

## Approaches and Fault Lines in Agro-Pastoral Conflict Prevention and Resolution in the Bamenda Grasslands of Cameroon since Independence

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**Abstract:** The independent republic of Cameroon at her very inception was faced with many interwoven problems one of them being that of ethnic diversity for which national policy was designed to attain national integration and national unity. Among the numerous inter-ethnic glitches was that of conflicts between the Fulani minority and the indigenous people of the Bamenda grassfields which largely took the form of agro-pastoral conflicts. In an effort to curb such frictions for the purpose of enhancing agricultural productivity and national cohesion, policy makers introduced conflict resolution and prevention strategies. This paper from a critical historical perspective assesses the different exertions made towards resolution and prevention of conflicts between both groups. It argues that the reforms introduced by state authorities met numerous challenges from both sides of the divide. While ascertaining that these challenges were a result of mistrust from the different groups who saw the reforms as bias, the paper intimates that there were also lapses in the formulation and implementation of the well-intended policies. As a result of these, the tensions between the Fulani and indigenous people of the Bamenda grassfields have persisted.

**Keywords:** Authority, Conflict, Farmer-Grazier, Law.

### INTRODUCTION

Identity differences have often been at the center of conflicts and when these take such economic dimensions as those between the Fulani graziers and the indigenous farmers, competition for economic resources become a cause for conflicts.

In such instances, and upon identification of the existence of factors that could enhance conflicts, state authorities develop strategies to avert such encounters as well as resolve them when they occur. It is within this context that the state of Cameroon having observed that relations between farmers and graziers in some parts of the Bamenda Grasslands were conflict dominated established different approaches towards checking such conflicts. This divergence in the Bamenda grasslands devolved from the fact that the different indigenous ethnic groups that make up the Bamenda grasslands were settled in the area in ca 1800. They are generally of Tikar, Widikum, Ngemba, Chamba and supposedly Munchi [<sup>1</sup>] background and are known to have fought against other groups for land security; a process out of which each of the groups established ethnic boundaries with its neighbours either

forcefully or diplomatically [1] In the 1920s, the nomadic Fulani migrated into the area which was then under British colonial administration. These new arrivals set the basis for socio-economic and political diversity in the different communities of the area as the latter identity settled side-by-side the previous identity. Consequently, a conflicting relationship soon developed over modes of life and economic determinants (which were predominantly but not exclusively land) emanating from the desire of each of the ethnic groups to hold land. Considering that land was a fixed factor of production either for crop or animal farming as well as the increasing population, continuing immigration skyrocketed land demands, making land conflicts for grazing and crop cultivation a common description of Fulani-indigenous relations provoked by environmental and human circumstances [2].

<sup>1</sup> Much writing on the Aghem who are host of the Menchum divisional Headquarter (Wum) in the Bamenda grassfields of Cameroon attest that the Aghem of Wum are of Munchi origin. However, recent debates on the historicity of Aghem give some doubtful link with the Munchi. Munchi to the questioning thesis was only one of the places where the Aghem stopped in the course of their migration.

This has attracted a lot of focus on the study of relations between the graziers (predominantly Fulani) and farmers (predominantly indigenous people) of the Bamenda Grasslands of Cameroon. In the light of the foregoing, Ngwoh [3], Suliya [4], Nebasina [5], Nchia [6], and Mark and Aniuska [7] have focussed on the farmer-grazier conflict which is a major characteristic of relations between both groups. In a general manner,

the authors view this persistent rift as typically of an economic background. In line with this, Mark and Aniuska [7] have concentrated their work on the changes in both farming and grazing systems and land tenure which according to them are central to the aggravation of farmer-herder goal discordancy and inter-community friction. They argue that European bias against nomadism and the common property land tenure system, practiced by the indigenous people was at the root cause of farmers' encroachment into pastoral fields. This implies that traditional land tenure as well as the European styled land tenure system did not favour nomadic practices. As a result, nomads found themselves in a difficult position of securing pasturage for their cattle and consequently were tempted to invade farm lands thereby paving the way for conflicts.

