created numerous employment opportunities for settlers and surrounding communities, thereby improving the overall economy of the state. However, the study also found that the scheme has declined to the extent that some settlers have abandoned their farms, primarily due to insecurity caused by herder-farmer clashes, kidnapping for ransom, banditry, and other factors. The paper recommends several strategies to address the insecurity impacting the farm settlement scheme, including the enhancement of security infrastructure and patrols, community-based security initiatives, land tenure system reforms, and strengthening policy frameworks.*

**Keywords:** *Insecurity, Farm Settlement Scheme, Frustration-Aggression, Conflict Theory.*

## 1. Introduction

Agriculture has historically been the backbone of Nigeria's economy, serving as the primary source of livelihood for the majority of its population and contributing significantly to national development (Ogbalubi, 2013, Adeniran & Adewuyi, 2019). As of recent statistics, agriculture accounts for about 22.35% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs over 60% of the labour force, making it a pivotal sector for economic stability and food security (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021, FAO, 2020). The sector encompasses a diverse array of activities, including crop farming, livestock rearing, forestry, and fisheries, which collectively sustain the livelihoods of millions and influence Nigeria's socio-economic landscape. Agricultural productivity directly influences food security, poverty reduction, and rural development as well as provide raw materials for agro-based industries, which are crucial for diversifying Nigeria's economy away from oil dependency.

In recent years, Nigeria has embarked on various reforms and schemes to boost agricultural productivity and ensure food sufficiency. These include the National Fadama Development Project (NFDPP), National Agricultural Policy, The Green Alternative, The Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS), The Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP), National Rice Development Strategy (NRDS), Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA), and the establishment of farm settlement schemes.

Edo State, located in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, is endowed with fertile lands, favourable climatic conditions, and abundant water resources, making agriculture a key sector in its economy. In an effort to improve its agricultural productivity, the Edo State government has adopted various reforms and schemes initiated by the Nigerian government as earlier mentioned, including the farm settlement scheme.

The concept of farm settlement schemes in Nigeria emerged as part of the post-colonial efforts to promote rural and national development, and the first notable farm settlement scheme was established in 1959 by western Nigeria government led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The government acquired large tracts of land to allocate to settlers, who were mainly unemployed school leavers. The scheme was designed to provide farmers with land, technical assistance, and infrastructural support such as roads, clinics, and markets (Omotola, 2022). The advantage of the farm settlement scheme over other agricultural policy lies in its ability to address the challenges of acquiring land and other agricultural inputs by the youths and other willing farmers (Aitanun & Deedam, 2024). Over time, various states, including Edo, adopted and adapted these schemes.

Edo State, inherited several farm settlement initiatives from the defunct Midwest and then Bendel state aimed at revitalizing agriculture and promoting rural self-sufficiency. These schemes included the provision of land, inputs, and extension services to settlers, with the expectation that they would cultivate crops like cocoa, oil palm, and rubber, which were vital to the state's economy.

Insecurity has emerged as a significant obstacle to the growth and sustainability of agriculture and farm settlement schemes across Nigeria, including Edo State. Issues such as armed banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and communal conflicts have severely hampered agricultural activities, leading to reduced productivity, displacement of farmers, and abandonment of farms and settlement schemes (Akinwale & Omotayo, 2020, Okoro 2020, Nwanze, 2019).

In Edo State, insecurity manifests in various forms, including clashes between farmers and herders, which often escalate into violence, destruction of farmland, and loss of lives. These conflicts are exacerbated by competition over land, scarce resources, and inadequate security measures. The consequences are profound: farmers are discouraged from investing in their lands, and the government's efforts to revitalize the farm settlement schemes are undermined.

Understanding the interplay between insecurity and the deterioration of farm settlement schemes in Edo State is crucial for informed policies aimed at revitalizing the agricultural sector. While Nigeria's agricultural potential remains vast, the persistent security challenges threaten to undermine progress and exacerbate rural poverty. In Edo State, where agriculture historically contributed significantly to economic development, the decline of farm settlement schemes due to insecurity highlights the need for comprehensive solutions that address security concerns alongside agricultural development.

This study aims to critically examine the extent to which insecurity has impacted the sustainability of Edo State's farm settlement schemes, identified the underlying causes, and propose strategies for overcoming these challenges. By doing so, the research contributes to the broader discourse on rural development, food security, and national stability in Nigeria.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Agriculture remains a vital sector for Nigeria's economic stability, rural development, and food security. In Edo State, a region endowed with fertile lands and favourable climatic conditions, agriculture historically played a significant role in poverty alleviation and employment generation. In an effort to improve its agricultural productivity, the Edo State government has adopted various reforms and schemes initiated by the Nigerian government including the farm settlement scheme.

However, despite these well-intentioned efforts, the sustainability and effectiveness of farm settlement schemes in Edo State have been severely compromised by escalating insecurity. Issues such as armed banditry, kidnapping, communal clashes, and conflicts between farmers and herders have become pervasive, disrupting agricultural activities, displacing farmers, and leading to the abandonment of farms. These security challenges have not only hindered productive farming but have also eroded the infrastructural investments made in these settlements, leading to infrastructural decay and reduced agricultural output. Understanding the extent to which insecurity influences the decline of farm settlement schemes in Edo State is critical for designing effective interventions.

Many scholars have researched the impact of insecurity on agricultural productivity. For instance, Ahmad, T. Y. (2019) researched the economic implications of insecurity on agricultural productivity in Katsina state; a case study of Kankara local government area of Katsina state. The major findings of the research show that Maize farming is profitable and that it has been drastically affected by the insurgency due to abandonment of farmlands, and forceful migration. As such, the study recommends that adequate security should be provided in villages, and that agricultural policies should be reviewed so as to enhance farmers' accessibility to fertilizer, loans and grants.

