

The Rise of Precision Agriculture: Farming with Data

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Introduction

Agriculture is undergoing a revolution in the age of digital transformation. Precision agriculture, a fast expanding discipline, is changing how we grow food by using data to inform decisions. The days of farming being based only on tradition and intuition are long gone. The application of innovative technologies and data analysis to improve agricultural operations is known as precision farming or precision agriculture. It involves using sensors, satellites, drones, and GPS-enabled equipment to collect data in real time from fields. Farmers subsequently utilise this information to make more informed choices regarding pest management, fertilisation, irrigation, and planting. The need for effective, resilient agricultural systems is growing as a result of climate change and the world's increasing food demand. Governments, agri-tech companies, and research institutions are making significant investments in precision agriculture with the goal of making it more widely available, more affordable, and more scalable. Precision agriculture may be the key to feeding the world sustainably as growing global food needs and the effects of climate change intensify. Digital agriculture and more efficient use of time and resources could make agriculture more reliable and productive.

Key Aspects of Precision farming

The precision farming mainly depends on three key aspects. They are:

- 1. Information:** One of the most important components of precision farming is information, which primarily deals with the many aspects of temporal and geographical variability data that are used to inform management decisions.
- 2. Technology:** It includes learning about several facets of crop and land factors through the use of technology such as GPS, GIS, remote sensing, etc.
- 3. Management:** It includes decisions made by management to control variability.

The Core Technologies Behind Precision Agriculture

- 1. Remote Sensing & Drones:** Farmers are able to keep updated on crop health, soil variance, and moisture levels by using drones and satellites to take overhead photos.
- 2. GPS Technology:** Accurate field mapping made possible by Global Positioning Systems makes it possible to plant, spray, and harvest crops precisely.
- 3. Data Analytics & AI (Artificial Intelligence):** Advanced computer programs examine gathered data to find patterns and suggest plans of action, such when and where to apply fertilizer or irrigation.
- 4. Soil and Crop Sensors:** Real-time measurements of pH, temperature, moisture, and nutrient content are made by in-field sensors, which reduces uncertainty in farming.
- 5. Internet of Things (IoT) Devices & Automation:** Agricultural machinery and sensors are connected via technology, enabling real-time automated modifications in response to environmental changes. Precision agriculture enables the automation of data gathering and processing for accuracy to make the best possible decision.

Why is this important for farmers?

Precision farming is important for farmers because it uses modern technology to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and maximize yields. By providing a detailed, data-driven understanding of their fields, it allows farmers to move away from uniform, whole-field treatments and apply inputs with greater accuracy. Now a days modern farming involves more than just producing crops; it also involves doing it more efficiently. Precision farming provides a number of important advantages:

- **Increased Yields:** Crop performance is enhanced when water, fertiliser, and pesticides are applied sparingly.
- **Cost Savings:** Overall costs are decreased when fewer resources are used.
- **Environmental Protection:** Better soil management, less chemical use, and less runoff.
- **Risk reduction:** Crop failure can be avoided by identifying issues early.
- **Labour Efficiency:** In areas with a shortage of labour, automated tools are helpful.

