

## Effect of Banditry on Agricultural production and Food Security in Katsina State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Banditry has become one of the most severe forms of insecurity confronting Nigeria's North-West geopolitical zone over the past decade. Its persistence has disrupted socioeconomic activities, particularly food production and availability in Katsina State. This study examines the impact of banditry on food security and evaluates recent government efforts to mitigate its effects and enhance agricultural resilience. A qualitative research design was adopted, using Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) as primary data sources. Three groups, each consisting of five participants, were selected from three Local Government Areas (LGAs) most affected by banditry: Jibia, Batsari, and Kankara. The data were analyzed thematically to capture participants' insights on the relationship between banditry and food security. Findings reveal that banditry has severely undermined food security through the killing and kidnapping of farmers, forced displacement, land seizure, cattle rustling, destruction of grain reserves, and blockade of rural trade routes. Although both federal and state governments have implemented various interventions to curb banditry and restore agricultural activities, these measures remain inadequate and have not achieved the desired outcomes. The study concludes that sustainable food security in Katsina State cannot be attained without addressing the root causes of banditry. It recommends decisive, coordinated, and community-driven actions, including improved community policing, deployment of trained security personnel, rehabilitation of displaced farmers, provision of agricultural incentives, and strengthening of local governance to enhance rural security and restore farmers' livelihoods.*

**Keywords:** Banditry, Food Security, Insecurity, Katsina State

## 1. Introduction

In Nigeria's North-West geopolitical zone, the phenomenon of armed banditry has escalated significantly over the past decade, posing a serious threat to rural livelihoods and agricultural production. In the five states most affected (Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto, and Kebbi), the activities of bandit groups have expanded beyond cattle rustling and kidnapping to include attacks on farmers, destruction of farmlands, and disruption of rural markets (Ladan & Matawalli, 2020). According to recent study by Lamidi (2025), in Northwestern states more than 58,000 hectares of farmland were reported abandoned by farmers due to insecurity tied to banditry. Reports show that farmers in high-risk areas pay large sums as levies or ransom to access their farmlands or avoid abduction. In a survey of about 3,000 community members in north-west Nigeria by Umar (2025), 82 % of respondents identified food insecurity as a major concern, while 70 % cited banditry as a principal problem in their locality.

Food security is a multidimensional concept encompassing the availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability of food systems (FAO, 2019). When rural households are displaced, their farms are abandoned or destroyed, and market routes blocked, all four pillars of food security are severely compromised. Insecurity disrupts food availability by reducing agricultural output, limits accessibility through increased prices and restricted movement, undermines utilization by reducing dietary diversity, and weakens stability by creating uncertainty in food supply chains. For instance, research by Nwankpa (2024) and Eze et al. (2025) indicates that the upsurge in banditry across Northwestern Nigeria has led to a substantial decline in food production, significant hikes in staple food prices, and heightened vulnerability among rural households. This underscores the interconnected nature of insecurity and food systems, where persistent violence directly translates into widespread hunger and economic distress.

Katsina State, located in Nigeria's North-West geopolitical zone, is predominantly agrarian, with over 70 percent of its population depending directly on farming for their livelihoods (NBS, 2023). The state is a major producer of staple crops such as millet, sorghum, maize, and groundnuts, contributing significantly to national food supply. However, the escalation of banditry in recent years has disrupted these agricultural activities, displacing thousands of farmers and leading to

widespread food shortages (Ladan & Matawalli, 2020). Reports indicate that large expanses of farmlands in local government areas such as Jibia, Batsari, and Kankara have been abandoned due to persistent attacks and fear of kidnapping (Lamidi, 2025). Consequently, Katsina State has witnessed a decline in food output, loss of income, and an increase in rural poverty, all of which threaten food security and community resilience in the region.

Given this context, this study examines the impact of banditry on food security in Katsina State and assesses both governmental and community-driven efforts aimed at restoring security and strengthening agricultural resilience. The research is particularly timely and relevant, as ensuring food security in Katsina State and, by extension, across Nigeria's North-West region depends largely on addressing persistent rural insecurity. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: following this introduction is the literature review, which presents the conceptual framework, theoretical foundation, and empirical linkages between banditry and food security, while also identifying gaps in the existing literature specific to Katsina State. The third section outlines the methodology adopted for the study, the fourth presents and discusses the research findings, and the final section offers the conclusion and policy recommendations.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

**Banditry and Insecurity:** Banditry refers to the organized use of violence by armed groups to steal, kidnap, or extort resources from communities, particularly in rural areas where state presence is weak (Adewuyi & Musa, 2021). In Nigeria's North-West region, banditry has evolved from isolated acts of cattle rustling to a widespread security crisis involving large-scale attacks, displacement, and destruction of livelihoods (Ibrahim & Okoli, 2021). These violent activities have disrupted agricultural productivity, reduced rural incomes, and triggered large-scale internal displacement (UNIDIR, 2024).