Similarly, Amadi-Robert, c. et al (2024) investigated effect of insecurity on agriculture sector performance from 1990 to 2021 in River's state. The researchers concluded that insecurity had a significant effect on agriculture sector performance in Nigeria. It was recommended amongst others that federal government through the ministry of defense should initiate new device on how to tackle kidnappers and eliminate the menace completely. This will help restore farmers and investors' confidence.

In the same vein, Amoh, M. U. et al (2024) did a study, which seeks to assess the effects of insurgency on agricultural product distribution and marketing in Niger State with emphasis on Shiroro LGA. The study revealed that insurgency has negatively affected agricultural productivity, transportation, distribution, and marketing in the study area. It was then recommended that the Niger state government should endeavour to curb the issue of insecurity amongst others to improve productivity.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge in relation to the reviewed extant literature on the subject, there is no existing study on insecurity and farm settlement scheme deterioration in Edo state, Nigeria. Hence, this study is being done to contribute to the body of literature on the subject and address the gap in knowledge. Therefore, the following research questions are formulated to aid the study.

*To what extent has insecurity impacted on the sustainability of farm settlement scheme in Edo State?*

*What are the primary causes of insecurity impacting farm settlements in Edo State?*

*What strategies can be implemented to address insecurity facing farm settlement schemes in Edo State?*

## **Research Objectives**

*To assess the impact of insecurity on the sustainability of farm settlement scheme in Edo State.*

*To identify the causes of insecurity affecting farm settlement scheme in Edo State.*

*To propose strategies for mitigating insecurity so as to revitalize farm settlement scheme in Edo state.*

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Insecurity**

Insecurity refers to a state in which individuals or groups feel unsafe due to threats from violence, crime, or instability, undermining social order and development (Nussbaum, 2003). In other words, Insecurity refers to a state of threatened safety or stability caused by violence, conflict, criminal activities, or social unrest. It manifests through armed conflicts, banditry, kidnapping, communal clashes, and other forms of violence that threaten individuals and communities. Insecurity disrupts the social and economic activities essential for agriculture. It leads to displacement of farmers, destruction of farmland, and destruction of infrastructure, all of which impair agricultural productivity and the sustainability of farm schemes (World Bank, 2011).

### **Farm Settlement Scheme**

Farm settlement schemes are government initiatives promoting rural development by providing small farmers with resources and land for commercial farm operations (Robert, 2017, & Omotola, 2022}. The goal was to increase the standard of living among rural communities in a cost-effective manner. According to Omotola (2022), farm settlement scheme can also be described as an intervention of the government to promote efficient utilization of land resources and improvement of farming methods by farmers as well as transforming subsistent agriculture into small scale commercial farming.

### **Global Overview of Farm Settlement Schemes**

Globally farm settlement schemes have been in existence though in different forms, but the major aims are to produce food for subsistence and commercial purposes and to generate employment

opportunities. Farm settlements began to appear specifically between 8,000 and 7,000 B.C., as people began to cultivate plants (Kelly, 2019). People would grow different crops, domesticate different animals, and create a variety of tools and objects for their own families and for trading, and Jericho is one of the earliest known farm settlements, established by 8,000 B.C (Kelly, 2019). Farm settlements tend to be created as a stable place to live, grow crops, and possibly raise animals. However, in some locations and time periods, farm settlements moved from area to area as the soil lost fertility (Robert, 2017). Groups of different families usually founded farm settlements, creating a village once the crops were established.

In the Americas, the Alto Beni project in Bolivia is an example of farm settlement scheme. The Alto Beni and Carrasco areas in Bolivia were found to have good climate and soils to produce perennial crops for domestic use and export (Robert, 2017, Igbanibo 1986). In the valley of Alto Beni, five planned settlements were established in which different families were stationed. Each family was allocated about 10 ~ 12 hectares to plant on. The five settlements conducted their activities cooperatively.

In the Middle East, the Moshave Farm settlement in Israel is an example. The sudden increase in the population after the independence war between Israel and Arabs resulted in the problem of food shortage and unemployment in that area. Faced by these challenges, the Israeli government adopted a system called the Moshav (Applebaum & Sofer, 2012). The Moshav (plural: moshavim) is a farming system that seeks to engage these immigrants in joint farming activities in a specific area called a farm settlement which is mostly rural. It incorporates tenets of a cooperative society into farming and agricultural production for subsistence and export (Igbanibo, 2012 & Schwartz, 1999).

Africa has been home to the most ambitious farm settlement schemes, which benefited from the assistance of foreign aid organizations. Farm settlement schemes were seen as the fastest method for developing rural areas, served as testing grounds for new farming methods and to transform market economies. Governments implementing the schemes hoped that by infusing large amounts of capital into specific areas, surrounding areas would benefit economically (Robert, 2017). In addition to the above, Igbanibo, (2012) averred in one of his studies that ensuring food security and self-reliance through farming made many countries to embark on farming schemes such as the Gezira in Sudan, Nyakashaka of Uganda, Songhai farm in Benin Republic, farming settlements of Eastern and Western Nigeria and the School to Land scheme in Rivers State.

In Northern Nigeria, the existence of farm Settlement scheme is not clear. Settlements which were in form of plantation were established by the British colonial masters who purely concentrated on the massive cultivation of tree crops (Okoro, 1984). However, this plantation form of farm settlement does not have any resemblance with the real farm settlement which was first pioneered in the western state in 1959 and was modelled after the Moshav in Israel. Embattled with the problem of population increase which concurrently led to food scarcity and unemployment in the western region of Nigeria, the then regional government led by Chief Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo initiated the farm settlement programme which consist today of six states of Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Ogun, Lagos, Ekiti state (Nwabughio, 2017). The programme entails establishment of farm institutes which was to train young school leavers in agricultural practices for two years and then engage them in farming using the knowledge acquired (Olatunbosun, 1971). Government acquired rural lands which were especially reserved for such purpose and are allocated to the participants. Houses and other facilities like schools, hospitals, and machineries were provided on the farm settlement for the participants and their families while monthly stipends are paid for the works done on the farm (Famulugba, 2016). The programme was widely celebrated as it was able to engage not only young school leavers but also unemployed graduates, increase massive production of food items sufficient for the huge population and generate income for the government (Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe, 2012). By the early 60s, other regions of the country such as the Eastern and Midwestern regions adopted the same program and replicated it in their zones (Isiani, 2020).

