

Land Use Conflicts and Rights to Farm in an Urbanizing Environment

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<https://doi.org/10.36263/nijest.2020.01.0150>

ABSTRACT

This study examined agricultural land use conflicts and right to farm in an urbanizing environment. It also examined the implication of urbanization on farming activities. Three sub-urban communities currently undergoing urbanization were selected for the study. Primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data were obtained through the use of questionnaires and interviews. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed out of which 139 were retrieved and analysed. This represents 92.67% of the total questionnaires distributed. Data collected were analysed using simple frequency distribution table and graphs. The results revealed that land use is gradually shifting from agriculture to residential land use, forcing the farmers to face increase in land value due to high demand for land, difficulty in accessing land for agriculture and land speculation.

Keywords: Urbanization, Urbanizing environment, Land use, Land use conflict, right to farm.

1.0. Introduction

Agriculture is the main stay of most communities and nations all over the world. Its importance cannot be over emphasized. In Africa, particularly in Nigeria before the discovery of crude oil, the main stay of the economy was agriculture. Agricultural activities were mainly practiced in the rural areas. Urban settlements depended and still depend on the rural settlements for food. However, land use in areas around the urban centres formally a rural area but now urbanizing areas is changing and these changes have resulted to several land use conflicts and community crises.

Urbanizing areas which are sometimes referred to as urban sprawl is currently undergoing land use changes due to increase in population and developments. The demand for land for developmental purposes is on the increase. In most cities, there is increased demand for land for construction of roads, building of residential and commercial properties by governments, private developers, cooperate bodies and individuals, building of schools, health centres and drainage systems and so on. All these activities coupled with increased population due to rural-urban drift has resulted to high pressure on land.

For urban expansion and development, attention is now been drawn to sub-urban environment for development. This development has resulted to land use conflicts between the original land owners, communities and other land users.

Many researchers have tried to explore the land use conflicts and probable measures of resolving such conflict (Deininger and Castagnini (2004); Magsi, *et al.* (2017); Lund, *et al.* (ND); Wu (2008)). Wu (2008) stated that land use change has social and environmental implications. He asserted that urbanization brought about many challenges such as destruction of crops and damage to farm equipment for farmers in the urban fringe and degradation in the ecosystem which altered the Earth's landscape. Magsi *et al.* (2017) examined the land use conflicts mainly caused by infrastructural development projects in some developing countries. They identified four driving forces on land use conflict as

extracted from Daily Regional Press (DRP) but similar to their case study as: Land consumption due to over population and urbanisation, Resistance against misuse of power and corruption, Opposition to responsive decision of the institutions for development projects and Land protection for agriculture, farmer life and social safe. This study seeks to identify the land use changes taking place in the study area, its attendant effects on agricultural land use and the resulting land use conflicts arising from the land use changes.

2.0. Literature Review

Urbanizing environment otherwise known as urbanizing areas is that environment that is undergoing a process of transiting from rural area to urban area. This transformation is driving by population growth, household formation and economic growth (Ralph and William, 2001). Several nomenclatures have been giving to urbanizing environment such as urban spur, urban fringe, sub-urban, urban sprawl and many other names. Ralph and William (2001) defined urban fringe as that part of the city that is not settled densely enough to be called urban. They attributed urban fringe as those areas with low density development which has the capacity to grow farther into rural areas and increasing the density of settlement through new houses, roads, and commercial buildings.

The urbanization of suburban environment is a new phenomenon in most part of Nigeria. This new development has resulted in land use dispute and conflicts between farm owners, landlords and developers and has also resulted to land use change in such communities. For instance, in the United States, this phenomenon is not new. Between 1960 and 1990, urban land expansion claimed more than one million acres per year and was never seen as a threat to most farming activities (Ralph and William, 2001). Today many of the American farms now operate within the urban and or suburban areas which has affected the farmers and the urban neighbours (Alvin, 2000).

Several issues concerning the positive and negative impact of agriculture in urbanizing communities were raised (Alvin, 2000) and attempts were made to proffer solutions to the challenges. They are incompatible land uses, economic opportunities for local agriculture and urbanization and local attitudes and economies. Alvin (2000) opined that the state and the local authorities should minimize the negative interaction between farmers and the urban residents and to create conditions that is mutually beneficial for their coexistence.

