

Media coverage of the establishment of the federal ministry of livestock development in selected Nigerian newspapers

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Abstract: A media content analysis of news published between July 10 and October 31, 2024, was conducted following the President's official announcement of the creation of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development (FMLD). The study assessed the frequency of reportage, article types, prominence, tone, and space allotment accorded to the establishment of the Ministry in the selected newspapers. Thirty-seven items of the selected newspapers were used. Findings reveal that *Guardian* (32.4%) and *Punch* (29.7%) recorded the highest frequency of reportage. Types of articles were dominated by straight news reports (37.8%) and editorials (18.9%). Articles were mostly placed on inner pages (70.3%), while the tone of reportage was predominantly neutral (40.5%). Space allotment across all selected newspapers during the period totalled 17,890.33 cm². There was no significant difference in the amount of space allocated to news on the establishment of the Ministry across the selected newspapers ($p = 0.413$). Newspaper coverage of the establishment of the FMLD was characterised by low frequency, dominance of straight news formats, limited prominence, a predominantly neutral tone, and appreciable space allocation. Nigerian newspapers should accord greater prominence to agricultural development policies through increased analytical, feature, and development-oriented reporting.

Keywords: Ministry of Livestock Development, Frequency of coverage, Tone of reportage, Livestock stakeholders.

1. Introduction

Livestock production is a vital component of agriculture in Nigeria, significantly contributing to food security, income generation, and rural development. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), livestock accounts for approximately 17% of agricultural GDP and supports the livelihoods of millions, especially in rural communities. The perennial farmer-herder conflict disrupts the potential of livestock's contribution to national development. For many years, farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria have resulted in significant loss of lives, with estimates suggesting over 19,000 people have been killed since 1999 (Ajala, 2020; Adebayo, 2023 and Mbamalu, 2024). This violence has escalated in recent years, with reports indicating approximately 2,600 civilian deaths in 2021 (Wonuola, 2023). The driving forces behind farmer-herder tensions include the breakdown of colonial-era grazing corridors

and traditional mobilisation routes, accelerated by demographic pressure, desertification, land degradation, and surges in cattle rustling and banditry. Though the Grazing Reserve Act of the 1960s aimed to settle nomadic pastoralists, recent evaluations show that most reserves are still underutilised, poorly maintained, or degraded, highlighting structural failure in pastoral reform (Ogunbiyi & Muhammad, 2023).

As part of a national effort to resolve longstanding pastoral conflicts and reposition the livestock sub-sector for enhanced productivity, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, on July 9, 2024, formally announced the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development (FMLD), a move aimed at spearheading policy reform, modernizing Nigeria's livestock sector and addressing recurrent farmer-herder crises through mechanisms such as ranching and controlled grazing (State House, 2024; Vanguard, 2024). Notably, this policy direction echoes

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past efforts such as the controversial RUGA settlement initiative, which was suspended in 2019 due to political and ethnic backlash (Onoja et al, 2024). The creation of the Ministry of Livestock Development, therefore, marks a major institutional shift with far-reaching implications for Nigeria's agricultural transformation. The announcement of the livestock ministry generated polarised reactions in the media. Supporters praised its potential to create jobs and streamline livestock policy, while critics raised concerns about ethnic patronage and duplicating the roles of the existing federal ministry of agriculture.

The mass media play a critical role in shaping public opinion, setting policy agendas, mobilising communities toward developmental goals, and enabling evidence-based decision-making. Agenda-setting theory posits that the issues most frequently covered in the media gain higher public salience (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020). Recent studies have shown that Nigerian newspapers often adopt conflict-escalating frames to cover the farmer–herder crisis. For instance, Felix et al. (2025) found that newspapers covering the Southern Taraba conflict largely employed inflammatory and ethnic-blame narratives. Likewise, Nwachukwu et al. (2021) highlighted the presence of ethnic tones and biased labelling in media coverage, with terms like “Fulani terrorists” used to generalise herder identity, potentially deepening social divisions and obstructing peaceful resolutions. While there is a growing body of research on media framing of farmer–herder conflict and general agriculture coverage in Nigeria (Kuchi & Msughter, 2023), research focusing specifically on how Nigerian newspapers frame the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development, created in July 2024, remains absent. Without such analysis, it becomes difficult to assess the media's role in either reinforcing public trust or deepening skepticisms around the ministry's mandate and execution. There is a noticeable gap regarding which stakeholders are prioritised, how frequently the ministry is reported in major Nigerian newspapers, and how coverage differs in prominence, tone, and source diversity (Onoja et al, 2024). Filling this gap will contribute to new empirical insights into media representation of institutional innovation in agricultural governance. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to analyse how selected Nigerian newspapers have covered the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development with a view to understanding the media's role in shaping public discourse around agricultural policy innovation. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. examine the frequency of newspapers' coverage of the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development news.
- ii. evaluate the types of news articles used by selected Nigerian newspapers in reporting the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development.
- iii. profile the sources cited in the coverage of the news of the establishment of the Ministry by the newspapers.
- iv. ascertain the prominence and placement given to news that covered the establishment of the Ministry of Livestock Development.
- v. determine the amount of space allotted to the news coverage of the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development.
- vi. analyze the tone or framing adopted by the selected newspapers.