Despite the failures of the scheme in Mid-west region of Nigeria (later known as Bendel state), the Edo State government continued with the policy. Edo state inherited the programme following the creation of Edo and Delta states from the defunct Bendel state. Each of the senatorial district in Edo state has a farm settlement. However, the farm settlements have lost their vitality as evidenced by the dilapidated infrastructures, and some are being abandoned by the settlers. That is

why it is imperative for the scheme to be revitalized so it can achieve the objectives envisioned by its founders.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This research draws upon and triangulates two theoretical frameworks: the Frustration-Aggression theory and the Marxian conflict theory.

Frustration-Aggression Theory, developed in 1939 by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears, suggests that aggression often results from frustration, defined as the obstruction of goal-directed behaviour. When individuals or groups face obstacles preventing them from achieving their objectives, they experience frustration, which can lead to aggressive behaviours. If unresolved, this frustration may be displaced onto innocent targets or expressed violently. Applying this to Edo State, ongoing conflicts and violence reflect deep-seated frustrations among local communities and herders, primarily driven by resource scarcity, land disputes, and economic hardship. The failure of the farm settlement scheme to provide sustainable livelihoods or resolve land conflicts amplifies these frustrations. As farmers and herders repeatedly encounter obstacles to peaceful farming or access to grazing routes, their frustration escalates into aggression, resulting in violent clashes. If these frustrations persist unaddressed, a cycle of violence ensues, destabilizing the agricultural sector further.

Conflict Theory, especially from a Marxist perspective (Marx, 1867), emphasizes that society is characterized by ongoing struggles over limited resources, power, and economic advantage. Marx argued that social inequalities particularly between different classes or group generate inherent conflicts rooted in the capitalist system. Such conflicts often manifest in disputes over land, resources, and political authority, leading to social unrest and violence. The deterioration of Edo's farm settlement scheme reflects these underlying inequalities. Intended to promote rural development, the scheme becomes vulnerable to conflicts over land, grazing rights, and economic opportunities especially between farmers and herders. These disputes are rooted in systemic issues like land tenure disagreements, marginalization, and unequal resource access, which Marx identified as sources of societal conflict. Failure to address these structural inequalities sustains tensions, fueling insecurity and undermining the scheme's sustainability.

Insecurity extends beyond land disputes to include rising kidnapping and violence, severely disrupting agricultural activities. Fear of attacks discourages farmers from participating in or investing in the schemes, leading to abandonment and decline. The perceived inability of law enforcement to protect farmers worsens this insecurity, creating chaos that hampers sustainable agricultural progress.

These theories collectively demonstrate that the decline of farm settlements is rooted in social and structural conflicts. The interaction between frustration from unresolved conflicts and systemic inequalities significantly contributes to insecurity and the decline of Edo's farm settlement scheme.

Effective solutions must go beyond security interventions to include structural reforms that reduce inequalities and resolve resource conflicts.

### **Empirical Review**

Extensive empirical studies underscore the pervasive impact of insecurity on agricultural productivity and rural development across Nigeria, including Edo State.

Falade et al. (2024) examined insecurity's effects on agricultural productivity in Ose Local Government Area of Ondo State. The study revealed that the consequences of insecurity include loss of profits, abandoned farmland, food shortages, and loss of lives. The study recommends multi-faceted security policies including community policing, border security, anti-grazing laws, and training security personnel to mitigate insecurity's impact and promote agricultural resilience.

Similarly, Amadasu and Osaghae (2024) explored the farmer-herder crisis in Edo State's Ovia North East LGA, emphasizing that climate change, poverty, ethnicity, urbanization, and anti-open grazing laws contribute to persistent conflicts. Their data from 188 respondents indicated that insecurity has led to casualties, crop destruction, and food insecurity. They advocate for poverty alleviation, improved security mechanisms, and policy reforms to address the root causes of farmer-herder conflicts and enhance food security.

Eneji et al. (2019) focused on Gombe State, revealing through regression analysis that crime rate and unemployment significantly reduce agricultural productivity (coefficients of -0.58 and -0.38,

respectively). They argue that insecurity hampers growth, urging the government to revamp security efforts and modernize agriculture to foster sustainable development.

Moses et al. (2024) examined insecurity's impact on rural women's crop productivity in Northeastern Nigeria. Their SEM analysis indicated that increased insecurity via kidnapping, Boko Haram, and farmer-herder conflicts correlates with declines in productivity by up to 89%. They recommend improved surveillance and security training for personnel to create a conducive environment for women farmers, emphasizing stakeholder collaboration.

Agogbua et al. (2022) in their study examine the impact of insecurity on Nigerian economic growth and development. The study's findings indicate that insecurity negatively impacts Business Activities (BA), but does not exert a significant influence on Economic Growth (EG) and Economic Development (ED) in Nigeria. The conclusion drawn is that national insecurity should be accorded a high priority, as flourishing business activities depend on a secure environment, ultimately fostering sustainable economic growth and development.

Ioryue et al. (2024) analyzed insecurity's influence on Nigeria's agricultural development, with a case study in Benue State. Their mixed-methods approach revealed that Boko Haram insurgency, herder-farmer conflicts, and banditry have caused displacement, land abandonment, and disrupted supply chains, culminating in food insecurity and economic decline. The study advocates comprehensive security reforms and sustainable agricultural policies.

Gwanshak and Zitta (2024) investigated displacement in Plateau State, caused mainly by farmer-herder clashes. Their findings, supported by land-use mapping, show that displacement leads to abandoned farmland and disrupted food production, exacerbating food insecurity. They recommend resilience-building strategies in conflict-affected regions.