The review of literature has also shown that there is a relationship between rural and urban households. Cecilia (1998) opined that urban and rural households rely on both agricultural and non-agricultural sources for their livelihoods and that a large number of families in the rural areas and those in the suburban centres rely on non-agricultural sources and services from the urban centres as well as their agriculture while families in urban areas rely on those in the rural and suburban areas for their agricultural supplies. This show the symbiotic relationship between the rural, suburban and the urban areas. Cecilia (1998) concluded that activities ascribed to rural or urban areas are linked across space and sectors and distinctions are usually arbitrary. Urban areas may vary in definition from one country to another while members of household residing in rural areas and some in urban areas engages in agricultural activities within the urban areas (Cecilia, 1998).

In a similar vein, Thomas (1999) was of the view that there is no decreasing farm land in the Suburban environment but rather there is an efficient transformation of land use from lower value to higher value.

2.1. Right to farm

In Nigeria, the demand for land is on the increase. The urbanization, population growth and increasing demand for food has assumed an alarming rate. In Benue state for instance, there has been several killings between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the recent times as a result of land use conflict. Also, in 2012, there was a seemingly land conflict between farmers and Fulani herdsmen in Olobgo

Community of Edo state. The farmers accused the herdsmen of grazing cattle on their crops and destroying them, while the herdsmen accused the farmers of depriving them from feeding their cattle as they claim equal right to land. They also claimed that the community leaders have been settled in cash and in kind and as such, they have equal right to land as the indigenes of the community.

All over the country, the fight to own and possess land is on the increase. Yobe State has over the years had its own share of Fulani herdsmen and farmers conflicts in various part of the state. Alhassan (2013) reported that the major causes of herdsmen and farmers conflicts includes destruction of crops and other property by the herdsmen, and blockage of stock routes, water points and burning of rangelands by farmers, Other causes includes increased rate of cattle theft accompanied by violence and antagonistic perceptions and beliefs among farmers and herdsmen. Alhassan (2013) also, found that most of the Fulani herdsmen do not own or possess rights to land, they depend solely on open land to graze their cattle, resulting in intense pressure on land and further cumulating to conflicts. In the same vein Okoli and Atelhe (2014) sums up the result of conflict as having humanitarian, socio-economic, social and economic consequences on the people.

The Land Use Act of 1978 now CAP 202 LFN 1990 provides that all land in the territory of each State have been vested in the Governor, who holds the land in trust and administered them for the common goods and benefit of all. However, section 36 sub section 2 and 4 stated that occupier or holder of any agricultural land before the commencement of the Act shall continue to hold same. These places the right of ownership and use of such land to the farmers and land owners.

In Ghana, Fabian (2013), examined agricultural land use conflicts between land owners and migrant farmers. The study observed that the land owners accused the migrant farmers of not putting their land into efficient use, while on the other hand the migrant farmers accused the land owners of collecting greater percentage of their farm produce without contributing to the cost of production. From the foregoing, Fabian (2013) recommended that the land use dispute between the land owners and the migrant farmers can be resolved by putting in place measures to incorporate customary and statutory policies for efficient and appropriate land use.

2.2. Farming in urbanizing environment

There are several farming activities going on in urbanizing communities in Edo state. In communities like Evbuodia, Eyaen, Iduomwena, Utagban Ulemon and many other communities, there are several agricultural activities going on in these communities amidst development. According to Alvin (2000) farmers see urbanizing areas as more beneficial because of its closeness to market, access to labour and ease of transportation of products but this differs according to population size of neighbouring urban market.

Ralph and William (2001) stated that agricultural activities in the United States are influenced by closeness to urbanized areas and that the population concentration brought about by growth. However, as urbanizing areas grow landowners and land speculators may seek those activities that offer better returns to land with those from development (Ralph and William, 2001). Ralph and William, (2001) further stated that the economic changes farmers in the urban fringe face brings pressure on them to adjust to the changes while offering them opportunities and reward for the changes. They also advanced several benefits of farming from urbanization to include proximity of urban centres', greater off-farm employment opportunities, providing opportunities for farmers to grow new crops and increased house hold income. Although there are some economic benefits of farming within urbanized areas, there are also some disadvantages. Ralph and William (2001) stated some of the disadvantages include complaints about farm odours and chemical by the suburban residents, conflict between farm owners and dwellers, increase in real estate taxes due to rise in land prices, reduced crop yield due to urban smog, theft and vandalism, reduced market for dairy product or field crops and increase pressure from water and land use restrictions.