To Nebasina [5], this was worsened by the unwillingness of the stake holders to implement the decisions (land reforms) as proposed by the technical staff or land management experts. Implicitly, the authorities charged with the responsibility for ensuring an enabling environment to incorporate both farmers and herders were either not willing or incapable of handling the responsibilities bestowed on them thereby enhancing the tensed atmosphere that existed between the two groups. In support to this, Ngwoh [3] adds that the implementation of land reforms were made further complex by the tedious process of land acquisition and according to him, this encouraged trespassing by both farmers and herders. Epo [8], Sulyi [4] and Nchia [6] justify the farmer-grazier conflict as being a consequence of an increment in the population of cattle and humans. According to them, early relations between farmers and graziers were peaceful. However, the growing population enhanced trespassing which tore both groups apart. The failure to implement objective measures to ease tension when it arose was consequent to its protracted nature.

While acknowledging that the encounter between the Fulani and the indigenous people in Menchum Division was an ethnic encounter, characterised by diversity, often associated to conflicts, Ami-Nyoh [9] opines that relations between both groups were characteristic of economic interdependency, which occurred differently at different levels and can be a useful tool in enforcing reciprocity. According to him, cordial relations between the two groups were economically beneficial to both parties at community and individual levels. It was on the bases of the important nature of this relations that the authorities of independent Cameroon saw need to enhance cordiality between both groups. On account of the forgoing, this paper resituates the bases of farmer-grazier conflicts to examine why exertions made by administrative authorities to preclude as well as resolve conflicts between farmers and graziers did not attain set goals.

### **Bases of Agro-pastoral Conflicts in the Bamenda Grasslands**

Conflicts over land for farming and grazing were basically a consequence of physical or human factors or both. As far as the physical factors were concerned, climate as well as the relief of the Bamenda Grasslands attracted Fulani settlement in the area. The topography of the area is generally bumpy with steep hills disjointed by tapered valleys which are averagely between 2500m to 5000m wide. The soils of the slopes are very thin and highly leached. This was, and is a problem to both farmers and graziers, considering that, graziers who were known to inhabit the hills descended to the lowland areas, by and large occupied by farmers, to carry out their grazing activities for better pasture and to reduce cattle accidents [10] Though this was a common practice in the dry season, it resulted in the destruction of farmers' cereals such as cassava, cocoa yams and potatoes, thereby triggering economic friction. The insignificant nature of the valleys (lowland areas) guaranteed serious competition between cattle herders and the indigenous crop cultivators over land. This competition at times led to ferocious clashes between herders and crop cultivators, with the latter considering the former as alien invaders and demanding the liberation of their land.

Moreover, climatic variation was another problem posing issue in Agro-pastoral relations. The entire Bamenda Grasslands of Cameroon has two main seasons; the dry and the rainy seasons. As a result of the practice of transhumance and shifting cultivation, graziers who depended on the rains for pasture regeneration and farmers who depended on the rains for planting their crops were bound to clash over the small pieces of land in the valleys that were often punctuated by streams. This apart, the raffia palms grew around some of these valleys and with their fibrous roots drew up water from the soils which kept the nearby lands wet throughout the year. It was around these wet areas that women (particularly in Aghem) planted their vegetable for dry season consumption. When cattle grazed from the hills for water, they trampled on the crops and destroyed them. This often resulted to conflicts after inadequate compensation or none at all [2].

In terms of human and economic factors, poverty, population increase and archaic farming methods were all influential in the occasional uncordial relations between farmers and graziers [11]. In the light of this, the income levels and living standards of most of the people of the locality were low making it difficult and even impossible for them to employ security measures such as barbed wire and paddocks that could help avoid trespassing. Population increase was caused by migration of people especially the advent of the Fulani which coincided with the introduction of new medical knowledge brought about by colonization that increased life span [12]. Also, the attitude of herdsmen

further aggravated the situation; they abandoned their flock of cattle, letting it stray into peoples' farms [4].

This opposing relationship that developed between farmers and graziers of the area was observed by British authorities and different attempts were made to encourage cordiality by introducing conflict preventive measures which however met with mistrust as each group considered British administrative efforts as a ploy to cede land to the opposing camp. In the light of the foregoing, different colonial administrators made efforts at different times to contribute towards an affable relation between graziers and crop cultivators in the British Southern Cameroons. In the course of these struggles, the British introduced policies such as; the Land Demarcation Scheme, the Fulani Development and Welfare Scheme (FDWS), Cattle Control Rules, the British Livestock Mission Settlement Scheme for the Fulani and the Barbed Wire Scheme in succession which however did not give dividend [13]. He expresses this failure in two dimensions; the first being on the part of the authority and the other on the part of the parties in conflict. In this light, he establishes that the failure of the different policies was a result of grid, shortage of staff, short sightedness as well as the use of exclusivist policies on the part of the British administrative authorities. On the other hand, gross disrespect of policy on the part of both the Fulani and the indigenous peoples, fears of being usurped by the British to the vantage of the Fulani and conservatism on the part of the indigenous people were all justifications for the failure of the British to guarantee peaceful co-existence between the ethnically and economically diverse people. It was this failure that carried over the problem to the independence era [2].

