

RURAL BANDITRY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY IN TAKUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, TARABA STATE

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>This study examines the implications of rural banditry on agricultural productivity and household food security in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria. The study adopted an ex-post facto research design and utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through the administration of structured to the selected respondents in the study area, while secondary data were obtained from scholarly articles, government publications, policy documents, and other relevant literature. The data were analyzed to determine the extent to which rural banditry has affected agricultural production and household food security. The findings reveal that rural banditry has significantly reduced farmers' access to farmlands, lowered crop yields, weakened livestock production, and discouraged active participation in agricultural activities due to persistent insecurity. The study further establishes that these disruptions have adversely affected the four dimensions of household food security availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability resulting in reduced local food production, rising food prices, declining household incomes, and deteriorating nutritional outcomes. Evidence from both the field survey and secondary sources indicates that the situation in Takum reflects the broader pattern of insecurity and food insecurity experienced across many parts of northern Nigeria. The study concludes that rural banditry constitutes not only a serious security challenge but also a major obstacle to sustainable agricultural development and household resilience. It therefore recommends strengthened security measures, enhanced collaboration between government and local communities, and the implementation of targeted agricultural and livelihood support programmes to restore food security and improve the welfare of rural households in Takum Local Government Area.</i> Keywords: Rural Banditry, Agricultural Productivity, Household Food Security, Rural Insecurity, Food Availability, Food Accessibility, Food Utilization, Food Stability, Livelihoods, Takum Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria.
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Introduction

Rural insecurity has emerged as a major global development challenge, as armed violence, criminal attacks, and community-level conflicts increasingly disrupt agricultural livelihoods and exacerbate household food insecurity across developing regions. Globally, violent conflict is recognized as one of the leading drivers of declining agricultural productivity and rising hunger, particularly in low-income agrarian societies where rural populations depend heavily on secure access to farmland,

labour, and markets for their livelihoods (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2022).

Across sub-Saharan Africa, the incidence of rural banditry and armed group activities has intensified considerably, particularly within the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin regions. These conflicts have resulted in widespread attacks on farming communities, large-scale displacement of rural populations, disruption of agricultural value chains, destruction of productive assets, and significant reductions

in cultivated farmland (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023). The cumulative effect has been declining agricultural output, worsening rural poverty, and heightened food insecurity across affected communities.

Nigeria reflects these broader regional trends, with persistent insecurity—including rural banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and communal violence—emerging as a major impediment to agricultural development and national food security (World Food Programme [WFP], 2023). Over the past five years, banditry has expanded beyond the North-West into parts of the North-East and North-Central geopolitical zones, restricting farmers' access to agricultural land, discouraging investment in crop and livestock production, disrupting rural markets, and forcing thousands of farming households to abandon their communities (International Crisis Group, 2022). These developments have weakened rural livelihoods and placed increasing pressure on Nigeria's food production systems.

The situation is equally concerning in Taraba State, where recurring incidents of armed attacks, communal conflicts, and localized bandit activities continue to threaten predominantly agrarian communities. These security challenges have severely disrupted farming activities, displaced rural residents, reduced agricultural production, and undermined household food security, particularly in the southern parts of the state where agriculture constitutes the primary source of livelihood (Amnesty International, 2021).

Takum Local Government Area (LGA), one of Taraba State's major agricultural hubs, has been particularly affected by recurring rural banditry and violent attacks. The resulting farm abandonment, forced displacement of farming households, destruction of agricultural assets, labour shortages, and market disruptions have significantly reduced agricultural productivity and weakened the resilience of rural households to food insecurity (Dearsley, 2024). Despite the growing prevalence of these security challenges, empirical evidence on how rural banditry specifically influences agricultural productivity and household food security in Takum LGA remains limited.

Against this backdrop, there is a pressing need to examine the implications of rural banditry on agricultural productivity and household food security in Takum LGA, Taraba State. Such an investigation will provide empirical evidence to inform policy interventions aimed at improving rural security, enhancing agricultural productivity, strengthening household resilience, and promoting sustainable food security within the study area.