2.3. Land use and land use change

Urbanization and the growing deforestation in the country today has brought about land use change. Many studies on land use change in many parts of the world have been conducted by different researchers. Xiangzheng *et al.* (2008), Frapolli *et al.* (2007) and Reed-MD (2008) cited by (Bello and Arowosegbe, 2014) reported that demand for residential and industrial land are the main causes of land use changes. Although urbanization brings about growth and development, the spate of urbanization is affecting agricultural land user particularly at the sub-urban areas or urban sprawl. It could be noted that human use of land has altered structure and functioning of the ecosystem. Globally, the most important use of land include cultivation, land reserves, construction, timber extraction and protected lands (Vitonset *et al.*, 2007; Turner II *et al.*, 2007) cited by (Bello and Arowosegbe, 2014). In the developing regions, (Bello and Arowosegbe, 2014) also observed that settlements and sprawl development are becoming active land use change.

Bello and Arowosegbe, (2014) opined that increase in population created adjustment and re-adjustment of human and land use activities within urban systems. The population increase within the city or urban centres is forcing urbanization to the sub-urban areas. Most of our cities is been taking over by commercial and industrial activities, compelling residential land use to shift towards the city edges or sub-urban areas, bringing about land use change in these areas. Bello and Arowosegbe (2014) in their study identified four factors affecting land use change on property values in Nigeria which they classified as; government and real estate policy, attraction factors of the country and crude oil, people and regional conditions and the law of the strength structure.

3.0. Materials and Methods

This paper reports the Land Use Conflicts and Rights to Farm in an Urbanizing Environment. Primary data used for this study were gathered from land owners, community leaders and individual developers through the use of questionnaires and personal interview. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed among farmers, land owners, community leaders and individual developers who are civil servants and traders/businessmen in three communities out of which a total of 139 questionnaires representing 92.67% were retrieved. The questionnaire contains information on the type of land ownership that subsist in the community, the agency in charge of land administration in the community and types of land use before the process and during the process of urbanization. The respondents were also asked to rank the various types of land use in their community before and during the process of urbanization. Furthermore, they were asked to identify the various conflicts that were prominent in their community and state their effect on land use. Data were analysed using descriptive statistical tool such as frequency distribution and percentage table.

4.0. Results and Discussion

4.1. Analysis of results

The results of the research are presented in tabular form and graphs and discussed in this section. Table 1 showed the characteristics of the respondents. Statistics showed that 112 were males while 27 were females, representing 80.58% and 19.42% respectively. The respondents include traders, farmers and civil servants. 36.69% were farmers, 28.78% traders/business men while 14.29% are civil servants. 29.50% of the respondents have lived in the community for over 26 years, 17.27% have lived there for between 21-25 years and 18.70% have lived there for between 16-20 years. Other respondents have lived in the community for 1-5yrs, 6-10yrs and 11-15yrs respectively. These represents 7.19%, 16.55% and 10.79% respectively.

Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents in the study area

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex of respondent	Male	112	80.58
	Female	27	19.42
Occupation of respondent	Trading/businessmen	40	28.78
	Farming	51	36.69
	Civil servant	20	14.39
	Trading/farming	28	20.14
Duration of living in the community	1-5yrs	10	7.19
	6-10yrs	23	16.55
	11-15yrs	15	10.79
	16-20yrs	26	18.70
	21-25yrs	24	17.27
	Above 25yrs	41	29.50

Source: *Field survey, 2015***Table 2:** Types of land ownership in the study area

Types of land ownership	Frequency	Percentage
Family Land	28	20.1
Community Land	45	32.4
Individual	66	47.5
Government	00	00.0
Total	139	100.0

Source: *Field survey, 2015*

Table 2 revealed that three types of land ownership exist in the study area. That is, land is owned by the community, family and individuals. The study revealed that most of the land in the study area belong to individuals who bought from the community, representing 47.5%. 32.4% and 20.1% of the land belong to the community and family heads who got their land through inheritance respectively. This implies that land in the study areas are owned by individuals who acquired land by purchase, gift and or inheritance, families who are indigenes of the communities and community land which is administered by the community leaders for the benefit of all indigenes of that community.

Table 3: Land administrators in the study area

Land administrators	Frequency	Percentage
Family heads	32	23.02
Community leaders	105	75.54
Government	2	1.44
Total	139	100.00

Source: *Field survey, 2015*

From Table 3, it was observed that community leaders (75.54%) were the sole administrators of land in the study area. This implied that community leaders were more preferred to be custodian of lands on the communities which is what is more obtainable in Edo state at large. However, the administration of family land is left in the hands of the family heads on behalf of other members of the family.

