

**Letter to the editors**

# Grazing reserves: a panacea to the farmers-herders crisis in Nigeria

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## Grazing reserves: a panacea to the farmers-herders crisis in Nigeria

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## To the Editors of the Pan African Medical Journal

Nigeria has an estimated population of 200 million people and a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of USD 1,968 [1,2]. The agricultural subsectors account for 21.2% of the GDP, with 36.5% of the labour force directly or indirectly engaged in the subsector, [2]. Nigeria has about 70.8 million hectares (ha) of agricultural lands of these 37 million (ha) are arable lands [2]. The economic importance of this is that over 75% of Nigerians involved in the agricultural sector practices subsistence farming mostly in the rural areas [3,4]. Consequently, clashes between pastoralist and agrarian communities may occur

following encroachment of farmland, cattle rustling. These may have devastating consequences on both parties, the resultant economic losses, population displacement may further aggravate the state of insecurity in the country.

To this end, the grazing reserve law was enacted in 1965 recognized as a state law by the amended 1999 Nigerian constitution [5,6]. Grazing reserves are primarily designated grazing areas for the use of pastoralists to provide fodder for the rearing of ruminants. To enhance the development of the Grazing reserves, the first and second Livestock Development Programme (FLDP, SLDP) supported by the World Bank was implemented by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and rural development, leading to an accelerated identification and gazette of Grazing reserves in Nigeria [7]. The grazing reserve law gave the legal backing for the establishment of grazing areas in states of the federation where such law has been domesticated. Under these laws, animals are only allowed to graze in the grazing areas within the grazing reserve. Section 37 of grazing law CAP G3 Laws of Kwara State criminalized open grazing it stated that: 'the owner of a specific animal or the person in taking care of who; (a) allow such animal to graze anyhow other than grazing reserves or trade route established under this law; or (b) fails to control such animal and the animal causes damages to any crops', was deemed to have committed an offence. Furthermore, section 40 of the law prohibits possessing, carrying or using for any purpose any firearms or other weapons for other purposes in the grazing areas [6]. In recent times there have been arguments about the existence of a 'grazing route'; pathways that link one grazing reserve, or area to another where pastoralist may lead their herds through, graze to prevent encroaching on agricultural farmlands. However, historical records show that grazing routes were only allowed in states where the grazing reserves law allow for such mostly in northern Nigeria [8]. Apart from the provision of Section 6 of the Land Use Act which empowers the

Local Government areas to grant the customary right of occupancy for grazing purposes, there is no known Federal legislation on grazing in Nigeria [6,8].

Nigeria has 415 grazing reserves in 21 states of the federation and the federal capital territory (FCT) with a total land area of 4.4 million hectares, of these 141 (34%) of the grazing areas about 2.9 million hectares of land was gazetted, while, 274 (66%) of grazing areas about 1.2 million hectares were ungazetted (Table 1). The importance of these is that about 66% of grazing areas are at risk of encroachment by individual, cooperates entities, farming communities, as such may further precipitate crises between farming clusters and pastoralists. In addition, some states in southern Nigeria with existing grazing reserves have banned open grazing (OG), (Figure 1) with no commensurate commitment to improving husbandry facilities within grazing reserves in their respective states to serve as an impetus for the pastoralist to graze within these grazing areas. These may be the bane of curbing the farmer's herder's crisis in Nigeria. It's worthy of note that there is no federal legislation that supports open grazing in Nigeria, consequently, the state government should constitute pastoralists into cooperative clusters where they can easily access funding from the bank of agriculture or Nigeria incentive-based risk sharing system for agricultural lending (NIRSAL) an arm of the central bank of Nigeria, these entities may provide the necessary funding towards improving the quality of services, facilities within the grazing reserves, such may reduce the risk of encroachment of pastoralist on agricultural farmland in search of lush pastures. Livestock farming is a business and should be treated as such.

## Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

## Authors' contributions

Dr Okoli SC wrote this manuscript Dr Onaga read the manuscript and made valuable contributions. The authors have read and agreed to the final manuscript.