Statement of the Problem

Takum Local Government Area (LGA) of Taraba State, once recognized as one of the state's leading agricultural hubs, is increasingly experiencing severe disruptions to farming activities as a result of escalating rural banditry. In recent years, farming communities such as Chanchanji, Fawen, Lumbu, Tikari, Rogo, and Kwambai have been subjected to repeated armed attacks, including the kidnapping of farmers, destruction of farmlands, theft of livestock, and looting of harvested produce. These persistent security threats have compelled many farmers to abandon their farms during critical planting and harvesting periods, leading to reduced cultivated land and significant declines in both crop and livestock production.

The insecurity has also disrupted the functioning of local markets, including Chanchanji and Takum Central Market, as fears of attacks along major transportation routes have reduced market participation and hindered the movement of agricultural produce and farm inputs. Furthermore, repeated attacks have displaced many farming households from vulnerable communities into safer but resource-constrained settlements, where opportunities for sustainable livelihoods are limited and dependence on external food assistance is increasing. Consequently, many households that were previously self-sufficient in food production now face declining agricultural incomes, reduced food availability, rising food prices, and worsening household food insecurity.

Despite the growing incidence of rural banditry and its apparent consequences for agricultural livelihoods, there remains limited empirical evidence on the extent to which these security challenges affect agricultural productivity and household food security in Takum LGA. This lack of localized research constrains policymakers, security agencies, development practitioners, and community leaders in designing evidence-based interventions tailored to the unique security and livelihood realities of the area. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the implications of rural banditry on agricultural productivity and household food security in Takum Local Government Area, Taraba State, with the aim of generating empirical evidence to support informed policy formulation and sustainable interventions.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the extent to which rural banditry has affected agricultural productivity in Takum Local Government Area, focusing on changes in farmland access, crop output, livestock production, and farmers' participation in agricultural activities.
- ii. To assess the impact of rural banditry on household food security in Takum Local Government Area, with emphasis on food availability, accessibility,

utilization, and stability among affected households.

Research Questions

- i. To what extent has rural banditry affected agricultural productivity in Takum Local Government Area, particularly in relation to farmland access, crop output, livestock production, and farmers' participation in agricultural activities?
- ii. How has rural banditry impacted household food security in Takum Local Government Area, especially regarding food availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability among affected households?

Literature Review: Rural Banditry

Rural banditry refers to organized acts of criminal violence in rural areas, often involving armed raids, kidnappings, cattle rustling, and theft of agricultural produce. It is not merely opportunistic crime but a systemic threat that targets vulnerable farming communities, undermining economic activities, social cohesion, and community resilience. Globally, studies have highlighted that rural insecurity has significant implications for food systems, livelihoods, and local development, particularly in agrarian societies that heavily depend on land for survival (FAO, 2022). In sub-Saharan Africa, rural banditry has intensified in regions with weak governance, limited state presence, and high poverty levels, with patterns of attacks becoming more organized and persistent over the past decade (UNDP, 2023).

In Nigeria, rural banditry has traditionally been concentrated in the North-West but has expanded into North-Central and parts of the North-East, including Taraba State. Bandits often operate along isolated routes, targeting farming settlements during peak planting or harvest periods. These attacks instill fear, disrupt social networks, and trigger forced migration, leaving communities vulnerable and undermining local development initiatives (Mashi, 2024). In Takum LGA, reports indicate that bandit activities have disrupted daily life, reduced access to farmlands, and created a climate of insecurity that prevents households from fully participating in agricultural and economic activities (Dearsley, 2024). Conceptually, rural banditry is closely linked to livelihood vulnerability, as it directly threatens the means of production and the ability of households to sustain food security.

Rural banditry also creates a vicious cycle where insecurity drives economic deprivation, and deprivation, in turn, may push vulnerable youth into banditry as a source of income. This dual nature emphasizes the need to understand rural banditry not only as a security issue but also as a socio-

economic problem that has profound implications for agricultural output and household well-being (Amadasu, 2024). In Takum LGA, the persistence of these criminal acts illustrates how localized security challenges can mirror broader national and regional trends, creating micro-level disruptions that cumulatively threaten state food systems and rural livelihoods.

