

Original Article

Exploring Effective Means of Farmer-Herder Conflicts Prevention: Insights from the Asante Akim North Municipal, Ghana

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Abstract - Farmer-herder conflicts have been a serious human security problem in Asante Akim North Municipal. This paper explores the strategies for farmer-herder conflict prevention. The study found that if herders stop grazing cattle at night, apply technology such as Remote Sensing, Global Positioning System (GPS), and Google Locations to assist in their movement with the cattle, and farmers stop attacking herders and their cattle, the conflicts would be prevented. The study, however, found that poor internet coverage and lack of access to these technologies may hamper their effective application. Despite this, the study recommends the application of technology in herding to prevent farmer-herder conflicts.

Keywords - Farmer-Herder Conflicts, Prevention, Cattle, Crops, Technology.

1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, one of the areas that has attracted the attention of scholars is the farmer-herder conflicts in Sub-Saharan and East Africa. Apart from the Israeli and Palestine wars, farmer-herder conflicts have perhaps been the longest-running conflicts in the world. The only difference is that these conflicts are sporadic and widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa, involving different people in different geographical areas. The protagonists are usually poor, subsistent farmers and herders who compete to use land and water for their crops and animals. They also use less lethal weapons. The internecine decades of ongoing conflict between the farmers and the herders require a thorough understanding of the fundamentals of mechanisms critical for establishing the tenets and bases for conflict prevention, especially between farmers and the herders. In order to gain a complete understanding of conflict prevention, one needs to have a thorough understanding of conflict prevention fundamentals. Therefore, concrete evidence of the real nature of farmer-herder conflict prevention is crucial to contain the menace. In Sub-Saharan Africa, farmer-herder conflicts have received a lot more attention in the media, in policy forums, and in scholarly literature in recent times. Concerns about the phenomenon's apparent scope, rapidity, and connection to Islamist violence are shared internationally. The phenomenon is a critical problem which has its roots decades back and creates animosity and competition for scarce resources [1]. An expeditious Google Scholar search for papers containing the term "farmer(s)-herder(s) conflict" produced 998 results for the years 2020–2022 and 430 in

2023, and by July 2024, it was 162. Most of these are linked to environmental security in Africa [1].

2. Farmer-Herder Conflicts and Research Gaps in Preventing the Conflicts

The scholarly discourse on farmer-herder conflicts in Ghana, for instance, is heavily skewed towards the causes [2;3 and 4] and challenges and the constellation of conflict actors and their influence on agropastoral policies in Ghana [5 and 6]. There are also few studies on stereotyping and stigmatizing the Fulbe, usually the herders [7]. The study of [8] prominently featured the unsuccessful measures taken by the state to contain the conflicts. Earlier studies by [9] talked about the state's attempts to contain the situation by embarking on the expulsion of herders from Ghana. Other research findings featured the attempts by the government to prevent the conflicts by constructing Cattle ranches [10 and 11]. Similarly, [12 and 13] also provide a detailed account of the failure of government policy to resolve the conflict in Agogo and how the local people protested against the herders' menace and reprimanded the traditional authorities for selling lands to them. Even court actions were taken against the herders amidst spontaneous protests on the streets of Agogo to register their displeasure at the menace caused by the herders [14]. Elsewhere in Africa, [15] narrates the public protest by the Aghem women in the Northwest Province of Cameroon, which resulted in widespread violence against the Fulani in December 1980. Similar community actions against the herders' menaces are reported in Tanzania [16].



In Nigeria, numerous studies on farmer-herder conflicts highlight the causes of the conflicts and the actions taken by the local people [17]. In Burkina Faso, [18] describes how a young Karaboro man gunned down a FulBe herder and his cattle degenerated into a war between the Karaboro and the FulBe. Contrary to the situation in Cameroon and Burkina Faso, in Ethiopia, [1] report that a women's group formed the Oromia Pastoralist Association (OPA) to advocate for peace after having lost family members and experienced great insecurity and theft of their livestock over the years, as a result of farmer-herder conflicts. The frequent recourse to violence against the herders by local people and non-state actors points to the failure or lack of confidence in the government's effort to contain the situation. From the above discussions, it is obvious that while there are a lot of empirical studies on farmer-herder conflicts, few studies have been done to examine effective ways to deal with the situation. Social science researchers seem to neglect to explore realistic ways to prevent farmer-herder conflicts. This paper seeks to focus on exploring effective ways to contain farmer-herder conflicts in Ghana, with deep insights from stakeholders in the Asante Akim North Municipality, one of the hotbeds of farmer-herder conflicts.