2. Materials and methods

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative content analyses to explore the coverage of news on the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development in Nigeria. The population of the study comprised news on the establishment of the Ministry of Livestock Development in selected Nigerian newspapers published between the 10th July 2024, and the 31st of October 2024. A total of 456 newspaper editions were examined across the four selected newspapers. A three-stage sampling procedure was used to select samples for this study. The first stage involved selecting newspapers based on their national reach and readership statistics. This stage led to the emergence of the Nigerian Tribune, The Punch, The Guardian, and Daily Trust newspapers. In the second stage, all editions of the selected newspapers reporting Federal Ministry of Livestock Development news during the study's time frame constituted the population for this study. In the third stage, the number of news related to the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development was gathered from the selected print media. This comprised 11 and 12 from Punch and Guardian, respectively, and 7 from each of the Nigerian Tribune and Daily Trust newspapers. In the final analysis, 37 news items reported FMLD-related items in all 456 editions of the selected newspapers within the chosen timeframe. All news items with clearly reported stories about the creation of FMLD were included, while those items with a general agricultural slant were excluded from the news sample for the study. Articles for this study were gathered from the research library databases of the Kenneth

Dike Library, University of Ibadan, and the National Library of Nigeria, Oyo State branch, using the keyword “Federal Ministry of Livestock Development”. Articles that were selected for the research include news, feature editorials, and opinion articles sourced from hard copies of editions of the newspapers.

A coding sheet was developed for data collection. Variables such as frequency of coverage, space allotment/news hole, placement/prominence, sources quoted, tone of reportage, and framing were measured for this study. An inter-coder reliability test was conducted to assess the reliability of the study data and ensure consistency in coding. A reliability test with two coders was carried out using Holsti's (1985) reliability formula. The inter-coder reliability coefficient of 0.65 was achieved and considered acceptable. Frequency, percentage, Chi-square test, and ANOVA were used for the purpose of data analysis.

3. Results

3.1. Frequency of coverage of the Ministry of Livestock Development news

The results in Table 1 show that the Guardian recorded the highest frequency of reportage (32.4%), followed by The Punch (29.7%), while Daily Trust and Nigerian Tribune recorded equal but lower levels of coverage (18.9%).

Table 1: Frequency of reportage of the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development news across selected Nigerian newspapers

Newspapers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The Punch	11	29.7
Daily Trust	7	18.9
Nigerian Tribune	7	18.9
The Guardian	12	32.4
Total	37	100

Source: Newspaper Review 2025

3.2. Types of news articles used

The results in Table 2 show the distribution of the distinct types of news articles used in reporting the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development across the four selected newspapers. News articles constituted the largest share of coverage, accounting for 37.8% of total reports, while editorial and opinion articles accounted for 18.9% and 10.8%, respectively. The least-reported article type was Viewpoint, accounting for only 2.7% of reports.

3.3. Sources quoted in the coverage

Table 3 shows the categories of individuals and institutions whose views and information formed the basis of media coverage on the issue. The results reveal that government officials were the most frequently cited sources, accounting for **48.2%** of the total, while farmers, herders, and livestock breeders accounted for 17.9%, and experts, academics, and veterinary professionals accounted for 14.3%.