Ijeomah and Wonah (2022) analyzed insecurity's effects on peasant farmers in Delta State. Using the Marxian political economy perspective, they found that conflict over land and grazing routes has caused fatalities and reduced food production, leading to shortages and unemployment. They suggest banning open grazing and establishing designated grazing fields to mitigate conflicts.

Etim and Oladipo (2024) analyzed the impact of insecurity on agricultural sector product in Nigeria. The study reveals that terrorism has negative impact on agricultural output in Nigeria. In order to mitigate the effect of insecurity, the study recommends some strategies which include the provision of employment, literacy, reduction in poverty, and cross-cultural integration, among others. Yusuf and Mohd (2023) study the growth and fiscal effects of insecurity on the Nigerian economy.

The empirical results revealed that an escalating level of insecurity has a detrimental impact on high unemployment rates, domestic capital formation, foreign direct investment, and government spending on education and security, leading to inhibited growth in both the short and long term. Conversely, enhanced health services, fair income distribution, and effective utilization of public borrowing exhibited positive correlations with security, thereby fostering growth in both the short and long run.

Umar, I.S., Salawai, P. H., & Mohammed, U (2024) investigated the impact of insecurity on the food security status of farmers in Niger State. The study revealed that insurgency adversely affects the food abundance of farmers. To address this issue, the researchers recommended that communities establish active and effective vigilante groups to assist in surveillance efforts alongside government initiatives. Additionally, they suggested that the National Emergency Management Agency and Niger State Emergency Management Agency should provide farmers with improved, high-yielding crop varieties and farm inputs as palliatives to mitigate the negative effects of insecurity and enhance food security for farmers and the nation as a whole.

Fiase and Gbadem (2024) studied banditry and insecurity's developmental impacts in Benue State, linking youth unemployment and political instability to increased insecurity. Their data show that violence has resulted in thousands of deaths, destruction of property, and displacement, severely impairing socio-economic development. Addressing root causes such as poverty and marginalization is crucial for stability.

Tenebe, D (2025) did a write up in business post titled "curbing Insecurity, Investing in Rural Infrastructure are Key to Nigeria's Agri-Potential" According to her, the escalating insecurity across many parts of Nigeria, particularly in the Middle Belt, has dealt a crippling blow to agricultural

productivity. To solve this problem, she advocated an integrated approach which should begin with establishing robust security architecture to protect farming communities among others.

#### **4. Methodology**

The study employed qualitative approach with secondary data from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Key Persons Interview (KPI, S) transcripts and notes from the earlier study, which capture farmers' perceptions and narratives regarding insecurity and farm settlement scheme deterioration in Edo state. Four Key Persons were purposively selected for the interview session. Participants were Acting Permanent Secretary/Director of Agric and Extension services; Director, Cluster Farming; Director, Agriculture Development Programme (ADP) and Manager (Government Representatives at the Farm Settlements) while three FGDs were conducted; one in each of the three farm settlements with the settlers.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the KPIs and FGDs transcripts identifying the recurring themes and perceptions relating to insecurity's impact on the deterioration of the farm settlement scheme in Edo state. Other secondary data were gathered from publications on the internet, including books, daily newspapers online, clips, and journals.

#### **Presentation of Data**

Below are the responses of Key Persons Interviews (KPIs). Four Key Persons were purposively selected for the interview session. Participants were Acting Permanent Secretary/Director of Agric and Extension services; Director, Cluster Farming; Director, Agriculture Development Programme (ADP) and Manager (Government Representatives at the Farm Settlements).

Sources: Researchers field work, (2024).

Responses on how farm settlement scheme has been effective in reducing unemployment in the past in Edo state

According to the Acting Permanent Secretary/Director of Agric Extension Services...

...it is a well-known fact that unemployment is generally high in Nigeria including Edo state. Government has tried to reduce the level of unemployment through several policies and programmes. According to the acting PS, farm settlement scheme is one of such policies. The farm settlement in Edo state was inherited from the old Mid-Western/Bendel State after it was divided into Delta and Edo states.

The primary purpose of setting up the farm settlement was to create an ecosystem where people who are willing to take agriculture as a means of livelihood were recruited by government, and the necessary infrastructures including land were provided initially for the settlers to assist them in cultivation. The scheme operated as a cooperative to enable the produce to be marketed. At some point the facilities in the settlements deteriorated, but government tried to revive the system. Essentially, the farm settlement was geared towards employment generation through live-stock farming, food crops and cash crops production. To this end, it has helped in reducing unemployment as most people were engaged in the process. In addition, it was a means of socialization between people of different background which acted as a cluster that bring people together. In each farm settlement there were different practices in terms of crop cultivation. That means, some settlements plant cash crops such as rubber and palm, and arable crops, while others plant only arable crops e.g. Sobe Farm Settlement (KPI/PS/54). When asked about the number of persons employed by the farm settlements, he said, those figures are available with the farm settlement leadership.

An interview session with The Director, Cluster Farming, she remarked thus:

*The Farm Settlement Scheme generated a lot of employment in the past. This is more so when one looks at the value chain ranging from land preparation, planting, harvesting, and processing (KPI2/DCF/40).*

Director, Agric Extension Services, Agriculture Development Programme (ADP) also remarked:

*Indeed, the farm settlement scheme is a veritable means of job generation because of value chain inherent in it. However, it has decline overtime in this function due to many factors.*

Responses on factors accounting for the inability of the farm settlement scheme in addressing unemployment in Edo state since 2007 till date.

According to the Acting Permanent Secretary/Director of Agric Extension Services...

A policy change towards farm settlement is one of the factors that accounted for the inability of farm settlement scheme to address unemployment reduction in Edo state. Every successive administration has a priority area in terms of policy implementation; whereas some are favorable to farm settlement scheme, others are not favourable.