2.1. Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study:

1. What should the herders do to prevent farmer-herder conflicts? (Avoid night grazing? Use specified routes to grazing land? Use adults to herd cattle? Avoid cutting down economic trees to feed cattle? Must not take farm belongings in the farms? Avoid using cattle to pollute water sources for humans? Avoid of bush burning? Should cattle be headed all year round? And should herders pay for crops destroyed by cattle?)
2. To what extent can the adoption of appropriate technologies by herders prevent farmer-herder conflicts?
3. What can government and local authorities do to prevent farmer-herder conflicts? (Prevent strangers from herding? Expel herders from the area? Should not shield herders who destroy crops from paying compensation?)
4. What should the local people/crop farmers do to prevent the conflict? (avoid attacks on herders? Avoid killing cattle for causing crop damage and avoid stigmatizing herders? Should farmers pay for killing or wounding cattle? To what extent can stereotyping of herders prevent conflict?).

3. Conceptualizing Conflict Prevention Theory and Actors

Conflict prevention is undoubtedly not a new concept. It has its roots way back to 1814–1815, following the Congress of Vienna, which established neutral states and demilitarized zones, among other policies and practices, to prevent future wars. Indeed, Chapters VI and VII of the UN charter provide a broad range of coercive and non-coercive instruments designed to ensure that violent conflicts do not start or

continue. One of the main tenets of the UN system since its establishment is the desire to avoid conflict- notable secretary generals might be seen as the forerunners of the present emphasis due to the push they provided for this goal [19].

Conflict is a disputed incompatibility between two parties who compete over the use of scarce resources, particularly over land, water, minerals, power, and material or immaterial [20]. In this case, the conflict between the farmers and the herders is always over access to scarce fertile land for farming and grazing [19]. Conflict, in itself, is a necessary evil in every society. It is a necessary evil in a fast-growing and dynamic society. It only becomes a challenge when the parties involved resort to violent means to get their needs. Therefore, "conflict resolution requires not only the reduction of the use of violence but, above all, the dissolution of the underlying incompatibility so that the conflict cannot erupt again in the future" [19].

One of the strategies for preventing parties in conflict from fighting is to make it impossible for them to fight by discouraging, preventing, and disarming them from using force. Researchers keenly debate conflict prevention itself as to which stage prevention should come in. The questions as to whether prevention should come before the outbreak of the conflict (primary prevention), prevention before the violent outbreak, or during the conflict (secondary prevention), containing the conflict before it grows in space and intensity or after the conflict (tertiary prevention) the last phase is the consequences of violent conflict to be able to prevent the repeat and resurgence of violence in the future.

In the case of preventing farmer-herder conflicts, the primary prevention model is suitable since prevention would not leave any bad memory or scald on anybody's mind or body. Farmer-herder conflicts are largely occasioned by nonadherence to the rules of the game. For instance, grazing at night, using minors to herd large numbers of cattle, using cattle to pollute water sources for humans, cutting down economic trees to feed cattle, and leading cattle to crop farms are preventable if parties involved can adhere strictly to the rules of the game. How to ensure effective farmer-herder conflict prevention: A two-way Practical Approach Here, we highlight two broad ways of ensuring effective conflict prevention between farmers and herders.

These two are direct and structural prevention. Direct prevention, also referred to as operational or light prevention [19], seeks to provide a prompt response to an impending situation. Then, from a relatively short-term viewpoint, the goal of prevention is quite narrow and focuses on reducing violence between recognized players. The following are some examples of practical strategies that can be used in direct prevention: observation, fact-finding, mediation, negotiation, and confidence-building [19]. Concerning the prevention of farmer-herder conflicts, the direct prevention strategies are:

avoid using cattle to pollute water bodies used by humans, engage in all year round heading of cattle, desist from night grazing, use adults for heading, desist from killing cattle for causing damage to crops, do not attack herders for leading cattle in farms, and herders must also desist from cutting down economic trees to feed cattle. The second broader strategy is structural (or deep) prevention. The goal of structural prevention is not only to lessen violence but also to address its underlying causes and the circumstances that gave rise to it [21].