**Food Security:** Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2019). It is built on four key pillars — availability, accessibility,

utilization, and stability. Insecurity in rural areas affects each of these dimensions: food availability declines due to loss of farmlands and livestock; accessibility is constrained by rising prices and limited market activity; utilization weakens due to poor nutrition and disrupted supply chains; and stability is undermined by persistent uncertainty and displacement (Nwankpa, 2024; Eze et al., 2025).

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on two interrelated theoretical perspectives — the Human Security Theory and the Food Security Framework.

**Human Security Theory:** The Human Security concept, as introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994), extends the notion of security beyond military threats to include freedom from fear, want, and deprivation. It posits that individuals are secure only when their basic needs — including food, health, and safety — are guaranteed. Applying this theory, banditry represents a direct threat to human security by depriving communities of livelihoods and food access (Akinyemi & Bello, 2020). In Katsina State, the inability of rural households to farm safely undermines both human and economic security, leading to widespread vulnerability.

**Food Security Framework:** The FAO's (2019) four-pillar framework — availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability — provides the analytical lens for understanding how banditry affects food systems. Attacks on farmers and destruction of farmlands affect food availability; market disruptions reduce accessibility; loss of livestock and grain reserves affect utilization; and recurring violence destabilizes production and trade. This framework therefore guides the assessment of how insecurity translates into food scarcity and rural poverty.

## **2.3 Empirical Review**

Empirical evidence from Nigeria and other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa consistently shows that insecurity, particularly armed banditry, has devastating effects on agricultural productivity and food security. Studies conducted over the past decade reveal that the escalation of banditry in the

North-West region has displaced thousands of farmers, disrupted supply chains, and reduced food availability across rural communities.

Ogunleye and Yakubu (2020) used a time-series approach to analyze the relationship between insecurity and agricultural performance in Northern Nigeria. Their findings revealed a significant inverse relationship between incidents of violence and agricultural output, emphasizing insecurity as a major obstacle to rural development. In a related field study, Olapeju and Adeniyi (2021) surveyed farming households in Zamfara State and found that persistent bandit attacks forced more than half of the respondents to abandon their farmlands, causing a drastic reduction in staple crop production. Similarly, Adewuyi and Musa (2021) observed that banditry-induced displacement and rural-urban migration in the North-West have led to severe shortages of farm labor and a decline in agricultural productivity.

Ibrahim and Okoli (2021) further examined the spatial spread of armed banditry across Kaduna and Katsina States using GIS data. Their results indicated that repeated attacks on farming communities disrupted land use patterns, restricted market participation, and caused local food scarcity. Complementing this, Abdullahi et al. (2022) employed panel data from six North-Western states and found that a 1% increase in recorded banditry incidents reduced agricultural GDP by about 0.4%, demonstrating the measurable economic cost of insecurity.

At the household level, Bamidele et al. (2022) used a mixed-method approach to analyze the socioeconomic impacts of insecurity on rural livelihoods. They reported significant reductions in farm income and purchasing power, reflecting how insecurity exacerbates food poverty. The FAO (2022) *Global Report on Food Crises* also underscored this pattern, identifying Nigeria's North-West as a hotspot for food insecurity where banditry, insurgency, and displacement collectively account for over one-third of food-insecure households in the country.

More recent works have reinforced these findings. Nwankpa (2024) found that recurrent bandit attacks in Katsina and Zamfara States resulted in substantial harvest losses, post-harvest spoilage, and limited market access. The UNIDIR (2024) report provided corroborating evidence, revealing that over 700,000 people were displaced in the North-West between 2019 and 2023, leading to a