He further remarked that government encroachment into the lands that were originally allocated to settlers also contributed to the challenges. Government took some land and used it for other development purposes. At the beginning of the scheme, there was enough land for farming, however, the encroachment problem led to the reduction of the farm size.

Inadequate market, the delay in issuing certificate of right to operate the farms to the settlers contributed to the inability of the farm settlement scheme to address unemployment in Edo state. Although this issue is being resolved and the certificates are being issued out now.

Also, the religious bodies are not helping matters. The church leaders do not encourage their followers to engage in productive hard work like farming; rather the religious leaders encourage their followers to just have faith and believe in whatever they want, and they will have it. You will understand what I am saying if you go to new Benin market. You see young people hustling for customers for electronic sellers instead of embracing more productive ventures like farming.

An interview session with The Director, Cluster Farming, she remarked thus:

*Several factors could account for the inability of farm settlement scheme to address unemployment in Edo state. For instance, Rural-Urban drift or migration from the rural to urban areas is a major factor. The youths leave the farm settlement to the towns and even abroad in search of greener pastures. She further remarked that Lack of infrastructural facilities such as internal roads, schools, health facilities, internet facilities etc is also a factor. In addition, recreational facilities such as playgrounds, malls, guest houses etc are not available.*

Again, she noted that insecurity from herdsmen is another big factor militating against the farm settlement scheme in Edo state. Settlers are afraid to go to their farms for fear of being kidnapped or even killed. Others include poor price regulation by government, poor mechanization of farming, land dispute between farmers and host communities and a lack of storage facilities leading to spoilage of produce that cannot be sold immediately.

An interview session with The Manager (Government Representatives at the Farm Settlements)

According to the manager, even if government is not showing enough interest, the settlers themselves are not showing enough capacity in managing the farms. That spirit of entrepreneurship and the readiness to make the farm work better are not there. The youths do not even show interest in farming. In addition to the lack of modern farming equipment and infrastructural amenities in the farms, the government's inability to maintain peace and security in the farm settlements has also contributed to the challenges.

Director, Agric Extension Services, Agriculture Development Programme (ADP) in an interview remarked thus:

*The lack of synergy between ADP and the Farm Settlements is a big challenge. The ADP ought to bring new innovations and inputs into the farm settlement scheme. This function has been thwarted due to lack of synergy between the ADP and the Farm Settlements. He further remarked that people don't want to be seen as farmers rather they look for white collar jobs which are non-existent. Insecurity is a big challenge in the farm settlements especially in Sobe Farm where herders attack farm settlers and members of the community on frequent basis.*

Responses on how farm settlement scheme can be revitalized to reduce unemployment in Edo state According to the Acting Permanent Secretary/Director of Agric Extension Services...

The state government is making efforts to improve farm settlement programme to enable youths to work. Efforts are being made through the Land Development programme, to make more land available so that people can work. Diversification of crops to be cultivated should be done. Farm settlements that are good for cash crop production should specialize in cash crop production, while areas that are good for arable crops should specialize in Arable cropping.

Also, the acting PS noted that mechanization of farming is very important as this will help to improve production. Experienced farmers should teach the young ones so that they can stay in the farms to continue with the scheme. Serious advocacy on the benefits of farm settlement scheme cannot be overemphasized. Both the government and private individuals and religious bodies should sensitize the youths and their members of the need to embrace farming. Commercial farming should



be encouraged instead of farming for subsistence. In this regard, Edo state government is emphasizing on backward integration in agriculture. By this, the government will be encouraging settlers to produce in high quantity for private organizations that will then transform the produce into other industrial uses. That way, a lot of employment will be generated. For example, farm settlers and other farmers are being encouraged by government to produce cassava for private organizations who are seeking for it to produce other products such as industrial starch.

Government is also trying to bring in financial support through private organizations who wants to collaborate with the farm settlements. According to the acting PS, improving security architecture in the farm settlements will also help to revitalize the farm settlement scheme. Expansion of farm will also create more employment opportunities.

When asked if it is possible to establish farm settlement scheme in each of the Local Government Areas in the state, the acting PS noted that to establish farm settlement in each LGA, the ministry would need partnership with private individuals and willing communities.

An interview session with The Director, Cluster Farming, she remarked thus:

*Improvement in security architecture is one important area that must be considered in revitalization of farm settlement scheme in Edo state. To this end, she suggested that hunters should be incorporated into the security architecture to collaborate with the Agro rangers which were set up by the state government in the past to protect farms and settlers. She furthered that the hunters are very brave and effective because they know the terrain more. Other factors to be considered include tax waivers for farmers. Government officials should facilitate linkages between off takers and farm settlers. Price regulation is also important to keep the price competitive so that farmers will be encouraged to continue to produce. Government should invest in infrastructure such as internal roads, provision of health facilities, internet connectivity to attract youths to the farms, provision of storage facilities to prevent spoilage of produce amongst others.*

Director, Agriculture Development Programme (ADP) noted thus:

*The linkage between ADP and Farm Settlements should be revived so that they can bring in their inputs to the development of the farms; also, he opined that provision of infrastructure and recreational facilities are very important for the revitalization of the farm settlement scheme. One thing is the provision of infrastructure, but another thing is to get the settlers and youths to embrace and stay in the farms. He remarked that Edo youths will rather travel out than stay in the farm. To stop this trend, he emphasized the need for advocacy and awareness creation on the importance of agriculture and farming. He said this can be done through the media, religious bodies, NGOs, teacher/lecturers etc. He also emphasized the need for improvement in the security systems so that farms and farmers will be protected.*

According to the Manager (Government Representatives at the Farm Settlements):

In addition to the provision of security, provision of infrastructure and recreational facilities, getting the youths to embrace farming through strong advocacy and awareness creation will help in revitalization. Also, he suggested that settlers should take full ownership of the farms to operate it as a personal business even when government tends to pull back rather than seeing it as a means of government employment.