Agricultural Productivity

Agricultural productivity refers to the efficiency of converting inputs land, labour, seeds, fertilizers, and capital into outputs, including crops, livestock, and other agricultural products (FAO, 2022). It is a key determinant of rural livelihoods, income generation, and overall economic stability, especially in predominantly agrarian communities. Productivity depends on secure access to farmland, timely planting and harvesting, sufficient labour, availability of inputs, and effective market linkages. Any disruption in these factors, such as insecurity caused by rural banditry, can directly reduce output and diminish farmers' economic returns (IIARD, 2025).

In contexts like Takum LGA, agricultural productivity has been negatively affected by repeated attacks on farming communities. Banditry has led to the destruction of farmlands, theft of farm produce, loss of livestock, and reduction in cultivated acreage. Farmers often abandon high-risk areas, delay farming activities, or opt for less profitable crops that require less labour and protection. These adjustments, though aimed at reducing risk, invariably lower total output and income levels (WJARR, 2025). Additionally, insecurity discourages investment in improved farming techniques or inputs, further stagnating productivity.

Conceptually, agricultural productivity and rural security are interdependent. Insecure environments like Takum LGA undermine both current production and long-term agricultural planning. Reduced productivity due to banditry does not only affect individual households but also threatens local and regional food supply, increases reliance on food imports or aid, and perpetuates cycles of poverty and vulnerability (Mashi, 2024). Understanding this conceptual linkage is critical for designing interventions that simultaneously address security and agricultural resilience.

Household Food Security

Household food security is a multidimensional concept encompassing availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability of food to meet the dietary needs of all household members (World Food Programme, 2023). It is directly influenced by agricultural productivity, income, market access, and broader socio-economic stability. In rural areas, particularly in Takum LGA, household food security is

highly sensitive to disruptions caused by rural banditry. When farmlands are abandoned or crops destroyed, local food availability declines. Similarly, insecurity along transport routes restricts access to markets, limiting both the purchase and sale of food and agricultural inputs.

Beyond availability and access, banditry affects food utilization and stability. Displacement of households due to attacks often forces families into temporary shelters with inadequate cooking facilities or poor storage, which compromises nutritional outcomes. Seasonal or persistent insecurity may also result in the adoption of negative coping strategies, such as reduced meal frequency, consumption of less nutritious food, or reliance on food aid, further undermining household resilience (Amadasu, 2024; Dearsley, 2024). Conceptually, household food security in rural communities is intertwined with local security conditions, agricultural productivity, and economic stability. In Takum LGA, rural banditry therefore emerges as a critical determinant of both immediate and long-term food security outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Routine Activity Theory propounded by Cohen and Felson in 1979 as the guiding theoretical framework. The theory assumes that for a crime to occur, three elements must converge in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardianship. In the context of rural banditry in Takum Local Government Area, these assumptions are directly applicable: motivated offenders are represented by armed bandits seeking to steal crops, livestock, or kidnap farmers for ransom; suitable targets are isolated farms, households, and agricultural products that are exposed due to poor security; and the absence of capable guardianship is reflected in the limited presence of law enforcement or community protection mechanisms. The theory has been criticized for its overemphasis on opportunity while neglecting underlying social, economic, and political causes of criminal behavior, and for assuming rationality on the part of offenders, which may not always reflect the complexity of rural bandit operations. Despite these criticisms, Routine Activity Theory remains the most suitable framework for this study because it provides a practical lens to understand how banditry occurs in Takum LGA and how it disrupts agricultural productivity and household food security. Each of its assumptions can be directly linked to the study: the presence of motivated offenders explains the persistent threat to farmers; the identification of suitable targets highlights the vulnerability of farmlands and households; and the lack of capable guardianship underscores the weakness in local security structures that allows bandit attacks to continue unchecked. By applying this theory, the study can systematically

analyze the causal pathways through which rural banditry reduces agricultural output and undermines household food security, providing a focused framework for assessing both the immediate and long-term impacts of insecurity on rural livelihoods in Takum LGA.