Examples of these include avoiding stereotyping and stigmatizing herders as thieves, criminals, and name calling; authorities such as chiefs, police, and political figures should not shield herders who destroy crops; herders should desist from stealing farmers' belongings and foodstuff from the farms, and farmers should also be made to pay for killing or wounding cattle. Ultimately, to prevent farmer-herder conflicts, a multifaceted strategy is required. This requires the inclusion of political, social, and economic aspects of structural prevention. These aspects include the involvement of stakeholders such as chiefs, land owners, cattle owners, cattle traders, the Municipal Assembly, the police, the youth groups, and thriving civil society and good governance. To prevent resource conflicts, it is also important to promote the sustainable use of natural resources [19].

4. The Study Area

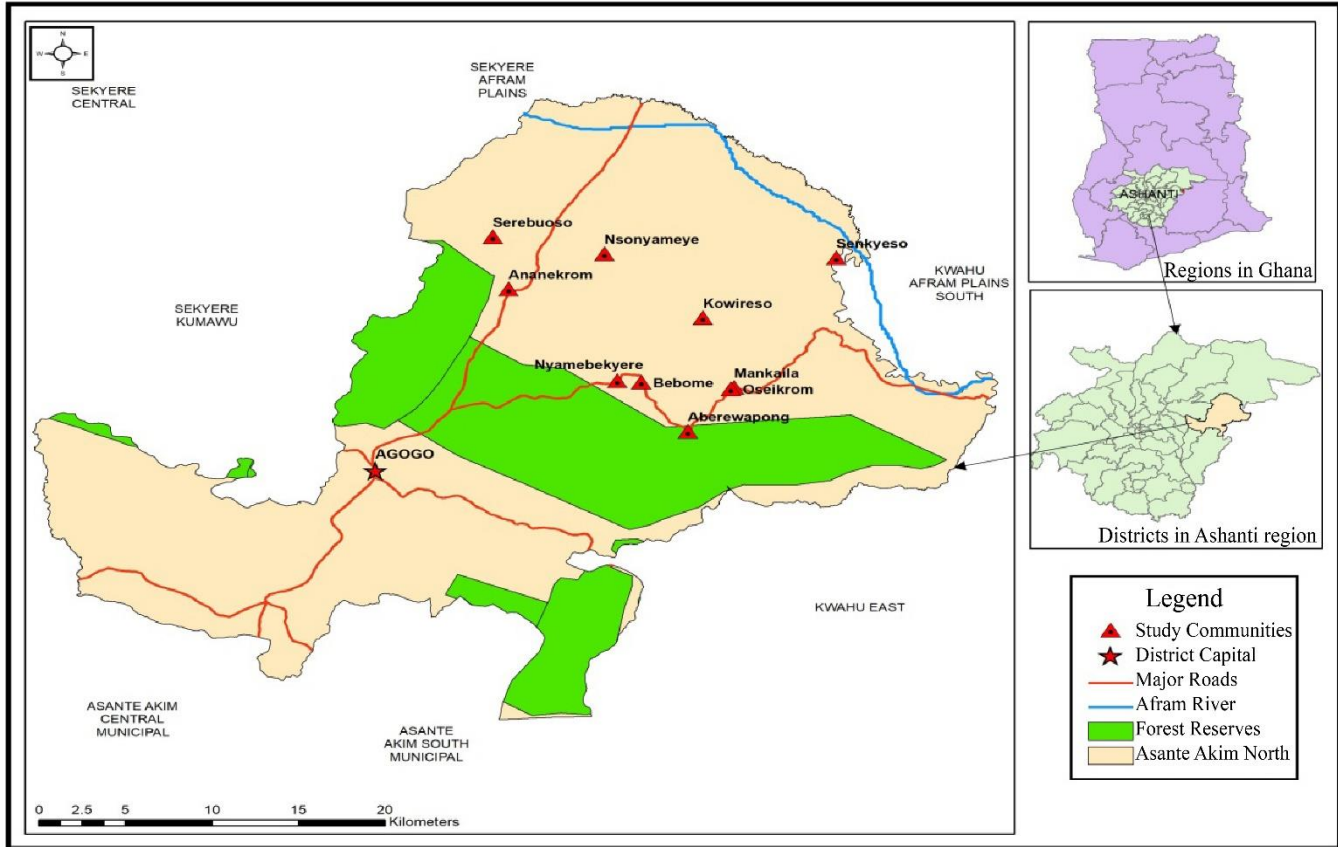
The Asante Akim North Municipal is located between latitudes 6° 30' North and 7° 30' North and longitudes 0° 15' West and 1° 20' West, in the eastern part of the Ashanti Region. It covers approximately 1,126 square kilometers and constitutes about 4.6% of the region's 24,389 square kilometer of land area. Sekyere Kumawu and Sekyere Afram Plains border it in the north, Sekyere East in the west, Asante Akim South and Asante Akim Central in the south and Kwahu East in the east. The population stood at 85,788, comprising 42,000 males and 34,788 females. The municipality is predominantly rural, with the majority of the population residing in three towns: Agogo, Hweddiem and Juansa [22].