Table 2: Types of news article coverage of the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development news across selected Nigerian newspapers

Article Types	Newspapers				
	Punch	Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	Guardian	Total
Agricultural News	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (28.5)	1 (8.3)	3 (8.1)
Northern News	2 (18.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (5.4)
Editorial	2 (18.1)	2 (28.5)	2 (28.5)	1 (8.3)	7 (18.9)
Industry and business News	1 (9.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (8.3)	2 (5.4)
Interview	1 (9.1)	1 (14.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (5.4)
News	3 (27.3)	3 (42.8)	3 (42.8)	5 (41.7)	14 (37.8)
News Analysis	0 (0)	1 (14.2)	0 (0)	1 (8.3)	2 (5.4)
Opinion	1 (9.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (25.0)	4 (10.8)
Viewpoint	1 (9.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (2.7)
Total	11 (100)	7 (100)	7 (100)	12 (100)	37 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages. Source: Newspaper Review, 2025

Table 3: Sources quoted in the coverage of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development news across selected Nigerian Newspapers

Sources Quoted	Newspapers				
	The Punch	Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	Guardian	Total
Government Officials	8 (53.3)	2 (22.2)	5 (62.5)	12 (50)	27 (48.2)
Farmers / Herders / Livestock Breeders	4 (26.7)	3 (33.3)	1 (12.5)	2 (8.3)	10 (17.9)
NGOs / Civil Society Groups	0 (0)	1 (11.1)	1 (12.5)	4 (16.7)	6 (10.7)
Experts / Academics / Veterinary Professionals	1 (6.7)	3 (33.3)	1 (12.5)	3 (12.5)	8 (14.3)
Community Leaders / Traditional Institutions	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (4.2)	1 (1.8)
Others(e.g., International Agencies, Security Operatives)	2 (13.3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (8.3)	4 (7.1)

Figures in parentheses are percentages Source: Newspaper Review, 2025

3.4. Tone of newspaper coverage

Table 4 presents the tone adopted by the selected newspapers in reporting the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development. The results show that neutral tone dominated the coverage, accounting for 40.5% of the total reports, with the Guardian newspaper recording the highest neutral-tone share at 66.7%. Positive tone accounted for 29.7% of the coverage, but the findings show that the Daily Trust newspaper had the highest positive tone (71.4%) in its reportage, while the Nigerian Tribune showed the lowest positive tone (14.29%). Similarly, negative tone also accounted for 29.7% of the total coverage, with Nigerian Tribune having the highest negative tone (42.9%) reported.

3.5. Prominence and placement of the coverage

Table 5 indicates that most of the reports (70.3%) were placed on the inner pages of the newspapers, while only 5.4% appeared on the first pages and 2.7% on the back pages, which is far less than the placement on inner pages. The middle page placements accounted for 21.6%, which is less than one- third of the related news articles covered within the study period.

3.6. Space allocation to the coverage

Table 6 shows variations in the space allotted to reports on the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development across newspapers. Daily Trust recorded the highest average space (662.34 cm²), followed by

Table 4: Tones of coverage adopted by the newspapers

Tones	Newspapers				
	The Punch	Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	Guardian	Grand Total
Negative	4 (36.4)	2 (28.6)	3 (42.9)	2 (16.7)	11 (29.7)
Neutral	4 (36.4)	0 (0)	3 (42.9)	8 (66.7)	15 (40.5)
Positive	3 (27.3)	5 (71.4)	1 (14.29)	2 (16.7)	11 (29.7)
Total	11 (100)	7 (100)	7 (100)	12 (100)	37 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages. Source: Newspaper Review, 2025

Table 5: Placement given to Ministry of Livestock Development related news.

Placement	The Punch	Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	Guardian	Total
First page	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (28.6)	0 (0)	2 (5.4)
Inner page	7 (63.6)	7 (100)	4 (57.1)	8 (66.7)	26 (70.3)
Middle page	4 (36.4)	0 (0)	1 (14.3)	3 (25)	8 (21.6)
Back page	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (8.3)	1 (2.7)
Total	11 (100)	7 (100)	7 (100)	12 (100)	37 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages Source: Newspaper Review, 2025

Table 6: Space allotted to the news coverage of the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development

Space Allotted (cm ²)	Newspapers				
	The Punch	Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune	Guardian	Total
Average/ Mean	397.41	662.34	527.86	432.29	483.52
Minimum	72.25	230.75	219.00	131.00	72.25
Maximum	1463.00	1385.00	928.00	962.00	1463.00
Total	4371.48	4636.35	3695	5187.5	17,890.33

Figures in parentheses are percentages Source: Newspaper Review, 2025

Nigerian Tribune (527.86 cm²), then Guardian (432.29 cm²), and Punch (397.41 cm²). Overall, the total space allotted across all newspapers was 17,890.33 cm². Also, the Punch had the least minimum (72.25cm²) and maximum spaces (1463cm²) allotted to news on the establishment of the Ministry of Livestock Development compared to Daily Trust (230.75 cm²; 1385cm²), Nigerian Tribune (219cm²; 928cm²), and the Guardian (131 cm²; 962 cm²) news. However, The Guardian newspaper had the highest space allocated to the news coverage on the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development (5187.5cm²).