### **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

Three FGDs were conducted in the three farm settlements with the settlers.

Table 1: Data of participants in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

S/N	Location of the Farm Settlement	Number of Participants
1	Iguoriakhi Farm Settlement	8
2	Ekpoma Farm Settlement	8
3	Sobe Farm Settlement	9
	Total	25

Source: Researcher's Field Work, (2024).

Responses on how farm settlement scheme has been effective in reducing unemployment in the past in Edo state

In response to the above question, settlers at Iguoriakhi farm remarked thus:

*Farm settlement brought "Generational Employment" (President, Iguoriakhi farm). By this I mean farm settlement generated employment not just for the settlers but also for the generations that would follow. He further said families have benefited from farm settlement; and if the farm settlement scheme is established in each Local Government Area in Edo state, it will reduce unemployment (FGD).*

*According to the president, we grow Palm tree, Rubber and Arable crops. Each farmer is assigned 10 hectares of land by the government. Each settler employs an average of 15 persons during land preparation, planting, weeding, harvesting, and processing of the produce in the past.*

In response to the above theme, settlers at Ekpoma farm remarked thus:

*From 1964-1999 a total of 157 settlers were employed by the government. Each settler employs an average number of 15 and sometimes more casual workers annually; this shows that farm settlement scheme has generated significant employment in Edo state in the past. Here in Ekpoma farm, we have a total of 2,677 hectares of land. Each settler is allocated 10 hectares of land for crops and 1 acre for compound farm.*

In response to the above question, settlers at Sobe farm remarked thus:

*Farm settlement scheme started in Nigeria in 1963 from the Western Region with the aim of generating employment. The planners of the scheme planned it adequately. This was handed over to old Bendel state down to Edo state. Our farm settlement covers 6 square miles. There are 80 settlers employed by the government and we employ an average of 15 and sometimes more casual workers per year during land preparation, planting, weeding harvesting and processing; this shows the level of employment created by farm settlement scheme in the past. However, insecurity by herdsmen has chased us out of the farm settlement; hence we are taking refuge in Sobe town.*

Responses on Factors that accounted for the inability of the farm settlement scheme in addressing unemployment in Edo state since 2007 till date.

In a Focus Group Discussion with settlers at Iguoriakhi farm, they remarked thus:

*The delay in the issuing of certificate to operate the farm made people to lose interest in the farm. Also, the issue of insecurity is a contributing factor; people are being killed or harmed in their farms. Another factor is lack of farming tools like tractors, fertilizers etc. 'Government has abandoned us to our fate. We sometimes take our produce to the market, in the absence of patronage, our goods go bad because there are no off takers and there is no provision for storage facilities such as silos to keep the produce.*

Again, the lack of infrastructure like houses, access and internal roads, health facilities, recreational centers, schools among other have contributed to the failure of the scheme. Several youths are not ready to come and reside in this settlement and just do domestic farming; they rather travel out of the country to look for greener pastures.

In reaction to the above question, settlers at Ekpoma farm listed the following:

*Government negligence in terms of poor funding, lack of soft loans, lack of tractors and other equipment such as plowing machine. According to the president of the farmers' cooperative, some tractors were removed from the settlement during the tenure of former governor Igbinedion and they were never replaced as promised. The multi-million palm oil milling plant was removed at the beginning of this present administration, and it was never brought back.*

Lack of interest by youths is a big challenge. The youths would rather move from the farms to the cities.

Insecurity from Herdsmen suspected to be Fulani's is a worrisome factor. They allow their animals to eat your crops. When you try to stop them, it leads to fight. We have had series of crises with the herdsmen and even court litigations.

Lack of training on modern farming practices

Adulterated inputs such as fertilizers, chemicals, and insecticides are another factor. Some of the input we bought last farming season did not work because they were adulterated. It was not so when government agents were supplying at subsidized rate.

In terms of marketing, there is difficulty in securing partnership with organization due to government refusal to sign surety. According to the president of the farmers' cooperative, PRESCO used to come in here in the past to buy palm produce from us. Right now, they no longer come because the farm is not functioning well.

The secretary to the Cooperative said there is difficulty in securing loan from the banks. The president of the cooperative remarked "Before the banks could give you loan, they will check to see if you have what it takes to be given loan. That is, what are you producing that could bring money to the bank? Are you bankable?" Many of us do not have the collateral to secure loan so the government need to help us.

Decayed and dilapidated infrastructures such as residential and office apartments with no portable water and health center are also factors

Lack of recreational centers

Certificate to operate have not been issued to settlers although they have started issuing it now.

In reaction to the above question, settlers at Sobe farm remarked thus:

*Insecurity is our biggest problem in Sobe farm; Fulani Herdsmen have taken over the entire farm and its environs. The herders even enter the community to kill and kidnap residents in the community for Ransome. We used to plant cocoa yam, maize, cassava, and other arable crops in large quantity, but insecurity has made us to leave the farms, we cannot go there regularly as we use to. We are even looking for alternative land to farm just for subsistence. The high level of insecurity has made every other factor to be secondary. One of the FGD members remarked thus 'as at this time last year; I had already sold about 4 million naira from watermelon alone. Right now, the farms are under siege. You cannot go there alone and if you must go there, we go in group'.*

When we entered the farm in group during this field work, the secretary to the cooperative remarked thus" this is an experimental site by an organization for cassava specie. I had to cut low these cassava stems otherwise the herders would come here to harvest the tubers and feed it to their cows" The Secretary who led us to the farm pointed at the dilapidated houses, and other infrastructures such as silos that were all burnt down and not functioning.

The chairman remarked; thus, "due to the insecurity, we have relocated our children from the school in the settlement to the SUBEB School in Sobe town so they can continue with their education".

Other challenges include poor funding, lack of equipment such as tractors, ploughing or plowing machine. One of the FGD members remarked that "OWENA River Basin Development authority used to hire equipment to us at cheaper rates, but they no longer do that for us". However, these problems are secondary to the problem of insecurity.

