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# Climate Justice and Conflict: Safeguarding Ghana's Food Systems from Agro-Pastoralist Tensions

Prepared by

*Agresearch Lead*  
*(Mohammed Jamaldeen Gariba)*



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# Executive Summary

Climate change is exacerbating already fragile relationships between pastoralists and farmers across West Africa. In Ghana, prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, and the depletion of grazing land have led to intensified competition over natural resources. This has resulted in violent clashes, food insecurity, and social polarization, especially in climate-sensitive regions like West Gonja. This brief explores the climate justice dimensions of these conflicts and calls for inclusive policies, conflict-sensitive programming, and legal recognition of marginalized groups such as Fulani pastoralists.

## Key Issues

### 1. Climate-Induced Resource Competition

Erratic rainfall and desertification have shifted traditional transhumance patterns, pushing herders—especially Fulani pastoralists—into farming communities. This has increased tension over grazing lands, water access, and crop destruction, contributing to recurring intercommunal violence (WANEP, 2022).

### 2. Food Insecurity and Livelihood Disruption

Agro-pastoralist conflicts have a ripple effect on food systems. Once a food basket, West Gonja now experiences diminished agricultural output, with staple commodities like gari becoming scarce. The transition of women from agriculture to charcoal burning to survive reflects a climate-exacerbated economic shift with negative environmental impacts (WANEP, 2023).

### 3. Deepening Social and Ethnic Divides

Conflicts often fuel ethnic profiling, especially against the Fulani. Despite being born in Ghana, many Fulani are denied citizenship, reinforcing narratives of exclusion and limiting access to justice and social services (WANEP, 2023). Compensation for crop loss is often insufficient and marred by local corruption, further deepening resentment.

### 4. Weak Conflict Mediation and Justice Systems

Although institutions like the National Peace Council and NGOs like Oxfam, CRS, and CARE are engaging in community peacebuilding, traditional authorities often pervert justice by exploiting vulnerable pastoralist groups. Existing national responses, such as Operation Cow-Leg, have failed due to violent evictions and lack of conflict-sensitive approaches (WANEP, 2022).

### 5. Lack of Climate-Smart Adaptation Support

Despite awareness of the link between climate change and conflict, climate-smart adaptation programs remain underfunded and disconnected from grassroots realities. Promising efforts like promoting alternative livelihoods (e.g., bee-keeping, integrated agriculture) are not widespread due to insufficient multi-stakeholder collaboration.



# Policy Recommendations

01

## Legal and Civic Inclusion for Marginalized Groups

- Grant national identity to Fulani born in Ghana and ensure access to social services and justice systems.
- Promote anti-discrimination education in schools and through media campaigns.

02

## Invest in Climate-Smart, Conflict-Sensitive Livelihoods

- Scale up programs that combine agriculture, animal husbandry, and renewable energy.
- Support women and youth with training and micro-financing in green livelihoods.

03

## Strengthen Community-Based Mediation

- Provide resources and legal backing to community-based mediation groups involving farmers, herders, traditional leaders, and women.
- Document local peace agreements and promote mutual accountability.

04

## Institutionalize Multi-Stakeholder Coordination

- Establish a national agro-pastoralist task force that includes CSOs, ministries, development partners, and pastoralist associations.
- Align policy actions with Ghana's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and climate adaptation strategies.

05

## Enhance Early Warning and Response Systems

- Expand WANEP's National Early Warning System (NEWS) for proactive conflict prevention.
- Integrate climate data, satellite imagery, and local reporting to forecast tension hotspots.



# Conclusion

Agro-pastoralist conflicts are no longer just about cattle or crops they are about climate justice, inclusion, and peacebuilding. Climate change, if not addressed through equitable and participatory policy measures, will continue to act as a threat multiplier. The time for coordinated action is now.

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CONTACT US >>



Agresearch Lead, Ghana



[www.agresearchlead.org](http://www.agresearchlead.org)



[Info@agresearchlead.org](mailto:Info@agresearchlead.org)

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