The Chi-square result in Table 7 shows that there was no significant relationship between the types of news covered on the establishment of the Ministry of Livestock Development and the placement of such news across selected newspapers (p-value=0.216). Also, there was no significant relationship between sources of news quoted on the creation of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development and the placement of such news in the newspapers (p = 0.719).

Table 7: Chi-Square analysis of types of news covered, placement and source quoted.

Variables	X ²	Df	P-Value
News type versus placement	8.313	6	0.216
News type versus source quoted	14.152	18	0.719

Level of significance at 0.05

The Analysis of variance (ANOVA) results in Table 8 show that there was no significant difference in the space allotted to news on the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development across selected Nigerian newspapers (p = 0.413).

Table 8: Analysis of variance of space allocated across newspapers (cm²)

	Sum of Squares	F-value	Df	p-value
Selected Newspaper	350,647.419	116,882.473	3	0.413

Level of significance at 0.05

4. Discussion

4.1. Frequency of reportage

The pattern observed in the frequency of reportage suggests that the Guardian and Punch newspapers paid relatively more attention to the establishment of the Ministry compared to other newspapers. Overall, reportage on the news of the establishment of the Ministry of Livestock Development is low, given that only 37 editions carried the news out of the 456 editions of the selected newspapers assessed. This pattern is supported by recent Nigerian media studies conducted by Abubakar et al. (2025) on food security and climate change coverage, which found that, although individual newspapers varied in frequency, overall coverage of these national development issues remained low across selected dailies. Also, Nwantah et al (2025) reported that Guardian offered a greater volume of relevant coverage than Punch in their analysis of food insecurity reporting, which parallels the pattern established in this study with respect to the Ministry's establishment. The varied pattern observed across newspapers with respect to frequency can be explained by varied policies of newspapers with regards to national issues. While some newspapers prefer to be seen covering burning national issues like the creation of the ministry, some are indifferent and apolitical.

4.2. Types of news article coverage

The types of articles reflect the various journalistic formats used to present the issue. The news format that dominated the reportage indicates that most reports focused on factual presentations of events, such as official announcements, government actions, and immediate developments related to the establishment of the ministry. The editorials represented the newspapers' collective position, offering institutional opinions, evaluations, and judgments on the establishment of the Ministry and its relevance to national development. The opinion articles provided space for individual writers to

express personal viewpoints, arguments, and reflections on the creation of the Ministry and its expected impact. This suggests limited use of specialised or thematic perspectives to critically examine the establishment of the ministry. Straight news dominated the types of news reported, with comparatively fewer analytical, interpretative, and sector-focused articles. This aligns with previous studies on Nigerian newspapers' coverage of development issues. Abubakar et al (2025) found that straight news dominated coverage of food security and climate change, while analytical, interpretative, and specialised articles like features, opinion pieces, and editorials were limited. This implies that newspapers prioritise factual reporting over in-depth analysis of public policy and development issues.

4.3. *Sources quoted*

The data on sources quoted in the report on the establishment of the Ministry suggest that newspapers' coverage relied heavily on official statements, press briefings, and policy pronouncements from government representatives and other official sources, such as the President, Ministers, government spokespersons, and representatives of relevant agencies. The heavy dependence on government officials suggests that information about the establishment of the Ministry was largely communicated through formal policy statements and official pronouncements. As a result, the frame of the issue was mainly driven by institutional perspectives, which may have influenced how the policy was presented to the public. The breeder associations represent key actors within the livestock sector and are directly affected by livestock-related policies. Their inclusion indicates that the newspapers have made some efforts to reflect grassroots perspectives and lived experiences within the sector. However, their relatively small share compared to government officials suggests that the voices of primary producers were not strongly heard in the coverage. Sources from experts, academics, and veterinary professionals provided professional and technical insights into livestock development, animal health, and policy implications. The moderate level of expert sourcing indicates that while technical perspectives were present, they did not play a dominant role in shaping public understanding of the ministry's establishment. Non-governmental organisations often address issues such as advocacy, social impact, sustainability, and accountability. The minimal use of community-based sources indicates limited engagement with local leadership structures that play important roles in livestock management, conflict resolution, and

rural governance. Overall, the sourcing pattern reveals a strong reliance on official voices, with comparatively limited inclusion of producers, experts, civil society actors, and community leaders. This suggests that newspaper coverage of the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development was largely shaped by government narratives, with less emphasis on diverse and grassroots perspectives. This indicates that a large proportion of the newspapers presented the issue factually and descriptively, focusing mainly on official announcements, statements, and reported activities without expressing clear approval or disapproval. Such reporting suggests an attempt by the newspapers to maintain objectivity and balance while informing the public about the creation of the ministry.