Responses on how farm settlement scheme can be revitalized to reduce unemployment in Edo state

In a Focus Group Discussion with settlers at Iguoriakhi farm, the settlers highlighted the following on how farm settlement scheme can be revitalized to reduce unemployment in Edo state.

Farm settlement scheme should be funded properly by government. -Government should partner with Private Corporation to aid the farmers.

There should be provision of infrastructure such as power supply, good houses, good access and internal roads, recreation, and entertainment. Facilities etc.

There should be provision of tractors, fertilizers, and other modern farming inputs to enhance mechanized farming.

Strong advocacy and awareness creation on the need for people especially the youths and the educated to embrace farming and key into the farm settlement.

There should be provision of modern infrastructure with internet connectivity to attract the youths

Agriculture entrepreneurship should be promoted.

There should be land development.

Government should facilitate partnership with off takers to aid the farmers in selling their produce

Security challenges should be addressed.

In reaction to the above question, settlers at Ekpoma farm listed the following:

*There should be provision of infrastructural amenities like health centers, secondary school, portable water, and recreational centers.*

*Reintroduction of permanent crops such as rubbers, Palm tree, poultry should be reintroduced*

*Proper funding from government should be enhanced.*

*Provision of necessary equipment for mechanized farming is also very important.*

*Training and retaining of settlers for modern best farming practices.*

*Advocacy and awareness creation on the need for people especially the youths to key into agriculture and the farm settlement scheme.*

*The government should facilitate linkages between the farm settlers and off takers in order to create more value to farmers.*

In reaction to the above theme, settlers at Sobe farm listed the following:

*The issue of insecurity should be given maximum attention; before anything can be done in Sobe farm, security must be restored.*

*There is a need for good internal road and other infrastructure to attract young people when security is restored.*

*When security is restored, proper advocacy and awareness campaigns should be done to restore the hopes of the people to come back to the far.*

## **Thematic Analysis**

### **Theme 1: The Impact of Insecurity on the Farm Settlement Scheme in Edo State**

Analysis of the both the KPIs and FGDs indicated that the farm settlement scheme historically reduced unemployment in Edo State by creating jobs and income for settlers and nearby communities, contributing to the state's overall economic development. From the KPIs, it was revealed by the Acting Permanent Secretary/Director of Extension Services and other government officials that the scheme helped lower unemployment levels amongst others benefits. Employment was generated as many individuals were engaged during land preparation, planting, harvesting, and processing. FGDs participants noted the scheme fostered “Generational Employment,” providing jobs for current and future generations. On average, each participant employed about 15 persons annually, demonstrating the scheme’s role in sustained employment.

However, despite these advantages, the farm settlement scheme has experienced deterioration, primarily due to insecurity among other factors. The Director of Cluster Farming emphasized that insecurity, particularly from herdsmen, is a major obstacle. “Settlers fear kidnapping or death when accessing their farms”. The Manager of the farm settlements corroborated this view, when he said government’s inability to maintain peace and security in the farm settlements is a big challenge. The Director of Agriculture Extension Services (ADP) specifically pointed out that insecurity is especially problematic in Sobe Farm, where frequent herder attacks threaten the safety of settlers and the continuity of farming activities. FGD responses from farmers across various settlements further illustrated the detrimental impact of insecurity. Farmers in Iguoriakhi farm settlement acknowledged that “insecurity manifesting as kidnapping, threats, attacks and violence has driven many farmers away from their farms. Similarly, farmers in Ekpoma highlighted that herdsmen suspected to be Fulani have caused significant damage, allowing their cattle to destroy crops and engaging in conflicts that sometimes escalate to court litigations. Sobe farm settlement is the most affected by insecurity. According to the farmers in Sobe during the FGD, “Insecurity is our biggest problem in Sobe farm; Fulani Herdsmen have chased us out and taken over the entire farm and its environs”. The herdsmen even enter the community to kill and kidnap residents in the community for Ransome. We used to plant cocoa yam, maize, cassava, and other arable crops in large quantity, but insecurity has made us to leave the farms, we cannot go there regularly as we use to. We are even looking for alternative land to farm just for subsistence. The high level of insecurity has made every other factor to be secondary. One of the FGD members remarked thus ‘as at this time last year, I had already sold about 4 million naira from watermelon alone. Right now, the farms are under siege. You cannot go there alone and if you must go there, we go in group”. The secretary to the cooperative described the extent of destruction, pointing out dilapidated and burnt-down infrastructure such as houses and silos, which hampers productivity. All respondents agreed that insecurity must be prioritized; restoring security is essential before any meaningful intervention or revitalization of the scheme can occur. They emphasized that security restoration should be accompanied by advocacy and awareness campaigns to rebuild farmers’ confidence and encourage their return to the farms.

Scholarly literature supports these responses regarding insecurity’s adverse effects on agriculture. Falade et al. (2024) examined insecurity’s impact on agricultural productivity in Ose Local Government Area of Ondo State, finding that insecurity hampers activities leading to profit loss, abandoned farmland, food shortages, and fatalities. Also, Moses et al. (2024) examined insecurity’s impact on rural women’s crop productivity in Northeastern Nigeria. Their SEM analysis indicated that increased insecurity via kidnapping, Boko Haram, and farmer-herder conflicts correlates with declines in productivity by up to 89%. Similarly, Eneji et al. (2019) studied Gombe State and found through regression analysis that crime rates and unemployment significantly reduce agricultural productivity. They advocate for strengthened security measures and modernization of agriculture to promote sustainable development. Additionally, Ijeomah and Wonah (2022) analyzed insecurity’s effects on peasant farmers in Delta State. Using the Marxian political economy perspective, they found that conflict over land and grazing routes has caused fatalities and reduced food production, leading to shortages and unemployment.