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## Table and figure

**Table 1:** status of grazing reserves in Nigeria

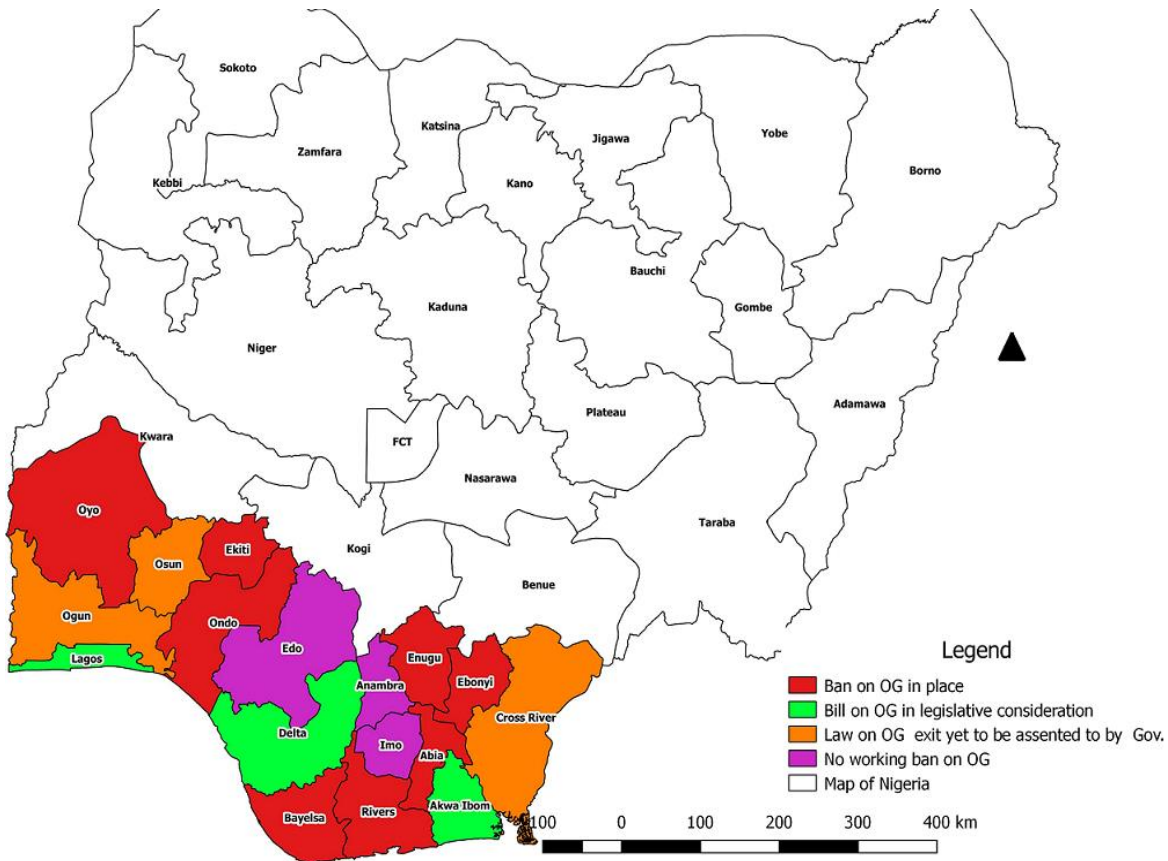
**Figure 1:** map of Nigeria showing status of the anti-grazing ban in Nigeria's Southern states as at September 2, 2021

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**Table 1:** status of grazing reserves in Nigeria

State	N° of grazing reserves (GR)	Total size (Ha)	N° of GR gazetted	Size of GR gazetted (Ha)	N° of GR ungazetted	Size of GR ungazetted
Adamawa	69	195432	31	122143	38	73289
Bauchi	42	244487	27	230285	15	14202
Benue	10	28000	0	0	10	28000
Borno	56	446583	15	108799	41	37784
Gombe	23	221378	4	152857	19	68521
Jigawa	2	135552	2	135552	0	0
Kaduna	7	129112	2	84612	5	44500
Katsina	1	122000	1	122000	0	0
Kebbi	24	822378	1	557000	23	265378
Kogi	5	20775	1	7620	4	13155
Kwara	17	147340	1	21156	16	126184
Nasarawa	7	128000	7	128000	0	0
Niger	18	104308	2	44302	16	60006
Ogun	1	61000	0	0	1	61000
Oyo	2	13440	2	13440	0	0
Plateau	8	132000	1	74000	7	58000
Sokoto	15	88783	8	65883	7	22900
Taraba	39	137800	9	110400	30	27400
Yobe	28	263202	17	92334	11	170868
Zamfara	37	969600	6	830044	31	139556
FCT	4	33485	4	33485	0	0
Total	415	4,444,655	141	2,933,912	274	1,210,743



**Figure 1:** map of Nigeria showing status of the anti-grazing ban in Nigeria’s Southern states as at September 2, 2021