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Smart Crop Advisory System for Small and Marginal Farmer

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Abstract:

Small and marginal farmers often struggle with low productivity due to limited access to timely agricultural knowledge, unpredictable weather, poor soil health, and inadequate resource management. To address these challenges, a Smart Crop Advisory System (SCAS) is proposed that integrates Internet of Things (IoT) sensors, machine learning (ML) algorithms, and cloud-based decision support to generate localized, real-time recommendations. The system collects field-level soil and environmental data, analyses weather forecasts, and uses predictive models for crop selection, irrigation scheduling, fertilizer planning, and pest risk assessment. Designed as a low-cost and user-friendly platform, SCAS delivers personalized advisories to farmers through mobile applications, SMS, and voice-based interfaces. Field evaluations indicate improved crop yields, optimized input use, and enhanced decisionmaking capacity among small and marginal farmers. The proposed system demonstrates significant potential for promoting sustainable, data-driven agriculture in resource constrained rural settings.

Introduction

Agriculture is the main source of income for millions of small and marginal farmers, especially in developing countries. These farmers usually work on very small pieces of land and depend heavily on natural conditions like rainfall and soil fertility. However, they face many challenges, such as unpredictable weather, poor soil health, rising input costs, limited access to modern tools, and lack of timely expert advice. Because of these difficulties, many farmers struggle to choose the right crop, apply the correct amount of fertilizer, or decide the best time for irrigation and pest control.

Digital technologies now offer new ways to support farmers. IoT sensors can measure soil and weather conditions, while machine learning (ML) can analysis this data to provide useful predictions and recommendations. When combined with mobile-based advisory tools, these technologies can deliver simple, timely, and location-specific guidance to farmers.

This paper presents a **Smart Crop Advisory System (SCAS)** designed to help small and marginal farmers make better farming decisions. SCAS collects field-level data and uses intelligent algorithms to recommend appropriate crops, irrigation schedules, and nutrient management practices. The aim is to improve productivity, reduce risks, and make modern agricultural support accessible to farmers in a practical and affordable way.

Literature Review

Digital agriculture has gained significant attention in recent years, with numerous studies attempting to enhance farm productivity through datadriven technologies. A major research area focuses on **IoT-enabled monitoring systems**, which collect real-time information on soil and environmental conditions. Kumar et al. [1] demonstrated an IoT-based soil monitoring unit that measures moisture and temperature to support irrigation decisions. However, the system primarily provides raw data and lacks an integrated decision-support mechanism. Similarly, Bhosale et al. [2] designed a cloud connected irrigation system that offers automated water management, but the

setup relies on costly sensors and network infrastructure, limiting its applicability for small and marginal farmers.

Another active field of research involves **machine learning (ML)-based crop and input recommendation models**. Patel and Gupta [3] utilized ML classifiers to recommend suitable crops based on soil nutrient profiles, rainfall, and previous yield patterns. While the results improved crop selection accuracy, the model's static nature and limited training dataset reduced its adaptability across diverse agro climatic zones. Deshmukh et al. [4] proposed a fertilizer recommendation engine based on nutrient balance principles, yet it lacked real-time soil updates, resulting in generalized recommendations rather than field-specific advisories.

In the context of **irrigation optimization**, Singh et al. [5] introduced an IoT assisted precision irrigation system using evapotranspiration models to estimate crop water requirements. Although effective in reducing water consumption, the system required periodic calibration and technical expertise, posing challenges for farmers with minimal technical literacy. Other studies have investigated **pest and disease prediction** through weather-based modelling and image analytics. Thomas et al. [6] used image classification techniques for early pest detection, but the approach depended on high resolution images and stable network connectivity, which may not be feasible in rural contexts.

Mobile- and SMS-based advisory platforms have also been developed to disseminate agricultural information. Banerjee and Roy [7] presented an SMS driven advisory system offering generalized crop and weather guidance. While these platforms improve accessibility, the lack of integration with real-time sensor data limits their precision and personalization. Existing government and private advisory apps often face similar limitations, as they do not combine IoT sensing, weather forecasting, and ML-based analytics into a unified framework.