At independence and reunification in 1961, the articulation of preventive measures continued as many processes such as urbanization, demographic pressure and increased influence of the global market economy continued decreasing available pasture land while increasing competition for natural resources throughout the national territory. One of such increasing land problems was that opposing the farmers and graziers. In an effort to ensure farmer-grazier co-habitation, the independent government introduced laws that among other related issues were aimed at bridging the gap between both groups. This paper therefore uses the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon to examine the extent to which reforms and administrative policies were capable of reducing the gap between farmers and graziers at independence. In the light of the forgoing, it

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<sup>2</sup> For details on British efforts read; H. Ami-Nyoh, "Strategies and Pitfalls of Agro-Pastoral Conflicts Prevention in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon under British Administration", *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, No. 3, Vol. 4A, 2015, pp. 825-832.

addresses the effect of the 1963 farmer-grazier law, the 1974 Land Ordinances and related ministerial decisions to establish that this reform processes rather provoked one group against the other and at some instances against state authorities on grounds that the policies were ploys to grant favours to one group against the other.

### **The application of the 1963 farmer-grazier law and fault lines**

At independence, it was observed that the colonial efforts made towards the enhancement of farmer-grazier co-habitation had been a failure. It was in the light of this that the Farmer-Grazier Law of October 3, 1963 was enacted. According to this law, the cattle inspector was charged with the responsibility of determining land to be allocated for farming or grazing. He was also responsible for making demarcation lines between grazing and farming land as he considered appropriate [14]. This law fell short of being a solution to the strained relations between the cultivators and graziers in the entire Bamenda Grasslands. Similar to the problem faced by the 1947 demarcation scheme, the implementation of the 1963 law had as major setback; the problem of shortage of personnel to man the livestock regulatory sector. This was made worst by the fact that the available staff in the area was not very conversant with the magnitude of the situation, considering that other issues such as the search for national integration and integrity seemed more imperative in the early post-colonial days than was the problem between farmers and graziers [14].

Apart from the problem of shortage of staff, another weakness emanated from the fact that the farmer-herder conflict was envisaged from a single perspective: trespassing and crop damage. Thus within a very short time other complex problems emerged. One of these was that among graziers who were each struggling to monopolize one portion of land or the other. This competition was brought about by the fact that some graziers had been uprooted from their occupied areas by encroaching farmers and were looking for new areas on which to graze. Under these circumstances, the already settled graziers feared the danger of competition over grazing land which could work to their own detriment and consequently, were unwilling to allow the new comers to settle.

The 1963 dispensation did not envisage the settlement of 'wondering' graziers. Little consideration was given to the fact that the Fulani who at this time dominated the cattle economy were in continuous migration with many more immigrating into the Bamenda Grasslands than they were emigrating. This made the task even more problematic for the already insufficient staff. Thus the law of 1963 was preventive as it did not put in place means of settling farmer-grazier disputes whenever they occurred. The law limited itself to avoiding the occurrence of conflict.

With the problem of inadequate staff to ensure the effective exploitation of grazing areas for grazing and vice versa, immigrating graziers settled in discordance with the law thereby occasioning conflicts which the law had not provided solutions for and did not empower the available staff to handle. As a matter of fact, considering that there were already such conflicts throughout the Bamenda Grasslands and especially in the Menchum and Nkambe areas prior to the introduction of the reform, it can be argued that the 1963 law simply ignored the need to settle the conflicts that were already ongoing.

Another weakness of the law was related to the fact that there was no consideration of the impact of the traditional land tenure system on the effective implementation of the law. To this regard, traditional states and their citizens continued to see the land as theirs and therefore did not hesitate to resist any grazier encroachment regardless of its respect for the new status quo. Such resistance on the part of the indigenous crop farmers was usually demonstrated in the form of encroachment in grazing areas that exposed crops to cattle damage. When this occurred, relations between farmers and graziers were further strained. As soon as it was identified that the problem of land tenure impeded on the successful implementation of the 1963 law, the Land Tenure Law of 1974 was introduced.