The Asante Akim North Municipal was originally part of Asante Akim Central (Konongo, now the capital) until June 2012, when it was carved out by the Legislative Instrument (LI) 2057 [23]. It is one of the forty-three (43) MMDAs in the Ashanti Region, and its capital is Agogo. It became a municipal in 2020 by (L.I.2421). Politically, the municipal is divided into twenty-two (22) electoral areas: one Urban Council, – Agogo-Hweddiem, and two Area Councils, Owerriaman and Amantenaman. Altogether, the municipality has one constituency and one Member of parliament. The Municipal Chief Executive is the political head, while Agogohene is the paramount chief of the area.



Source: AANM, 2023.

Fig. 1 Map of asante akim north in regional context



Source: Yeaboah, et al, 2024

Fig. 2 Map of the study area: asante akim north municipal

5. Research Methodology

5.1. Data Collection and Analysis

This study is mainly applied research and focuses on five communities in the Asante Akin North Municipal. The communities are Brahabebome, Mankala, Nyamebekyere, and Kowereso. The statistical population for this study was farmers, herders, and key stakeholders such as Chiefs, Landowners, Cattle owners, the Police, Asante Akim North Municipal Assembly (AANMA), Cattle traders, and butchers. The categories of people are directly and indirectly affected by the conflict. However, thirty-seven (37) people in all were selected as research samples, and questionnaires were distributed to them at random. For those who could not read and write, the same questionnaires were used as interview guides to pick their responses. In each community, we randomly sampled four farmers, thus giving us 20 farmers in all. Because the herders are scattered in the bush, we managed to get 10 of them who were willing to participate in the study. They interviewed using the questionnaire as a guide.

The other key stakeholders were selected based on convenience and their willingness to participate in the study. The data were coded, cleaned, and analyzed using SPSS version 27. Cronbach's alpha was used to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data. Since the sample size was less than 50, it was prudent to use the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapier-Wilk tests.

6. Results and Discussion

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, we used Cronbach's alpha. The number of items on the questionnaire was 18, and we obtained Cronbach's alpha value of 0.8, which is a good level.

Table 1 above shows the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapier-Wilk test results. The data do not have a normal distribution because the P-value or significance level is less than 0.05. For this reason, non-parametric tests are applied to analyze the data.

Table 1. Kolmogorov Smirnov-Shampirolek test

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	statistic	Df	Sig.	statistic	Df	Sig.
Avoiding night grazing	.291	37	.000	.868	37	.003
Using appropriate technologies to herd	.313	37	.000	.842	37	.001
Using specified routes to grazing land	.244	37	.000	.736	37	.000

Using at least two adults to herd more than 50 cattle	.241	37	.891	.008	37	.001
Preventing strangers from herding	.226	37	.001	.878	37	.004
Expel herders from the area	.384	37	.000	.686	37	.001
Avoid cutting down economic trees to feed cattle	.221	37	.002	.894	37	.003
Authorities should not shield herders who destroy crops	.442	37	.000	.566	37	.002
Stealing farm produce and other belongings on the farms	.268	37	.000	.850	37	.001
Avoid using cattle to pollute water bodies used by humans	.246	37	.000	.891	37	.008
Avoidance of bush burning	.314	37	.00	.842	37	.000
To what extent can attacks on herders lead to conflicts?	.229	37	.001	.834	37	.000
Avoid killing cattle for causing crop damage	.244	37	.000	.736	37	.001
Can stigmatizing herders lead to conflicts?	.441	37	.000	.566	37	.003
Herders should pay for crops destroyed by cattle	.214	37	.003	.881	37	.005
Should farmers pay to kill or wound cattle?	.229	37	.001	.843	37	.007
To what extent can stereotyping of herders prevent conflict?	.255	37	.000	.776	37	.000
Cattle should be headed all year round	.313	37	.000	.842	37	.001