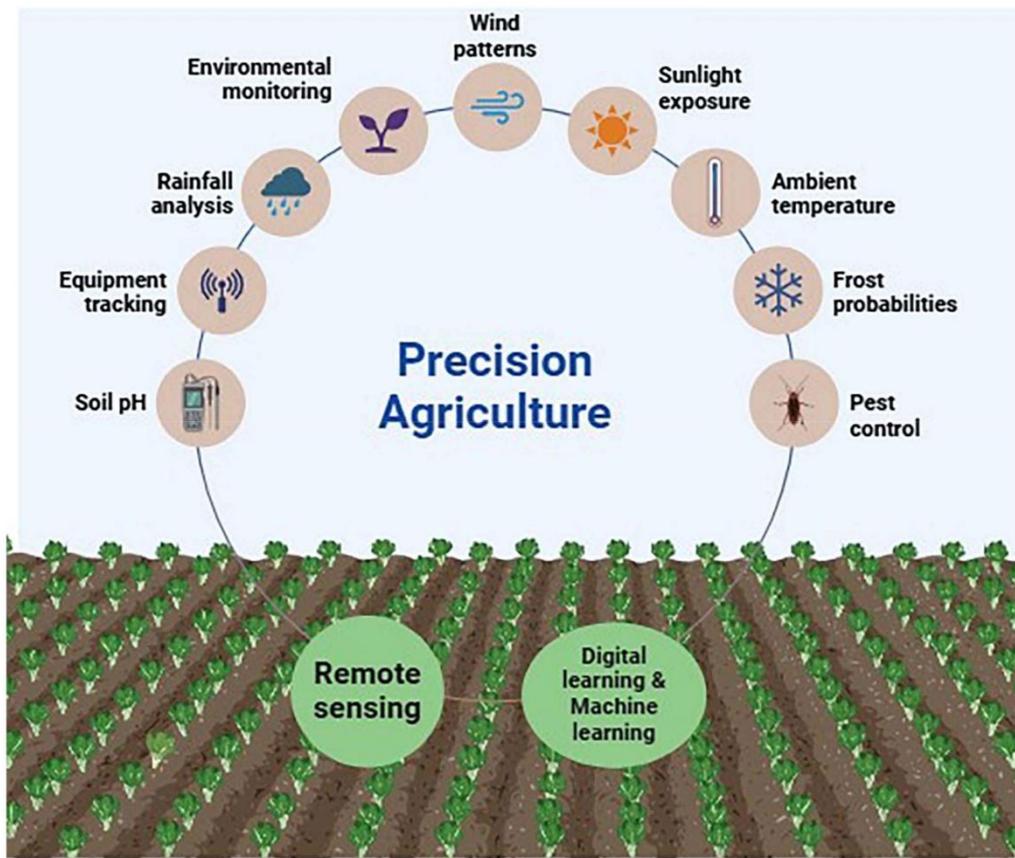


Fig.1: Graphical representation of factors involved in crop model predictor using deep learning and remote sensing

Benefits of Precision Agriculture:

- **Increased Crop Yields:** By applying inputs like water, fertilizer, and pesticides only where needed, farmers can significantly improve yields.
- **Cost Efficiency:** Reduced waste leads to lower input costs and more efficient resource use.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Targeted farming reduces runoff, conserves water, and minimizes the use of chemicals, promoting eco-friendly practices.
- **Risk Management:** Real-time monitoring helps detect and address issues early, reducing the risk of crop loss.
- **Labor Optimization:** Automation and machine learning reduce the reliance on manual labor, addressing workforce shortages in agriculture.

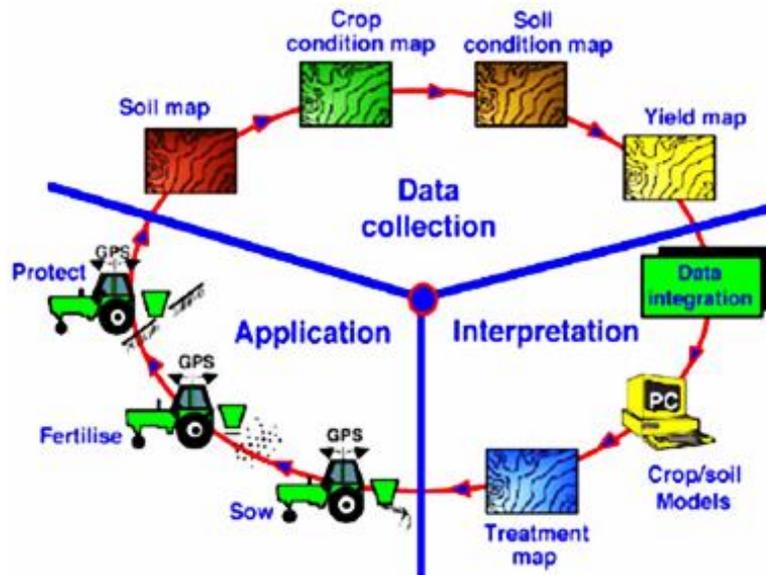


Fig.2: Precision Agriculture

Challenges to adopting precision agriculture:

1. **High Initial Costs:** The initial investment in technology and infrastructure can be a barrier, particularly for small farms. Advanced equipment and software require substantial investment.
2. **Connectivity Issues:** In rural areas, limited internet access can hinder the adoption of cloud-based and IoT systems. Rural areas often lack reliable internet for cloud-based systems.
3. **Data Privacy Concerns:** As with any digital platform, questions around who owns and controls the data are increasingly important. Farmers need clarity on who controls the data collected from their fields. There are concerns about data ownership and cybersecurity.
4. **Digital Skills Gap:** Farmers need to learn how to use and maintain new systems, and the constant evolution of technology requires continuous learning. Not every farmer is tech-savvy, which can slow adoption. Many farmers need training and support to adopt and manage these technologies effectively.
5. **Economic Disparity:** Large corporations may have a significant advantage in adopting these technologies compared to smaller operations.

Future Scope of Precision Agriculture

The necessity to increase food production sustainably for a growing population while dealing with limitations on resources is driving precision agriculture's promising future in India. Integrating AI, IoT, and robotics for data-driven decision-making presents significant possibilities that can boost

productivity, profitability, and reduce environmental impact. Recent advances in technology will enable personalized crop management, accurate resource application, and the automation of labor-intensive tasks. Compact treatment units are now possible because to the latest advancements in precision application technology, which customises applications to the needs of particular areas. Sensors and computer technology in automated systems of the future will first classify all plants in the field as either crops or weeds and then determine the type of weed. In a variety of sensing contexts, artificial intelligence (A.I.) has recently been applied to accomplish tasks involving detection, control, and/or prediction.

Conclusion

A paradigm shift in farming from reactive to proactive, from generalised to customised, is embodied by precision agriculture. Farmers can increase productivity, make better decisions, and help create a more secure and sustainable food system by utilising data. The way we farm is being redefined by precision agriculture. Better choices, more efficient use of resources, and a more sustainable future are more important than simply increasing harvests. It will become the new norm in agriculture with the correct backing and investment, so accurate crop management is required that can identify site-specific factors in agricultural lands and modify management plans appropriately with improved decision-making skills. Precision farming is still in its early stages and has a long way to go in many developing countries, including India. The main factor affecting its success is how fast and effectively the data needed to direct the new technology can be found.

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