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“Solidarity in a competing world —
fair use of resources”

Role of Chiefs in Managing and Resolving Resource Conflicts between Farmers and Pastoralists in Ghana

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Abstract

With increase in the value of land in Agogo-Ghana through commercialisation, commoditisation and expansion in agricultural activities, different resource users are all scouting for resources (land). These actors include local farmers, migrant farmers, Fulani pastoralists, and tree plantation and agro companies. Farmers and pastoralists in particular have engaged in violent conflicts in many parts of Ghana as a result of competition for land resources (farming land, pasture land water) resulting in several deaths, injuries and destruction of farms and killing of cattle. The Agogo area remains the ‘hub’ of these conflicts with more than 50 media reports of violent clashes in the first quarter of 2016 alone. Traditional chiefs and chiefs of Fulani pastoralists have played active roles in preventing, managing and resolving resource conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. Traditional chiefs in particular who are managers of communal resources have power to mediate between conflict parties over the use of resources as well as decide who is allocated resources. Using interviews and focus group discussions, this study examined the role of chiefs in managing violent resource conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in Agogo in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study found that while many farmers and local community members are suspicious of traditional chiefs in their allocation, lease and sale of land and use of resources to pastoralists, farmers and community members nonetheless see traditional chiefs as important in managing conflicts over land disagreements, land allocation and leases and mediating and adjudicating pastoralists’ payment of compensation to farmers for crop destruction. Pastoralists’ chiefs and cattle owners are also seen as crucial in restraining herders organised attacks and also mediating with farmers over the destruction of crops and use of resources such as land for pasture and water bodies.

Keywords: Chiefs and conflict resolution, farmers, Ghana, pastoralists, resource conflicts