Table 2. One-sample t-test

Responder	Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Farmers	Avoiding night grazing	20	3.35	.813	.182
	Using appropriate technologies to herd	20	3.0500	.93330	.2086
	Using specified routes to grazing land	20	2.6000	1.1876	.12200
	Using at least two adults to herd more than 50 cattle	20	1.9500	.82548	.18460
	Preventing strangers from herding	20	2.2500	.85070	.19022
	Expel herders from the area	20	2.8000	1.00526	.22478
	Avoid cutting down economic trees to feed cattle	20	2.5677	1.17882	.26554
	Authorities should not shield herders who destroy crops	20	3.0080	.90034	.22862
	Stealing farm produce and other belongings on the farms	20	2.0983	1.0233	.11233
	Avoid using cattle to pollute water bodies used by humans	20	2.2033	.11234	.23849
	Avoidance of bush burning	20	1.1356	1.4564	.23433
	To what extent can attacks on herders lead to conflicts?	20	2.7889	.78893	.13044
	Avoid killing cattle for causing crop damage	20	2.0588	.57780	.11452
	Can stigmatizing herders lead to conflicts?	20	2.1844	1.48933	.23004
	Herders should pay for crops destroyed by cattle	20	2.8000	5.1299	.26778
	Should farmers pay to kill or wound cattle?	20	2.0010	1.0000	.36776
To what extent can stereotyping of herders prevent conflict?	20	1.2993	1.9384	.28474	
Cattle should be headed all year round	20	1.4849	1.0773	.10929	
Herders	Avoiding night grazing	10	2.7000	.47899	1.8332
	Using appropriate technologies to herd	10	3.0838	.93343	.19021
	Using specified routes to grazing land	10	1.3488	.40030	.10230
	Using at least two adults to herd more than 50 cattle	10	2.9330	.83773	.23830
	Preventing strangers from herding	10	3.2844	1.3309	.18933
	Expel herders from the area	10	1.8993	.98830	.13001
	Avoid cutting down economic trees to feed cattle	10	2.3883	.10938	.13830
	Authorities should not shield herders who destroy crops	10	2.4894	.78389	.19949
	Stealing farm produce and other belongings on the farms	10	1.02302	.89383	.23849

	Avoid using cattle to pollute water bodies used by humans	10	1.12993	.90200	.23400
	Avoidance of bush burning	10	2.73738	.93034	.28449
	To what extent can attacks on herders lead to conflicts?	10	3.00490	1.3834	.19332
	Avoid killing cattle for causing crop damage	10	3.13004	.93032	.15373
	Can stigmatizing herders lead to conflicts?	10	2.5001	.89002	.12833
	Herders should pay for crops destroyed by cattle	10	1.9500	.8226	.182
	Should farmers pay to kill or wound cattle?	10	1.425	.8299	.823
	To what extent can stereotyping of herders prevent conflict?	10	2.7939	.4733	.13302
	Cattle should be headed all year round	10	3.0000	.1233	.23322
<p>Key stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chiefs • Land owners • Cattle owners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police • AANM • Cattle traders • Butchers 	Avoiding night grazing	7	3.1002	1.3494	.42720
	Using appropriate technologies to herd	7	1.2333	1.0033	.30044
	Using specified routes to grazing land	7	3.1000	.18484	.11233
	Using at least two adults to herd more than 50 cattle	7	2.8000	1.3977	.30644
	Preventing strangers from herding	7	2.2875	1.2566	.45262
	Expel herders from the area	7	2.2877	1.2568	.45627
	Avoid cutting down economic trees to feed cattle	7	2.2857	.75593	.28571
	Authorities should not shield herders who destroy crops	7	1.86	1.076	.407
	Stealing farm produce and other belongings on the farms	7	2.5714	.78680	.29738
	Avoid using cattle to pollute water bodies used by humans	7	2.0000	1.10000	.37797
	Avoidance of bush burning	7	1.8714	.69007	.46065
	To what extent can attacks on herders lead to conflicts?	7	2.2893	.98833	.37829
	Avoid killing cattle for causing crop damage	7	2.1456	1.08222	.38083
	Can stigmatizing herders lead to conflicts?	7	3.0000	1.15263	.43782
	Herders should pay for crops destroyed by cattle	7	2.0228	.14882	.36555
	Should farmers pay for killing or wounding cattle?	7	3.0230	1.15470	.4378
	To what extent can stereotyping of herders prevent conflict?	7	2.5722	.95672	.35673
	Cattle should be headed all year round	7	3.0002	1.41442	4.4522