4.4. *Tone of reportage*

Reports with a positive tone portrayed the establishment of the ministry as a welcome development, often emphasizing its perceived benefits, such as improved livestock management, enhanced agricultural productivity, reduced conflict between farmers and herders, and economic opportunities in the livestock sector. The presence of a considerable proportion of positive coverage suggests that many reports framed the ministry as a strategic response to existing challenges in the livestock industry, particularly in northern Nigeria. These reports reflected criticism, skepticism, or concerns regarding the establishment of the ministry. Issues raised in such reports included questions about policy implementation, fears of politicization, doubts about effectiveness, possible duplication of existing institutions, and concerns about inclusiveness and equity. The equal proportion of positive and negative tones indicates that the establishment of the ministry generated mixed reactions and was subject to public debate. Across individual newspapers, differences in tone distribution were observed. The Guardian recorded the highest proportion of neutral reports, suggesting a stronger emphasis on straight news reporting and factual presentation. Daily Trust, however, recorded a higher proportion of positive reports, indicating a more favourable portrayal of the ministry's establishment. These variations reflect differences in editorial emphasis and interpretative approaches across newspapers. Overall, the dominance of neutral tone alongside substantial positive and negative reporting suggests that, while newspapers largely maintained objectivity, they also provided space for supportive and critical perspectives. This indicates that the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development

was presented as an important public issue open to evaluation and discussion rather than a unanimously accepted policy decision. This, however, contradicts the position of Onoja et al (2025) that depicts an overwhelming negative view of online audience in their study of Nigerian online audiences' responses to the establishment of the ministry of livestock development news forcing the paper to conclude that Nigerian government's vision of ending farmers-herders' violent conflicts through the creation of the ministry will remain a mirage unless the ministry pursues genuine dialogue, inclusivity, and transparency in a bid to gain public trust

4.5. News placement

Kuchi & Msughter (2023) and Olajide et al (2025) reported that agriculture and agricultural-related news items in Nigerian newspapers were predominantly located in the inner pages, with minimal placement on highly visible pages such as the front or back pages. Their findings indicate that although agricultural issues are reported, they are often not framed as major national concerns deserving prime placement. This observation aligns with this study, where more than two-thirds of the reports were placed on inner pages, and less than 10% appeared on the front or back pages.

4.6. Space allotment

On the space allotted, the results align with the study of Ogunlade et al (2020) in the reportage of RUGA news and also corroborate the result of Arigbo et al (2023) that the Guardian Newspaper allocated more space than other newspapers in their findings on coverage and content analysis of agricultural transformation agenda news in selected newspapers in Nigeria. Overall, it can be concluded that the four newspapers are not particularly responsive to the news of the establishment of the Ministry of Livestock Development, given the space allotted to it. The results of the inferential analyses clearly established that, regardless of article type, reports were placed similarly, and news types did not significantly influence placement. In a similar vein, the source did not determine prominence across selected newspapers. Also, the selected newspapers allotted relatively similar space to news about the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development, suggesting a uniform pattern in news coverage.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that the newspapers offer limited and mostly official reports

in the coverage of the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Livestock Development news, it received low frequency of coverage, modest prominence, and minimal analytical attention in the selected newspapers, underrepresentation of farmers, herders, community leaders, and technical experts, prominence and placement given indicate low editorial priority and limited agenda-setting emphasis, and the coverage reflected a mix of positive, neutral, and negative frames. Consequently, the media's potential role in promoting development-oriented news, public understanding, and accountability in agricultural governance was not fully realised in the way the newspapers reported the creation of the new ministry. Therefore, it is recommended that the newspapers should dedicate an agricultural policy page, include extension experts, or use investigative journalism. of agricultural policies, such as the establishment of the Ministry of Livestock Development, beyond routine straight news reporting; use diversified sources; accord greater prominence and space to livestock development issues; and strengthen media engagement strategies by providing accessible data, expert briefings, and stakeholders' perspectives to encourage informed reporting.

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