**Theme 2: The Causes of insecurity impacting farm settlement Scheme in Edo State****Conflicts between Farmers and Herdsmen**

Ethnic tensions and conflicts between herders and farmers significantly contribute to insecurity in Edo State, disrupting agricultural activities and settlement initiatives. These disputes often stem from competition over land and resources, as discussed by Imanah & Osuide (2024), who notes that clashes between herders and farmers have intensified in the region leading to decline in agricultural productivity.

**Disputes Over Land and Inadequate Land Tenure Systems**

Disagreements concerning land ownership and the lack of clear land tenure policies hinder agricultural progress and the development of settlement schemes. Adofu I, et al (2024) argue that uncertain land rights in Nigeria exacerbate conflicts, discouraging farmers and investors alike.

**Rise in Kidnapping for Ransome and Insurgency Activities**

The increase in kidnapping and insurgency-related activities poses a threat to security, leading to displacement of farmers and disruption of farming operations. Amadasu & Osaghae (2024) & Adedipe (2022) highlight that kidnapping incidents and banditry in Edo State have adversely affected agricultural productivity including success of farm settlement programs.

**Weak Political Governance and Instability**

Inadequate governance structures and political instability undermine security efforts, allowing criminal elements to operate with relative impunity. Ekpa, D., Gyang, T., & Ogoh, A.A (2017) notes that deficiencies in security policies and corruption diminish the effectiveness of efforts to safeguard agricultural zones in Nigeria and by extension farm settlements in Edo state.

**Economic Hardship and High Poverty Levels**

Widespread poverty and unemployment create a fertile ground for criminal behaviors, including land grabbing and violence, which threaten agricultural development. Agunbiade (2024) identified severe unemployment, endemic poverty, deprivation, inequalities amongst others as the major causes of the unending insecurity negatively impacting Nigeria including farming communities in Edo state.

**Climate Change and Environmental degradation Effects**

Climate change, flooding, and environmental degradation displace farming communities and make agricultural activities more vulnerable to insecurity issues. Omokaro (2025) stresses that climate change poses a significant threat to Nigeria's agricultural sector, which is a cornerstone of its economy and food security. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events, erratic rainfall patterns, and rising temperatures have disrupted agricultural productivity, threatening the livelihoods of millions of Nigerians. These challenges could intensify insecurity by forcing herders to move down south in search of greener pastures. In the process they clash with farmers thereby destabilizing agricultural efforts.

**Theme 3: Strategies that can be implemented to address insecurity impacting Farm settlement scheme in Edo state**

Addressing insecurity impacting farm settlement schemes in Edo State requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates security, community engagement, policy interventions, and infrastructural development.

One of the strategies to be employed is enhancement of Security Infrastructure and Patrols. Implementing increased security patrols and establishing dedicated security units can deter criminal activities. The use of modern technology such as surveillance cameras and communication systems can improve response times. According to Okafor (2019), investing in security infrastructure is crucial in reducing farm-related insecurity in Nigeria. Similarly, Moses et al. (2024) agreed with this view when they recommended improved surveillance and security training for personnel to create a conducive environment for women farmers, emphasizing stakeholder collaboration.

Another strategy is Community-Based Security Initiatives. Empowering local communities through the establishment of vigilante groups or community policing can foster trust and facilitate timely reporting of threats. As Ivorgba (2024) & Oikhala (2024) emphasizes, that integrating

community policing with traditional security agencies fosters trust and enhances intelligence sharing. This is in tandem with the position of the director of Custer farming, ministry of Agriculture who says “that agro rangers and hunters should be engaged to work alongside the conventional police”. According to her, the Agro rangers and hunters know the terrain and are very courageous.

Nevertheless, implementing policies that formalize land tenure can reduce disputes, which often lead to insecurity. Scholars like Hyacinth et al (2022) & Lawal et al (2019) argue that reforming land policies to ensure clear, secure land rights encourages farmers to invest in their land, thereby revitalizing settlement schemes. The Land Use Act of Nigeria (1978) has been critiqued for its limitations; reforms should aim to simplify land access and ownership processes.

Farmer Sensitization and Conflict Resolution Programs is another strategy that could reduce insecurity affecting farm settlement scheme. Conducting awareness campaigns and conflict resolution workshops can foster better understanding, communication, and collaboration within farming communities, leading to more peaceful and productive agricultural practices. Adeyeye & Irekhore (2015) highlight the importance of capacity-building programs in reducing insecurity among rural farmers.

Equally important is infrastructural development and access to markets. Improving access roads, storage facilities, and market linkages reduces farmers’ vulnerabilities and discourages criminal elements from exploiting insecure zones. Chima (2023) & Tenebe (2025) argue that infrastructural development correlates with decreased insecurity and increased agricultural productivity.

In addition, integrating security considerations into agricultural policy planning can significantly enhance the success of schemes like farm settlements by proactively addressing potential insecurity issues that could disrupt or undermine them. T As Ioryue et al (2018) & Tenebe (2025) suggests, policy coherence between security agencies and agricultural ministries enhances effectiveness.

## 5. Conclusion

The data derived from key person interviews (KPIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) underscore the historical significance of the farm settlement scheme in Edo State’s economy. This scheme has traditionally served as a vital driver of employment and income generation for both settlers and neighboring communities, thereby contributing substantially to the broader economic development of the state. Nonetheless, despite these positive outcomes, the scheme has faced considerable deterioration in recent times, largely attributable to escalating insecurity among others.

The security challenges are multifaceted, encompassing conflicts between farmers and herdsmen, ethnic violence, disputes over land ownership rooted in inadequate land tenure systems, and a surge in kidnapping for ransom, among other issues. Addressing these complex threats requires a comprehensive strategy that integrates enhanced security measures, active community engagement, legal and policy reforms, capacity building initiatives, infrastructural development, and coherent policy articulation. Such an integrated approach holds the potential to substantially mitigate the insecurity concerns that currently undermine the sustainability and effectiveness of farm settlement schemes in Edo State.

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