#### **Implementation of the 1974 Land Ordinance and emanating pitfalls**

The 1974 Land Ordinance extended state ownership over all unoccupied land. The rights of the traditional rulers to lease out land was transferred to the state which was in this way exercised by the Land Consultative Board as stipulated by Decree No 76-166 of April 27, 1976. This board was to be appointed by the prefect to represent a district or sub-division. The passing of the 1976 decree with the establishment of its functional institutions gave the impression that state authorities would be able to better handle the problem of land conflicts such as those between farmers and graziers. Before the application of the decree, educational tours were undertaken by the administrative bodies to educate the population on the meaning of the new ordinance. Crop farmers interpreted the land laws as a calculated attempt by the government to expropriate their land. It was so thought that once expropriated, the government would turn around and lease the land out to the Fulani. As such they were unwilling to abide by this new dispensation.

In accordance with the terms of the 1974 ordinance which necessitated texts of application, Decree No 78-263 of July 3, 1978 was signed. It established the terms and conditions for settling farmer-grazier conflicts which was a prerequisite for the enhancement of farmer-grazier co-habitation. The decree introduced an institution known as the Farmer-Grazier Commission (FGC) whose jurisdiction was a

division appointed by the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) of each division.

According to Article 2 of the decree, the FGC was charged with the responsibility of organising land use in the rural areas for agriculture and grazing in accordance with the needs of the inhabitants and other development projects. It was also responsible for defining the methods of using land for mixed farming. To achieve this, the FGC was called upon to take into cognizance the climatic conditions of the area or the cycle of crop cultivation for the alternate use of the same piece of land by farmers and graziers [15]. The Commission was also charged with the settlement of related disputes. For its success, the decree also ruled that boundaries between grazing and farming lands should take into account natural features. Where there were no such features, the decree stated that surveyors were to use suitable beacons, supplied by the farmers and the graziers concerned. Such beacons were to be planted at a distance of 100metres from each other. In grazing areas, the decree reiterated that herds of cattle must be accompanied by herdsmen.

This decree was aimed at striking a compromise between farmers as well as graziers needs. According to Fon and Ndamba [15], the decree on the basis of this “is a good piece of legislation if properly implemented by all but because of corrupt government officials, the law is implemented by local government officials to the advantage of the highest giver of bribe.” The issue of bribery and corruption was therefore one of the flaws suffered by the decree.

According to the Aghem for instance, the decree reduced the rights of the Aghem people including their *ba’ahum* (chiefs) to beggars of what was by right theirs. They considered the decree as a draft; aimed at handing over Aghem leadership to strangers. As such the weakness of this decree according to the Aghem example did not depend on the fact that there was no land, neither was land mismanaged, rather, their concentration was on the issue of ethnic difference wherein the advent of the Fulani was seen to be gradually reducing their rights over land which they saw as theirs. Within this context, the decree was seen as government wish against the indigenous people of the Bamenda Grassfields. The latter thus got determined to disrespect any part of the decree in as much as it did not guarantee the success of their practice of shifting cultivation.

This was further compounded by the fact that the prerogative of land leasing in the area was transferred from the traditional rulers with the mandate of their subjects to the FGC. These traditional rulers, consequent to the decree, had to obtain farming land for their women through applications to the commission. Considering the power of land in traditional African chieftaincy, the power to govern the villages apparently



got transferred from the fons to the FGC. As such, conservatives saw no reason to negotiate as they judged the decree not based on the destructive nature of cattle but on the fact that, Fulani presence had resulted in the destruction of traditional authority. Therefore, indigenous farmers as well as their local leadership found reason to be furious as a result of the decree. Also, the fact that the chairmanship of the FGC was in the hands of the SDOs who were appointed and reappointed made the problem difficult to resolve as in most cases there was little time for them to get into the past histories of some of the conflicts that usually re-occurred.