35% reduction in livestock production and widespread hunger. Likewise, Eze, et al. (2025) observed that sustained insecurity disrupted food systems, inflated food prices, and weakened household coping capacities, arguing that achieving SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) is impossible without first addressing insecurity.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that banditry has both direct and indirect impacts on food security through reduced agricultural productivity, loss of livelihood assets, market disruptions, and population displacement. However, despite the growing literature on the insecurity–food security nexus, several gaps remain. First, most existing studies adopt either national or regional perspectives, offering limited insight into the localized effects within Katsina State, one of the most severely affected states in the North-West. Second, previous research has largely relied on quantitative or secondary data, with few incorporating community-based qualitative evidence such as Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) that capture the lived experiences of affected farmers. Third, while government and community responses to banditry have been noted, their effectiveness in restoring food security remains underexplored in existing empirical literature. This study therefore fills these gaps by combining qualitative and field-based evidence from selected Local Government Areas (Jibia, Batsari, and Danmusa) in Katsina State to analyze the multidimensional impacts of banditry on food security and evaluate the ongoing efforts to rebuild agricultural resilience.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopted a qualitative research design to examine the effects of banditry on food security in Katsina State. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth examination of the experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies of individuals and communities directly affected by banditry. It also enables the collection of rich, contextual information beyond what quantitative surveys could capture (Nwankpa, 2024).

### **3.2 Study Area**

The research was conducted in Katsina State, located in Nigeria's North-West geopolitical zone. Katsina shares borders with Kaduna and Kano States to the south and east, Zamfara State to the west, and the Republic of Niger to the north. The state is primarily agrarian, with the majority of its population engaged in farming activities such as millet, sorghum, maize, and groundnut cultivation. However, in recent years, widespread banditry has severely affected farming operations, trade, and livelihoods, particularly in the frontline Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Jibia, Batsari, and Kankara, which form the focus of this study.

### **3.3 Population and Sampling Technique**

The target population of the study comprised farmers, local leaders, agricultural officers, and other community members affected by banditry in the selected LGAs. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify participants with direct experiences or knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. This method was appropriate because it ensured the inclusion of respondents who could provide relevant, detailed, and credible information.

A total of 15 participants were selected for the study. These consisted of three groups of five individuals each drawn from the three LGAs—Jibia, Batsari, and Kankara. Participants included displaced farmers, traditional leaders, vigilante members, and agricultural extension officers who had firsthand experience with the impacts of banditry on agricultural activities and food availability.

### **3.4 Methods of Data Collection**

Primary data were collected through Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD).

- The Key Informant Interviews targeted community leaders, agricultural officers, and local government officials to gain expert insights on how banditry has influenced food security and what measures have been taken to address it.

- The Focus Group Discussions were conducted separately in each of the selected LGAs, consisting of five participants per group. The FGDs explored collective community experiences, perceptions of government interventions, and suggestions for improving rural security and agricultural resilience.

To ensure reliability, all interviews and discussions were conducted in Hausa and later translated into English. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly observed.

### **3.5 Method of Data Analysis**

Data generated from the interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved transcribing the recorded responses, identifying recurring themes, and categorizing the findings based on the key dimensions of food security availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability. The thematic approach facilitated the systematic interpretation of participants' narratives and provided a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between banditry and food security in Katsina State. The analysis was also guided by triangulation to enhance credibility crosschecking information obtained from different sources (e.g., KIIs and FGDs) to ensure consistency and validity of the findings.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

The findings from the Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) conducted in Jibia, Batsari, and Kankara LGAs revealed that banditry has severely undermined food security in Katsina State. The results are presented thematically according to the major issues emerging from participants' responses and are linked to the four dimensions of food security availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability.

### **4.1 Displacement of Farmers and Abandonment of Farmlands**

A dominant theme across all discussions was the mass displacement of farmers due to persistent bandit attacks. Participants reported that fear of abduction, killing, and farm raids forced many to

flee their villages or abandon their farmlands. In Batsari LGA, for instance, community leaders estimated that over 60% of farmlands were left uncultivated during the 2023 planting season. Similar accounts were provided in Jibia and Kankara, where farming communities have been deserted for over two years. This finding aligns with Ibrahim and Okoli (2021) and Nwankpa (2024), who reported that widespread displacement has become one of the most direct channels through which banditry undermines food production. The result underscores that food availability in Katsina State has drastically declined because of the ongoing insecurity.

#### **4.3 Reduction in Agricultural Production and Livestock Loss**

Respondents across all LGAs consistently identified a significant decline in agricultural output. The inability of farmers to access farmland, coupled with the destruction of crops and theft of harvests, has led to lower yields and income losses. Many households also lost livestock through cattle rustling, which further depleted their sources of livelihood and nutrition. As one farmer in Jibia stated during the FGD:

*“We cannot go to the farms anymore. Those who try are attacked or kidnapped. Even our cows and goats are stolen. We now depend on buying food from markets, but prices are too high.”*

This corroborates Abdullahi et al. (2022), who found that banditry significantly reduces agricultural GDP and livestock productivity in Nigeria’s North-West region. The decline in both crop and animal production directly affects food availability and accessibility, pushing many rural households into hunger and poverty.