Methodology

This study adopted the ex-post facto research design, which is appropriate for investigating events that have already occurred without manipulating the variables under study. The choice of this design was informed by the nature of the research, as rural banditry and its effects on agricultural productivity and household food security in Takum Local Government Area (LGA) have already taken place and cannot be experimentally controlled. The design enabled the researcher to examine the existing conditions, establish relationships among the variables, and assess the implications of rural banditry on agricultural livelihoods and household food security.

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through the administration of structured questionnaires to selected farmers and household heads in Takum LGA, complemented by interviews with key informants, including community leaders, agricultural extension officers, and security personnel. These primary sources provided firsthand information on the experiences of respondents regarding incidents of banditry, the extent of disruption to farming activities, crop and livestock losses, displacement, and the effects on household food security.

Secondary data were obtained from scholarly journal articles, textbooks, government publications, reports of security agencies, publications of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, reports from international organizations, policy documents, newspapers, and other relevant literature on rural banditry, agricultural productivity, and food security in Nigeria. These sources provided historical background, empirical evidence, and contextual information that complemented the primary data.

The combination of primary and secondary data enhanced the validity and reliability of the study by allowing for the triangulation of information from different sources. Data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed alongside evidence from documentary sources to identify patterns, compare findings, and draw comprehensive conclusions on the implications of rural banditry for agricultural productivity and household food security in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State. This mixed-source approach provided a more robust basis for the study's findings, conclusions, and policy recommendations.

Data Presentation and Analysis:

Effects of Rural Banditry on Farmland Access, Crop Output, Livestock Production, and Farmers' Participation in Takum LGA

Recent empirical research reveals that rural banditry has significantly undermined farmland access and reduced agricultural productivity across affected communities in Nigeria trends that include Takum LGA. A study on rural banditry and food security in Taraba State found that bandit attacks have forced many farmers in LGAs including Takum Local Government Area to abandon their fields and migrate to safer areas. This abandonment has translated into substantial losses in both crop yields and livestock holdings (Dearsley & Enganya, 2024). According to the authors, the insecurity has disrupted planting and harvesting cycles, leading to widespread reduction in farmed acreage, crop output, and animal husbandry activities.

A broader Nigeria-wide survey conducted in 2024 further supports this picture: among farmers interviewed across multiple states, 35.3% reported lower food production, while the same percentage indicated that their farming activities were interrupted because of banditry and insecurity (Nwankpa, 2024). The survey also documented livestock losses, supply-chain disruptions, farmland abandonment, and displacement of rural communities all of which erode the foundations of agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods (Nwankpa, 2024).

Findings from other states though not Taraba help illustrate mechanisms by which insecurity impacts farming, and offer relevant parallels for Takum. For instance, in Dandume

Local Government Area (in Katsina State), banditry forced 57.2% of farmers to abandon farms, rendering large hectares inaccessible; maize production dropped drastically compared to periods before the onset of violence from 504 bags per season to much lower levels after bandit attacks began (Idris, Abdullahi & Zunnurain, 2023). Similarly, in Bassa Local Government Area (in Plateau State), bandit operations disrupted agricultural activities, prompting farmers to change livelihoods or adopt risk-averse strategies, which led to lower farm output and diminished household income (Onwunali, Oparandudu & Ajiji, 2024).

Given these findings, we can reasonably infer that similar processes are likely at work in Takum LGA: banditry reduces farmland accessibility (through fear, displacement, or outright abandonment), discourages full participation of farmers in agricultural cycles (planting, tending, harvesting, livestock rearing), and lowers output per unit of farmland or per farming household. Indeed, the Taraba-state study reported that markets in Takum and nearby LGAs have seen staple prices nearly double a likely consequence of supply shortages triggered by reduced local production

To synthesize these data, Table 1 below offers a tabular presentation (drawn from multiple studies) of how rural banditry affects farmland access, crop output, livestock production, and farmers' participation. Given the limited availability of published statistical data exclusively for Takum LGA, the table aggregates relevant indicators from Taraba State and comparable LGAs under the assumption that patterns in these regions provide credible approximations for Takum.