The decree was also subject to the problem of proper application. In a good number of instances, the application of the decree suffered some pitfalls. These fault lines were largely a result of inadequate interpretation and consequently understanding of the decree by those charged with its implementation. For instance, there was a common situation of absenteeism of members of the commission in sessions concerned with land allocation. For selfish reasons, individuals preferred to go for dispute settlement alone. Others gave lame excuses to absent from the commission in times of need and sent very low level staff to represent their services. These staff was frequently accused of rather fanning the conflicts between graziers and farmers. In a correspondence to the SDO of Menchum in 1997 for instance, chief Ngha Ezagha Sa'akwo of Magha, Wum noted; "you should take note that your collaborators seem to like creating farmer-grazier conflicts for their selfish interest" [16]. There was also the tendency of some authorities rising above the FGC. In some cases in Menchum division for instance; like that between the Tumasangs and Alhadji Ngouni, successive SDOs in Menchum Division took upon themselves to go against the decisions of the FGC. In this case, the SDO after a visit to the disputed area by the Commission and the conclusion that one of the parties (Alhadji Ngouni) would have to be resettled, the SDO is alleged to have unilaterally went ahead to order that the forces of the National Gendarmerie, Wum, forcefully evict the Tumasangs from these farm land [17]. It is difficult to disconnect this from the problem of bribery and corruption discussed by [15].

The decree also fell short of being sufficiently discrete as a solution to the problem of conflicts between farmers and graziers. The cases of farmer-grazier conflicts in each division were so many to be handled by one FGC although the SDO who was the chairperson of the commission reserved the prerogative to establish sub-commissions at sub-divisional levels, headed by the DOs. This was because the SDO to whom the chairmanship of the commission was conferred had other multifarious functions. This was however compounded by the extensive nature of the subdivisions characterised by poor road network that connected administrative centers and their dependent

village communities. For instance prior to 1992 when Menchum Valley and Fungom Sub-divisions were carved out of Wum Central Subdivision the DO of the then Wum Central Sub-division had jurisdiction over about forty-five [<sup>3</sup>] independent villages with seven arborates. The effect of this was overloading of the DO. Consequently cases reported to the commission accumulated at the detriment of farmers who needed quick solutions in a situation of crop damages by either cattle or goats. The failure to give quick solutions usually resulted in skirmishes and at times open confrontations.

The problem of overloading is justified by the fact that from July 12 – 16, 1993 for instance, the Farmer-Grazier Commission for Menchum handled thirty-three different farmer-grazier disputes in Aghem, Bafmeng, Kuk, Nyos and Zhoa, (see Table-1 below for cases in Aghem ). Of the nineteen areas visited in Aghem, four were to be revisited and one of the cases was left undetermined [18]. This is indicative of the commission's regularity in the execution of their functions as mediators in the agro-pastoral problem due to time constrain. As a result victims of one form of trespassing or the other continued to accumulate their grievances until they could no longer continue to wait for the commission and resorted to violence. A case in point was the violent conflicts observed in Aghem in 1980/81.

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<sup>3</sup>This figure considers the Aghem Federation of chiefdoms with over 20 chieftains as a single village. For details on the organization of the Aghem Federation of Chiefdoms read: H. Ami-Nyoh, "Politics of Fragmentation in the Aghem Federation of Cheifdoms ca. 1800-2003: A Historical Investigation", Ph.D Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I, 2012.

**Table-1: Settlement of Agro-pastoral Disputes in Aghem July 12-16, 1993**

Grazier	Farmer	Remark or Compensation in FCFA
Adamu Bafanji	Michael Abok	25 000
Malam Yaro	Anthony Achung	34 000
Mallam Babori	Lucia Sih Beng Kung	No Compensation
Vincent Tem	Achuo Nang Ewi Martin	7 300
Adamu Kainjo	Etung Lucy and 7 others	98 000
Aghem Christopher	Nsen Agnes	48 300
Ndongoma	Esi Jua Paulina and 2 others	50 000
Sale Bi Aliu	Fuh Simon Kumata	Not yet determined
Sali Mama Umaro	Chief Gregory Fombui and 4 others	88 714
Bobemman	Ex-coporal Mbeng Nji	No Compensation
Bibah	Chu Moses	50 000
Alhadji Amoh	PrudenciaKah	10 371
Alhadji Amoh	Christina Mbong	13 400
Agem Christopher	JustinaNsen	31 143
Patrick Ewi	Anna Ekei	To Pay 2 000
Alhadji Ngale	Mathias Meh	Area re-inspected with no compensation
Alhadji Bira	Head Teacher G.S Upkwa	Case withdrawn
Sali Bi Aliu	Augustine Kum Njua	30 000
Danji	Monica Beh and 11 others	50 000