Table 4: Types of land use in the study area before urbanization

Land use before urbanization	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture	78	56.12
Residential development	47	33.81
Infrastructure development	14	10.07
Total	139	100.00

Source: *Field survey, 2015*

Findings showed that the three communities were basically rural areas but due to urban expansion, the communities are having their share in transiting from rural to urban. Before the process of urbanization started, the major land use was agriculture which represents 56.12% while residential development is 33.81% and infrastructure development is 10.07%. This implied that the communities engaged on more agrarian activities before the advent of urbanization. Table 5 illustrate the ranking of the land use in the communities before and during the process of urbanization. Before the process of urbanization, Agriculture tops the rank being that the land use in these communities was predominantly agriculture. This was closely followed by residential developments while infrastructure ranks least. It was observed that there are no good roads leading to the communities. This implies that in terms of infrastructural development, the communities are lacking. As the level of urbanization increases, the land use in the communities were observed to be changing gradually. A critical examination of table 5 indicates that land use for agriculture has dropped from 56%, 58.70% and 53.50% to 40.00%, 39.10% and 39.50% while the land use for residential building has increased from 26.00%, 30.40% and 46.50% to 42.00%, 50.00% and 60.50% respectively in the communities.

Table 5: Ranking of land use type in the communities before the process of urbanization

Community	Land use type	Before Urbanization			Process of Urbanization		
		Frequency	(%)	Rank	Frequency	(%)	Rank
Evbuodia	Agriculture	28	56.00	1 st	20	40.00	2 nd
	Residential Development	13	26.00	2 nd	21	42.00	1 st
	Infrastructure Development	9	18.00	3 rd	9	18.00	3 rd
	Total	50	100		50	100	
Utagban	Agriculture	27	58.70	1 st	18	39.10	2 nd
	Residential Development	14	30.40	2 nd	23	50.00	1 st
	Infrastructure Development	5	10.90	3 rd	5	10.90	3 rd
	Total	46	100		46	100	
Ulemon	Agriculture	23	53.50	1 st	17	39.50	2 nd
	Residential Development	20	46.50	2 nd	26	60.50	1 st
	Infrastructure Development	0	0.00	3 rd	0	0.00	3 rd
	Total	139	100		43	100	

Source: *Field survey, 2015*

This clearly indicates that there is an increased in land demand for residential development in the study areas. However, infrastructure development such as roads remains at its lowest ebb.

Table 6: Summary of land use before and during urbanization

Type of land use	Land use before urbanization		Land use during urbanization		Percentage change
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Agriculture	78	56.12	55	39.57	16.55
Residential development	47	33.81	70	50.36	16.55
Infrastructure	14	10.07	14	10.07	0.00
Total	139	100.00	139	100.00	

Source: *Field survey, 2015*

Table 6 illustrates the summary of the changes in percentages of the land use in the three communities before and during urbanizing process. From Table 6, agricultural land use was 56.12% before urbanization process sets in has dropped to 39.57%. Similarly, residential development is fast growing from 33.81% to 50.36%. An indication that land use in the communities are gradually changing from agriculture to residential.