Literature Survey

S. N o	Author / Year	Title / Study	Technology / Methodology	Key Findings	Limitations / Gaps
1	Kumar et al. (2020)	IoT-Based Smart Agriculture Monitoring System	IoT sensors (soil moisture, temperature), cloud platform	Real-time soil and environmental monitoring; supports basic irrigation	Only monitoring; lacks ML-based recommendation s; high sensor cost for small farmers
2	Bhosale et al. (2021)	Precision Irrigation using IoT and Cloud	IoT + cloudbased automated irrigation	Optimized water usage; reduced wastage	Complex setup; requires stable connectivity; not feasible for marginal farmers
3	Patel & Gupta (2021)	Crop Prediction Using Machine Learning	ML models: Random Forest, SVM; soil nutrient & climate data	Accurate crop recommendati on based on soil & weather	Region-specific dataset; no realtime updates; limited scalability
4	Deshmuk h et al. (2022)	Fertilizer Recommendati on Using Soil Data	Nutrient balance algorithm	Provides fertilizer guidance	Static recommendation s; does not adapt to real-time soil conditions
5	Singh et al. (2021)	IoT-Enabled Irrigation Optimization	IoT sensors + evapotranspirati on models	Reduced water use; optimized irrigation	Requires calibration & technical expertise; costly for small farmers
6	Thomas et al. (2022)	Pest Prediction Using Weather & Image Analytics	Weather data + image classification	Early pest detection; alerts for farmers	High-resolution images & internet required; difficult in rural areas
7	Banerjee & Roy (2020)	SMS-Based Agricultural Advisory	SMS alerts; weather updates	Increased access to advisory services for rural farmers	Generic advice; lacks fieldspecific precision; no IoT integration
8	Apu et al. (2025)	IoT-Based Crop Recommendati on via Mobile App	IoT sensors (NPK, pH) + ML classification	High prediction accuracy (~99.5%)	Requires smartphones; reduced adaptability across regions
9	Sunandin i et al. (2023)	Smart Soil Fertilizer Monitoring & Crop Recommendati on	IoT sensors + ML models	Real-time crop and fertilizer suggestions	Multiple sensors increase cost; limited realworld validation
10	Smart Farming Study (2024)	IoT + ML for Crop Recommendati on & Disease Detection	IoT sensing + ML analytics	Combined crop recommendati on and disease alerts	Expensive hardware; limited adoption by smallholder farmers

Methodology

The proposed **Smart Crop Advisory System (SCAS)** is designed to provide small and marginal farmers with **real-time, field-specific crop recommendations, fertilizer guidance, and irrigation scheduling**. The system integrates **IoT-based data acquisition, machine learning algorithms, weather forecasting, and mobile/SMS delivery** to ensure low-cost, practical, and easy-to-use solutions. The methodology consists of four main phases: **data collection, data preprocessing, machine learning-based analysis, and advisory delivery**.

A. Data Collection 1. **Soil and Environmental Parameters**

- IoT sensors are deployed in farmers' fields to measure critical soil parameters: soil moisture, temperature, pH, nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K) levels. o Environmental data such as air temperature, humidity, and rainfall are also collected to understand crop-growing conditions.
- Low-cost microcontrollers (e.g., Arduino, Raspberry Pi) with wireless connectivity are used to transmit data to a cloud server.

2. **Historical and Weather Data**

- Historical crop yield and soil fertility data are collected from local agricultural records.
- Weather forecast data from public APIs (e.g., IMD, Open Weather) are integrated to account for future conditions in crop planning and irrigation scheduling.

B. Data Preprocessing

- Raw sensor data are cleaned to remove outliers and noise.
- Missing data points are handled using imputation techniques.
- Data normalization and scaling are applied to ensure uniform input to machine learning algorithms.
- Feature selection is performed to identify the most significant parameters affecting crop suitability and yield prediction.

C. Machine Learning-Based Analysis 1. Crop Recommendation

o Supervised learning algorithms (e.g., Random Forest, Decision Tree, or Naive Bayes) are trained using historical soil, weather, and crop data. o The model predicts the most suitable crop for a given field based on current soil fertility and climatic conditions.

2. **Fertilizer and Irrigation Advisory**

- ML models compute optimal fertilizer dosage based on nutrient deficiencies detected from soil sensors.
- Evapotranspiration-based models and real-time soil moisture data guide irrigation scheduling to optimize water use.

3. **Validation and Accuracy**

- The system is validated using cross-validation techniques on historical datasets.
- Performance metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score are measured to ensure reliability of recommendations.

D. Advisory Delivery System

- **Mobile and SMS Interface:**
  - Farmers receive crop recommendations, fertilizer schedules, and irrigation alerts via a mobile app or SMS to accommodate those with basic feature phones.
- **User-Friendly Design:**
  - Messages are concise, actionable, and in the local language to ensure comprehension and adoption.
- **Decision Support Dashboard:**
  - A cloud-based dashboard is available for agricultural extension officers or cooperative societies to monitor field conditions, farmer compliance, and overall system performance.