**Source: DAW, E28/09/Vol. 1, Farmer-Grazier, 1994, p. 8-76**

To overcome the problem of time constrain and overloading, Article eight of the 1978 decree had provided that whenever the chairman of the commission received a complaint, a sub-commission had to be appointed to investigate into the case. The appointment of members of the sub-commission was the prerogative of the DO and at least four of its members had to be chosen from among members of the main commission. The problem here was the constitution of such sub-commission that was often short of competence as most departments to be represented sent ill-experienced staff to represent them. Suliy [4] opines that the major setback to the idea of sub-commissions laid on the fact that these commissions had little or no knowledge of the official evaluation table as stipulated by the decree of 1978. This was because they were not agricultural experts. The consequence was arbitrary determination of compensation rates which usually left the victims of crop damage unsatisfied. Such dissatisfaction is what usually pushed the victims of crop damages into violence. These ill constituted commissions placed the Cattle Control Officers, whose responsibility was that of technical assistance to the commission, in a difficult position of having to undertake on-the-spot settlement of dispute. This made things even worst as parties to disputes did not take the decisions of the sub-commissions seriously. As a result of this, most cases were redirected to the main commission where they kept pilling. This time wasting could not breed the necessary peace as it nursed doubts in the minds of the affected parties and consequently provoked open confrontations and violent demonstrations. Time and resources spend on confrontations of this nature hampered the attainment of both individual and state agricultural aspirations.

Sub-commissions were also faced with the problem of time wasting. Article eight of the decree stipulated that after investigation, the sub-commission had to send its reports to the president of the main commission who had the responsibility of bringing the matter for hearing in a subsequent sitting of the main commission. This procedure was long and so time consuming that parties to the dispute lost confidence in the commission, circumstances which in some cases forced especially farmers (who were often victims of crop damage) to take the law into their own hands which was consequent to marring peacemaking efforts.

Financial difficulties also plagued the FGC and plunged it into mal-functioning. According to article three of the 1978 decree, credits for the functioning of the commission had to be inserted annually in the budget of the Department of Lands, but the line for this purpose has never been introduced in the budget of the Department of lands. To solve this problem, parties in the dispute were often asked to bear the burden of investigation. Considering that farmers in this area live by hand to mouth, financial constraints scared the farmers from taking their cases to the authorities for fear of being required to pay huge and unaffordable amounts (sometimes even above the value of the damaged crops). There were many instances wherein only one party in the conflict was financially capable to make his/her financial contribution at the given moment and the commission's decision was often made in favour of such a person. For this reason, some farmers tend to maiming of cattle in revenge of the destruction of their crops. Such acts had controversial repercussions on agricultural attainments in the Bamenda grassfields.

**The Establishment of Compensation Rates in 1981 in the resolution of conflicts**

In the light of disagreement caused by unsatisfactory compensation, a ministerial Decision No 58/MINAGRI of August 13, 1981 was signed. The

order outlined the compensation rates for crops damaged by goats, cows, pigs etc. These rates covered items ranging from annual to perennial crops (see Table-2).

**Table-2: Compensation Rates for Crop Damages**

Type of Crops	Age	Rate of compensation
Leguminous plants and cereals	Young	30Frs/m <sup>2</sup>
	Adult	50Frs/m <sup>2</sup>
Plantain	Young	350Frs/foot
	Adult	600Frs/foot
Banana	Young	200Frs/foot
	Adult	350Frs/foot
Tuber crops (yams, cocoyams, potatoesetc)	Young	50Frs/foot
	Adult	80Frs/foot
Tobacco	Young	30Frs/foot
	Adult	50Frs /foot
Sugar cane	Young	25Frs /foot
	Adult	40Frs /foot
Citrus fruits	Young	1250Frs/foot
	Adult	3500Frs/foot
Coffee	Less than five years	600Frs/foot
	Between 8 and 15 years	1500Frs/foot
	25 years and more	1200Frs/foot

Source: M.U. Bessong, “Protracted Farmer-Grazer Conflicts, Rural Land Use and Resistances in Cameroon Grasslands”, *Africa files*, November 4, 2004, p. 20.