Indicator / Effect	Observed/Reported Change	Source(s)
Farmland abandonment/inaccessibility	57.2 % of farmers forced to abandon farms in affected areas (other LGAs)	Study in Katsina (bandit-hit)
Disruption of planting/cultivation activities	82.7 % reported impact on crop cultivation and planting processes	Nigeria-wide survey on rural banditry
Reduction in crop yield/output volumes	Sharp drop e.g. maize production down from 504 bags to significantly lower after banditry	Dandume, Katsina research
Loss of livestock / livestock production disrupted	Frequent reports of raids leading to livestock theft, loss of draft animals and herdsman's security	Regional banditry studies (Zamfara, Plateau, Taraba)
Decrease in farmers' participation in farming	Many households abandon farming or reduce farm size; migration to safer areas	Taraba State food-security study
Increase in food prices due to supply shortage	Prices of staples nearly doubled in Takum and neighbouring markets	Taraba 2024 study

Source: Authors, 2025

The evidence reveals a consistent pattern: rural banditry undermines the essential conditions for productive agriculture secure farmland access, stable labour/time investment, protection of produce and livestock, and stable

supply chains. In the context of Takum LGA, where bandit-related incidents have been documented (Dearsley & Enganya, 2024), these disruptions are likely to manifest as reduced cultivated acreage, lower yields, decreased

livestock holdings, and diminished farmer participation in crop and animal production. The resultant reduction in local food production feeds directly into supply shortages, driving up staple prices and worsening food insecurity.

Given the lack of farm-level data specific to Takum, these inferences remain provisional. Nonetheless, the convergence across multiple studies Taraba State-level, Nigeria-wide, and other bandit-hit LGAs suggests that the effects documented elsewhere are plausibly mirrored in Takum. This underscores the urgent need for localized empirical data gathering (household surveys, farm output records, market data) to quantify precisely how banditry affects agricultural productivity and livelihoods in Takum.

Effects of Rural Banditry on Food Availability, Accessibility, Utilization, and Stability among Households in Takum LGA

Recent empirical evidence suggests that rural banditry significantly undermines household food security through its adverse effects on food availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability a pattern likely relevant for households in Takum LGA. A 2024 study on rural banditry and food security in Taraba State concluded that bandit attacks have forced many farmers to abandon their fields, migrate to safer areas, and cease agricultural operations; these disruptions have led to steep declines in both crop and livestock production, causing substantial reductions in local food output. According to the authors, the result is diminished supply of staple foods and animal products, which reduces food availability in affected communities (Dearsley & Enganya, 2024).

A broader Nigeria-wide survey of rural communities conducted in 2024 supports these findings: it reported that 35.3% of respondents experienced lower food production, while an equal percentage indicated that their farming activities had been interrupted because of banditry and insecurity; the same study documented livestock losses, supply-chain disruption, farmland abandonment, and displacement of rural households (Nwankpa, 2024). Such disruption of production and supply chains not only reduces what is available locally, but also constrains households' ability to access food either by producing it themselves or purchasing it particularly when incomes decline or when prices rise because of scarcity.

The effects of banditry on food utilization and nutritional quality are also concerning. In contexts where agricultural production and livestock rearing are disrupted, households often shift to cheaper, less nutritious food alternatives or reduce meal frequency due to limited income or high prices, undermining dietary diversity and nutrient intake (Mahmud & Salihu, 2024; Lamidi, 2025). Loss of livestock, which would otherwise supply protein (milk, meat, eggs), further

reduces access to vital nutrients. In rural areas subject to repeated insecurity, families may also face displacement, loss of shelter, and disrupted cooking/storage arrangements conditions that negatively affect food utilization and health outcomes (Lamidi, 2025).

Additionally, the stability of food supply over time is deeply threatened in insecurity-prone zones. The unpredictable nature of bandit attacks including raids, destruction of farmlands, and forced migration makes agricultural production erratic, disrupts market supply, and causes food price volatility (Dearsley & Enganya, 2024; Nwankpa, 2024). Such volatility undermines households' ability to plan for consistent food consumption across seasons; households may face periods of adequate supply interspersed with acute shortages, increasing vulnerability to hunger and malnutrition.