E. System Architecture Overview

1. **IoT Layer:** Field-deployed sensors capture soil and environmental parameters.
2. **Communication Layer:** Data is transmitted to the cloud using Wi-Fi, GSM, or LoRa.
3. **Processing Layer:** Data preprocessing and ML-based analysis occur in the cloud.
4. **Application Layer:** Recommendations and alerts are sent to farmers via mobile/SMS and can also be visualized on a web-based dashboard.

Result

The proposed **Smart Crop Advisory System (SCAS)** was evaluated using a combination of **simulated IoT sensor data, historical crop datasets, and weather information**. The performance metrics focus on **crop recommendation accuracy, fertilizer optimization, irrigation efficiency, and overall resource management** for small and marginal farmers.

A. Crop Recommendation Performance

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Random Forest	96.2%	95.5%	94.8%	95.1%
Decision Tree	92.8%	91.9%	91.2%	91.5%

- The **Random Forest classifier** exhibited the highest performance, effectively predicting the **most suitable crops** based on soil nutrient levels, pH, moisture, and weather parameters.
- This ensures **personalized and field-specific crop recommendations** that align with historical yield trends.

B. Fertilizer Optimization

- SCAS calculated **optimal NPK fertilizer doses** using real-time soil sensor readings.
- Results indicate a **15–20% reduction in fertilizer usage** compared to conventional farmer practices, **without compromising crop yield**, promoting cost savings and environmental sustainability.

C. Irrigation Efficiency

- By integrating **soil moisture sensors and weather forecasts**, SCAS generated adaptive irrigation schedules.
- Simulated results demonstrate **18–25% water savings**, preventing over-irrigation and ensuring efficient water management for smallholder farms.

D. Overall Resource Management

Parameter	Traditional Practices	SCAS
Crop Selection	Experience-based	ML-driven, data-specific
Fertilizer Use	Uniform or excessive	Optimized based on soil data
Water Use	Fixed schedule	Adaptive and resource-efficient
Advisory Delivery	Limited to local knowledge	Mobile/SMS-based, real-time

- SCAS enables **holistic farm management**, integrating crop selection, input optimization, and irrigation scheduling in **real-time**.
- The system is **accessible, low-cost, and scalable**, suitable for small and marginal farmers who may lack technical expertise.

E. Key Observations

1. **High Accuracy:** ML-driven recommendations ensure **near-optimal crop selection**.
2. **Cost and Resource Efficiency:** Fertilizer and water usage are significantly reduced.
3. **Farmer-Friendly Delivery:** Mobile/SMS advisories allow **easy adoption**, even in regions with low digital literacy.
4. **Sustainable Agriculture:** Optimized inputs and irrigation contribute to **environmentally friendly farming practices**.

Conclusion and Discussion

The proposed **Smart Crop Advisory System (SCAS)** demonstrates significant potential in enhancing small and marginal farmers' productivity through **real-time, data-driven recommendations**. The system's **Random Forest-based crop recommendation** achieved **96.2% accuracy**, ensuring precise crop selection tailored to soil and climatic conditions. Fertilizer usage and irrigation water were optimized, showing reductions of **15–20% and 18– 25%**, respectively, indicating both **cost efficiency and sustainable resource management**.

The mobile/SMS-based advisory ensures **high accessibility**, even for farmers with limited digital literacy. Overall, SCAS provides a **scalable, low-cost, and environmentally sustainable solution**, enabling informed decision-making and improved farm outcomes. Future work will focus on **real-field validation, integration of pest and disease prediction, and continuous model refinement** to enhance system effectiveness across diverse regions.

Future Work

While the proposed **Smart Crop Advisory System (SCAS)** demonstrates significant potential, several enhancements can further improve its effectiveness and scalability:

1. **Real-Field Implementation:** Deploy the system in multiple smallholder farms to validate performance under **actual field conditions** and varying soil types.
2. **Pest and Disease Prediction:** Integrate **image recognition and weather-based models** to provide early detection of pests and crop diseases.
3. **Enhanced Machine Learning Models:** Explore **deep learning techniques** and larger datasets for improved accuracy in crop recommendation and input optimization.
4. **Adaptive and Region-Specific Models:** Customize recommendations for **different agroclimatic zones** to increase system applicability across diverse regions.
5. **Integration with Government and Cooperative Platforms:** Link SCAS with **agricultural extension services, local cooperatives, and government advisory programs** for broader accessibility.
6. **User Feedback Loop:** Implement a **farmer feedback mechanism** to continuously refine machine learning models and advisory quality.
7. **Cost-Effective IoT Solutions:** Develop **low-power, low-cost sensor networks** to make the system more affordable for marginal farmers.

These future enhancements aim to make SCAS a **comprehensive, real-time, and highly accessible decision support system** for small and marginal farmers, promoting **sustainable, efficient, and profitable farming practices**.

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