In spite of the fact that the 1981 Ministerial Decision came to alleviate arbitrary evaluation of crop damages, it did not go without inadequacies. The first of these inadequacies laid on the fact that the circular did not consider that the people of the Bamenda Grassfields practiced a system of crop cultivation by which many crops were cultivated in association [19]. As a result, in case of crop damage, the problem of whether to evaluate crops collectively or individually arose. Collective evaluation had its pitfalls since the different crops had varying compensation rates. The tendency was that the members of the commission commonly opted to ignore the presence of some of the crops in the farm and considered only those they regarded to be of greater significance. In some cases however, the compensation rate for one of the crops was used to evaluate all the crops in the said farm. In this case, it was difficult to have an effective consideration of the scientific calculation of space between crops. In each of the cases, the crop cultivator remained unsatisfied and on the basis of this, saw the entire team as being bias. Such feelings further widened the gap between crop cultivators and pastoralists.

Another problem faced by the decision laid on the fact that the agricultural system in the area depend largely on the ownership of multiple small farm holdings located in different places, with many small farmers coming together in a common area. This made it very difficult to have exact measurements of the farm area damaged by cattle per farmer. Moreover, the

circular assumed that the crops were evenly distributed on a given piece of land as its modes of calculations depended on technical agricultural prescriptions which were not practiced in the area. It ignored the fact that in places like the Bamenda grassfields, the ridge and furrow method of farming was still common and therefore allocation for furrows which were never planted needed to be improvised. The absence of this provision exposed the graziers to cheating as the absence of crops in the furrows was often ignored during evaluation. Added to this, compensation was only based on crops destroyed without taking into consideration the effect of soil deterioration caused by cattle hoofs [4].

The costing of the crops damaged was yet another problem that left the farmers unsatisfied. This was because prices were calculated at local market level without any consideration for farmers who would prefer to take their produce to urban markets; a practice that is common among some peasant farmers. They could as well store the crops until prices were favourable but against this, the decision made the prices static. According to Nebasina, the compensation rates were generally dissatisfactory; this in part, made the farmers to continue to complain even after receiving compensation[5]. He exemplifies his argument with a compensation case obtained in Bui Division. According to this example, a crop farm of 1352sqm comprising beans (estimated at five kerosene tins at the time of harvest), three farm beds planted with vegetable, Irish

potatoes (estimated at six Kerosene tins at the time of harvest), few beds of pumpkins, 23 stems of Cassava and 49 stems of Coffee seedlings was compensated at 5,000 (five thousand francs) [5]. From this example, compensation received after crop destruction was not proportionate to the quantity of food crops expected from the farm. The amount paid as compensation could not satisfy the family for even a week whereas the estimated harvest could do for even a month in an area where large families, dependence and symbiotic live styles are intimately tied up.

## CONCLUSION

The paper has examined efforts made by the government of independent Cameroon to prevent and resolve conflicts between farmers and graziers. It makes exploit of decrees, ministerial circular and prefectural orders to establish the snares in the state efforts to prevent as well as resolve agro-pastoral conflicts. According to this, lapses in the state agenda and processes to conflict prevention and resolution were generally exploited by the parties involved in the conflict to violate the law either independently or in collaboration with those who were entrusted with the task to ensure its success. The paper asserts that failure to acknowledge ethnic differences between farmers and cattle breeders had a serious impediment on the varying attempts made at preventing as well as resolving agro-pastoral conflicts. Moreover, very little was done to control the Cattle-land ratio and therefore the problem of overgrazing remained on attended to. While this is so glaring, there is the question of leadership of the commission that was in the hands of administrative officials who were subject to being appointed and reappointed or even service transfer that was a serious impediment. In this regard, the paper observes that the local rulers would rather have been empowered to render this service since they were more permanent. Within such a context, and especially where the chiefs and *Ardo'en* were made to work together the resolution of conflicts would have heavily depended on the historical facts while making exploit of administrators for coordination to ensure respect and application of procedures. Such strategy if applied would have generally reduced mistrust that very often was the root cause of apathy put up against policy by both farmers and graziers. This failure, hindered the attainment of state objective to enhance cohabitation between graziers and farmers and therefore flawed the greater attainment of agricultural outcomes in the rural and semi-urban areas of Cameroon in general and the Bamenda grassfields in particular.

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