#### **4.4 Rising Food Prices and Market Disruptions**

The study also found that the closure of major local markets due to insecurity has disrupted food distribution and raised prices. In all three LGAs, participants reported that traders are reluctant to transport food across unsafe routes, leading to scarcity and price hikes. For example, the price of maize was reported to have doubled between 2022 and 2024, while millet and sorghum saw increases of over 70%. These observations are consistent with findings by Olapeju and Adeniyi

(2021) and Eze et al. (2025), who reported that rural insecurity leads to increased food prices, reduced market efficiency, and limited physical access to food. Thus, economic access to food has been severely constrained for most farming households in Katsina State.

#### **4.5 Coping Strategies and Community Responses**

Despite the harsh conditions, communities have developed informal coping mechanisms. These include night farming (working on farms at dawn or dusk to avoid attacks), group farming under local vigilante protection, and reliance on humanitarian aid or food sharing among relatives. However, participants acknowledged that such coping strategies are unsustainable and expose them to continuous risks. This finding is supported by Bamidele et al. (2022), who noted that communities in conflict-prone areas often rely on short-term survival mechanisms rather than sustainable recovery strategies. The study thus reinforces the argument that food security interventions in conflict zones must integrate community-based security and livelihood recovery efforts.

#### **4.6 Government and Institutional Interventions**

Participants across the KIIs acknowledged ongoing governmental efforts, such as the deployment of security forces, establishment of joint security operations, and provision of relief materials to displaced people. Additionally, the Katsina State Government has launched agricultural support programs aimed at supporting affected farmers. However, respondents emphasized that these interventions remain inadequate and poorly coordinated. Insecurity persists in many rural areas, and displaced farmers have yet to return to their lands. According to one agricultural officer in Kankara:

*“Government is trying, but the problem is beyond relief. Without real security in the villages, people cannot go back to the farm.”*

This echoes UNIDIR (2024), which observed that government responses to rural insecurity in the North-West often lack sustainability and coordination. Therefore, while interventions exist, their limited effectiveness continues to hinder the restoration of food system stability in Katsina State

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the impacts of banditry on food security in Katsina State, focusing on three affected Local Government Areas: Jibia, Batsari, and Danmusa. Drawing from Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD), the findings revealed that banditry has gravely disrupted agricultural activities and rural livelihoods. The findings also demonstrate that insecurity has led to mass displacement of farmers, destruction of farmlands and food stores, cattle rustling, kidnapping, and the closure of local markets all of which collectively undermine food availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability. The research established that the continuous attacks by bandits have not only reduced agricultural productivity but also triggered food inflation, heightened rural poverty, and weakened household resilience. Although the federal and state governments have implemented various interventions such as deploying joint security forces and initiating agricultural recovery programmes these measures have produced limited results due to inadequate coordination, weak community involvement, and the persistence of structural drivers of insecurity. Overall, the study concludes that sustainable food security in Katsina State cannot be achieved without addressing the root causes of banditry and strengthening rural governance systems. Effective policy responses must therefore integrate security, socio-economic, and agricultural development strategies. Based on the findings, this study recommends the followings:

- I. **Strengthen Rural Security Frameworks:** The government should deploy well-trained and adequately equipped security personnel to rural communities. Security architecture should prioritize intelligence gathering, surveillance technology, and rapid response systems to prevent attacks before they escalate.
- II. **Promote Community-Based Policing:** Community participation in security management should be institutionalized through local policing structures and the proper regulation of vigilante groups (*Yan Sakai*). This will enhance trust, local intelligence sharing, and early warning mechanisms.
- III. **Rehabilitation and Support for Displaced Farmers:** Displaced persons should be resettled and supported with access to land, credit facilities, seedlings, and farm inputs to enable them to resume agricultural production and restore livelihoods.

- IV. **Reconstruction of Agricultural Infrastructure:** Destroyed silos, markets, and rural roads should be rehabilitated to facilitate the movement and storage of agricultural produce and to restore normal economic activities in affected communities.
- V. **Policy Coordination and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** There is a need for synergy between security agencies, local governments, traditional institutions, and civil society organizations in designing and implementing sustainable security and agricultural development programmes.

## 6. Acknowledgement

The Authors wish to acknowledge the sponsorship of the research by the TETFUND through Institution Based Research Grant.

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