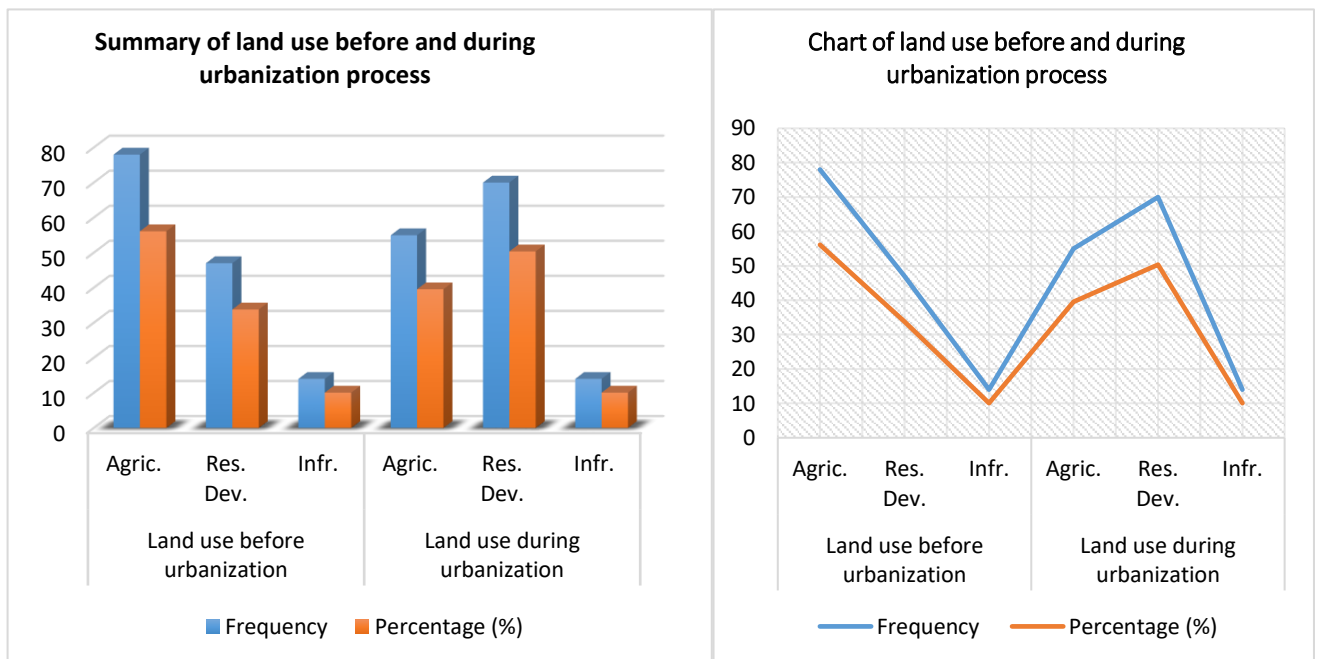


Figure 1: Type of land use before and during urbanization

4.2. Land use conflicts due to land use change

Farmers in urbanizing environment are faced with several challenges. The results from the interview conducted revealed that the challenges span from land speculation, arbitral increase in land values, insecurity of land titles, access to agricultural land among others. Land owners finds it more profitable to change their land use from agricultural use to developmental purposes. Rather than give it to farmers who cannot pay so much, they prefer selling to land developers who are ready and willing to pay more to satisfy their immediate gains. By such practice, farmers in the study areas are gradually losing their farm lands to land developers and speculators. These challenges are discussed as follows:

- i. Land speculation: As urbanization is spreading to the urban sprawl, people are now more involved in land speculation in these areas. Land speculators sells one piece of land for several unsuspecting individuals. This action usually leads to land conflicts amongst the buyers. Sometimes the individuals engage in serious fight leading to killings. In some cases the

community leaders wade into the conflict with a view of settling the disputing parties. In the study areas, land value is also rising high due to urbanization (increasing demand for land for residential development) and speculation beyond the rich of farmers.

- ii. Security of land title: the incidence of multiple sales of land to several persons has forced people to use every means within their reach to secure their lands in the study areas. At the point of purchase, the buyers insist on collecting the conveyance document and receipt from the community or the individual seller as proof of ownership in case of dispute. Some would survey the land and register it with the ministry of lands and survey as a means of securing their interest.
- iii. Increased land value: the high demand for land in these areas due to urbanization has brought about increase in land prices. For instance, land price for a plot of land in Evbuodia community has risen to about ₦2, 000,000.00 as at today. This is far beyond the rich of farmers, only very few farmers can pay such for agricultural lands.
- iv. Accessibility to agricultural land: Because of the high income land owners receive from the sales of their lands, farmers finds it difficult to access land for agricultural uses. This is affecting agriculture in the study areas. Land use are changing fast from agriculture to residential development (see tables 4, 5 and 6). It is believed that with the passage of time, most of the agricultural lands in these areas will change to residential areas, thus reducing the land areas for agricultural uses.

5.0. Conclusions and Recommendations

Farmers in an urbanizing environment experience one form of land use conflicts or the other. Basically, the study revealed that land use which was mainly agriculture is gradually changing to residential land uses. These changes (Thomas, 1999) regarded as the efficient transformation of land use from lower value to higher value uses. This has affected the ease of access to agricultural land as most land owners prefer the alternative land use which in their opinion pays better and gives them immediate lump sum of money for other investments. The change in land use has also brought about land speculation, multiple sale of a particular land to different persons resulting to land conflicts and lastly increased land values. Furthermore, the study recommends that farmers in the urban sprawl be given alternative farm land in areas farther from the urban fringe when their farm land is been acquired for a higher value use. They should also be provided with incentives that would facilitate their ease of movement from the former location to another.

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Cite this article as:

Oyedele J. B., Alohan O. E. and Edionwe O., 2020. Land Use Conflicts and Rights to Farm in an Urbanizing Environment. *Nigerian Journal of Environmental Sciences and Technology*, 4(1), pp. 31-39. <https://doi.org/10.36263/nijest.2020.01.0150>