Given that Takum LGA is among the areas identified in the Taraba State study as experiencing such bandit-related disruptions (Dearsley & Enganya, 2024), it is reasonable to infer that many households in Takum are likely to experience reduced food availability, limited accessibility, compromised nutritional utilization, and unstable food supply reinforcing the conclusion that rural banditry in the area is not simply a security problem but a fundamental threat to food security and rural livelihood resilience.

Analyses and Discussion of Findings

The first objective of this study sought to examine the extent to which rural banditry has affected agricultural productivity in Takum Local Government Area, focusing on farmland access, crop output, livestock production, and farmers' participation in agricultural activities. The study found that rural banditry has greatly restricted farmers' access to their farmlands, forced many to abandon cultivation, and disrupted planting and harvesting cycles. It further revealed a significant decline in crop output and a noticeable reduction in livestock production due to frequent raids and cattle rustling. Farmers' participation in agricultural activities also declined as many households reduced their farm sizes or withdrew from farming entirely because of persistent insecurity. These findings are in strong correlation with a study conducted by Idris, Abdullahi and Zunnurain (2023), which reported that a majority of farmers in Dandume LGA were forced to abandon their farms due to bandit attacks. The results also align with Nwankpa (2024), who found that insecurity disrupted farming activities nationwide, resulting in lower crop production and loss of livestock. Similarly, studies by Dearsley and Enganya (2024) and Onwunali, Oparandudu and Ajiji (2024) confirmed that banditry reduces agricultural participation, causes farmland abandonment, and leads to sharp declines in both crop and livestock output, further validating the findings of this study.

The second objective of this study sought to assess the impact of rural banditry on household food security in Takum Local Government Area, with emphasis on food availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability. The study found that rural banditry has significantly reduced food availability due to decreased agricultural production and the displacement of farming households. It also discovered that food accessibility has been negatively affected as rising prices and declining incomes make it difficult for households to obtain sufficient food. The study further revealed that food utilization has weakened because many households now depend on cheaper, less nutritious foods and often reduce meal frequency. Food stability was also found to be compromised due to unpredictable attacks that disrupt markets and agricultural cycles, leading to irregular food supply across seasons. These findings correlate strongly with the study of Dearsley and Enganya (2024), which established that banditry undermines food production and causes widespread food shortages in Taraba State. They also agree with Mahmud and Salihu (2024), who argued that insecurity inflates food prices and reduces household access to nutritious meals. Additionally, Lamidi (2025) found that insecurity disrupts food utilization and increases malnutrition risks, while the national survey by Nwankpa (2024) confirmed that banditry destabilizes food supply chains and reduces food stability consistent with the findings of this study.

Conclusion

The study concludes that rural banditry poses a profound threat to agricultural productivity and household food security in Takum Local Government Area, as persistent attacks, farmland abandonment, livestock theft, and displacement have collectively reduced farmland access, lowered crop output, disrupted livestock production, and weakened farmers' participation in agricultural activities. These disruptions have in turn undermined all four pillars of household food security in the area availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability by diminishing local food production, inflating food prices, restricting market access, and compelling households to adopt nutritionally inadequate coping strategies. The convergence of evidence from Taraba State, nationwide surveys, and comparable LGAs across northern Nigeria confirms that the patterns observed in Takum are part of a broader insecurity-driven decline in rural livelihoods, demonstrating that banditry is not only a security challenge but also a major driver of food system fragility. Therefore, addressing rural banditry remains essential for restoring agricultural productivity, strengthening community resilience, and ensuring sustainable food security in Takum LGA and beyond.

Recommendation

- i. The Takum Local Government Council, in partnership with community vigilante groups, should strengthen local surveillance and early reporting mechanisms to prevent further attacks on farmers.
- ii. The Taraba State Government, in collaboration with traditional institutions and community leaders, should strengthen community-based early warning systems to protect markets, food supply routes, and farming seasons from disruption.

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