Source: Fieldwork

The results of a sample t-test are depicted in Table 2. Of the 37 respondents, 20 were farmers, 10 were herders, and 7 were key stakeholders. Concerning the farmers, the mean score for avoiding night grazing is 3.35, while for preventing strangers from herding and heading, all year-round scores are 3.2844 and 3.2849, respectively, according to the herders. On the part of the stakeholders, the highest mean scores are 3.1002 and 3.1000 for avoiding night grazing and using specified routes to grazing land, respectively. The average value of the following conflict prevention strategies is for the farmers; the average value for using specified routes is 3.0500. At the same time, 3.0080 was the mean score for authorities should not to shield herders who destroy crops. Concerning the herders, the average value for avoiding killing cattle for crop destruction is 3.13004, followed by Using appropriate technologies to herd, 3.0838, and attacks on herders is 3.0049, and lastly, herding all year round is 3.00400. With regards to the stakeholders, the average mean score farmers should pay

for killing cattle is 3.0230, followed by herding all year round and, finally, stigmatizing herders, 3.0000. The lowest average means score for the farmer is 1.1356, and that is for the avoidance of bush burning; for the herders, the lowest score was stealing farm produce and other belongings of framers (1.02302), while the lowest average score for the stakeholders was (1.2333), using specified routes.

7. Discussion

The study's findings show little disagreement among stakeholders, farmers, and herders, with minimal divergence of opinions. Preventing farmer-herder conflicts in Africa is a thorny issue that defies many preventive measures. In Ghana, the various measures since the late 1980s include using the military and the police to embark on forceful eviction, as in Operation Cowled, Operation Foofo, and Operation Cowdang [24]. The use of legal means such as the court ruling in Kumasi against the herdsmen in Agogo [25], youth protests against the

menace of the herdsmen in Agogo [13], the construction of cattle ranches to curb the menaces, and even the brutal killings of herdsmen in Gushiegu District and Yendi Municipal in the northern region [26] are a few examples of some of the measures to deal with the farmer-herder conflicts in Ghana. All these measures fall short of addressing the situation. Acts of violence, particularly planned and coordinated attacks or actions that heighten feelings of injustice for one or both parties, acts that distance the parties from one another, obstructing the possibility of communication and negotiation, and redefining the nature of the conflict or the identity of the conflicting groups in terms more broadly, moving the scale up from a single incident to abstract causes and objectives, or from individuals to larger networks (based on kinship or ethnicity, for example) are examples of contingent drivers [1]. Prevention of farmer-herder conflict is an urgent necessity because its continuous manifestations could fester and transmogrify its form into xenophobia and ethnic cleansing. Already, the phenomenon has started showing its ugly head in the form of ethnic stereotyping and distancing as prevailing in the Asante Akim North Municipality, where the Fulani herdsmen have been declared *personae non gratae* [6 and 13].

8. Conclusion

Although conflict is regarded as a necessary evil in a fast-growing and dynamic society, its prevention is quintessential for peace and development. More importantly, preventing farmer-herder conflicts in Ghana could promote agriculture, especially crop production and livestock rearing. The general public views it as a necessary investment toward achieving goals like harmony and social equality. Preventing farmer-herder conflicts is essential in light of ongoing societal changes and technological advancements. Enhancing the importance and effectiveness of farmer-herder conflict prevention has long been a focus of social science researchers. It is crucial to encourage the use of appropriate conflict

prevention strategies not only in Asante Akim North Municipality but also throughout Ghana.

Moreover, it is critical that herders continuously remain knowledgeable about the terrain or the locality where they herd the cattle to be able to navigate and meander through farms and water bodies that they may trample upon. Herders can leverage technology and use devices such as remote sensing machines to locate grazing lands distance from farmlands. Herders can also use the Global Positioning System (GPS) and Google Locations to direct their movement with the cattle to avoid leading cattle into crop farms. The difficulties include the lack of knowledge in the use of the technologies, poor internet coverage, inappropriate mobile devices, herding a larger number of cattle by one or two people, attacking and killing cattle, and lack of knowledge of the field.

9. Recommendations

To ensure the effective prevention of farmer-herder conflicts in the Asante Akim North Municipal, it is essential to consider the following factors:

- Herding must be done only in the daytime involving mature herders who are familiar with the locality.
- Herders can apply technology such as remote sensing devices, Global Positioning System (GPS), and Google Locations to direct their movement with the cattle to avoid leading cattle into crop farms.
- Farmers must avoid attacking herders or their cattle but refer them to the appropriate authorities for sanctions.

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