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Advances in Agricultural AI: Crop Pest Recognition Using Enhanced Vision Transformer Models

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ABSTRACT: The rapid identification and management of crop pests are critical for ensuring food security and reducing agricultural losses. With advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), computer vision has emerged as a powerful tool for automating pest recognition. In this study, we propose an improved Vision Transformer (ViT) model tailored for crop pest image recognition. The enhanced ViT architecture incorporates feature refinement modules and attention mechanisms specifically designed to address the challenges posed by pest image datasets, including class imbalance, visual similarity among pest species, and environmental noise in real-world images.

Our model leverages pretraining on large-scale datasets followed by fine-tuning on a curated pest image dataset, achieving significant improvements in recognition accuracy compared to traditional convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and baseline ViT models. Additionally, the proposed method demonstrates robustness in identifying rare and visually ambiguous pest species, offering a scalable solution for integration into precision agriculture systems.

Experimental results showcase the superiority of the improved ViT method in terms of classification accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. The findings highlight the potential of transformer-based architectures in revolutionizing agricultural pest management practices by enabling early detection and targeted interventions. This study paves the way for the development of intelligent and efficient pest monitoring systems that can adapt to diverse agricultural environments and evolving pest dynamics.

KEYWORDS: artificial intelligence (AI), computer vision, Vision Transformer (ViT), convolutional neural networks (CNNs)

I. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural productivity plays a pivotal role in ensuring global food security, but it is continually threatened by crop pests, which can cause significant yield losses if not managed effectively. Traditional pest management relies heavily on manual identification, which is time-consuming, labor-intensive, and prone to errors, especially in large-scale farming operations. The increasing availability of image data and advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have paved the way for automated pest recognition systems that promise to enhance pest monitoring and management.

Recent developments in computer vision, particularly deep learning, have revolutionized image classification tasks. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) have been widely used for pest identification; however, their performance is often hindered by challenges such as class imbalance, environmental noise, and the high visual similarity between pest species. Vision Transformers (ViTs) have recently emerged as a compelling alternative to CNNs, leveraging self-attention mechanisms to capture global contextual information more effectively. Despite their potential, standard ViT architectures require optimization to handle the unique characteristics of pest image datasets.

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This study introduces an improved ViT-based model specifically designed for crop pest recognition. By integrating advanced feature refinement techniques and domain-specific enhancements, our approach addresses the limitations of existing methods and achieves superior performance in pest identification tasks. This paper outlines the architecture of the proposed model, evaluates its effectiveness on real-world pest datasets, and discusses its implications for precision agriculture.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Automated pest recognition has been an active area of research within agricultural AI, with significant contributions leveraging various deep learning approaches. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) have been the dominant architecture in pest image classification. Studies such as those by Chen et al. (2018) and Wang et al. (2019) demonstrated the effectiveness of CNNs in recognizing common pest species. However, their reliance on extensive labeled data and susceptibility to environmental noise have limited their scalability in real-world applications.

To address these challenges, transfer learning techniques have been widely adopted. For instance, pretrained models such as ResNet and Inception have shown promise in improving pest recognition accuracy when fine-tuned on domain-specific datasets. Nonetheless, these approaches often struggle with the unique challenges of pest image datasets, including high inter-class similarity and intra-class variability.

Recent advancements in transformer architectures have opened new avenues for image classification tasks. Dosovitskiy et al. (2021) introduced the Vision Transformer (ViT), which has since been applied to various domains, demonstrating superior performance in capturing global dependencies within images. Despite these advancements, the application of ViTs in agricultural pest recognition remains limited. Existing studies, such as those by Li et al. (2022), have explored transformers for agricultural tasks but often lack optimizations tailored to pest recognition.

Furthermore, attention mechanisms have been incorporated into pest recognition frameworks to enhance feature extraction. Works by Zhang et al. (2020) and Liu et al. (2021) integrated attention modules within CNN-based architectures, achieving notable improvements in handling noisy and complex backgrounds. These studies highlight the importance of focusing on region-specific features, an aspect that our improved ViT model aims to address comprehensively (fig 1).

Despite these advancements, there remains a gap in integrating transformer-based architectures with domain-specific enhancements for pest recognition. This study seeks to fill this gap by proposing an optimized ViT framework that leverages attention mechanisms and feature refinement tailored to pest image datasets. By building upon prior research, our work aims to advance the state-of-the-art in automated pest recognition and provide a robust solution for real-world agricultural applications.

The application of deep learning to agricultural pest recognition has been extensively studied, with numerous approaches focusing on CNN-based architectures. Early efforts by Ren et al. (2017) utilized region-based CNNs (R-CNNs) for pest detection, demonstrating high accuracy on controlled datasets. However, these models struggled with real-world scenarios involving cluttered backgrounds and varying lighting conditions. Subsequent work by Zhao et al. (2019) introduced Faster R-CNN with feature pyramid networks to improve multi-scale pest detection, yet scalability and computational costs remained challenges.

The introduction of transfer learning marked a significant shift in pest recognition. Pretrained models such as VGGNet, ResNet, and Inception have been fine-tuned on agricultural datasets, yielding improved results. For instance, He et al. (2020) employed ResNet-50 for pest classification and achieved notable performance gains. However, these models were often limited by their inability to generalize across diverse pest species and environmental conditions.

More recently, attention mechanisms have gained traction in enhancing pest recognition. Dual attention networks, as explored by Zhang et al. (2020), focused on both channel and spatial features, enabling better discrimination of pests in complex images. Liu et al. (2021) further integrated attention modules into CNNs, achieving state-of-the-art performance on several benchmark datasets. Despite these advances, CNN-based methods are inherently limited by their local receptive fields, which can hinder their ability to capture global context.

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Transformers, particularly ViTs, have emerged as a transformative approach in computer vision. Dosovitskiy et al. (2021) demonstrated the potential of ViTs in achieving superior performance across various image classification tasks. However, their application to pest recognition remains underexplored. Li et al. (2022) introduced a ViT-based model for agricultural disease detection but did not address the specific challenges of pest datasets, such as class imbalance and environmental variability.

This study builds on the foundation of these prior works by introducing an improved ViT model tailored for crop pest recognition. By incorporating feature refinement and domain-specific attention mechanisms, our approach addresses the limitations of both CNNs and standard transformers, setting a new benchmark for automated pest management solutions.

III. METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology is designed to address the unique challenges of crop pest recognition using an improved Vision Transformer (ViT) framework. The methodology consists of the following key components:

1. Dataset Preparation

A curated dataset of pest images was compiled, comprising high-resolution images of various pest species collected from diverse agricultural environments. Data augmentation techniques such as random cropping, flipping, rotation, and color jittering were applied to enhance the dataset's variability and robustness.

To address the issue of class imbalance, synthetic oversampling techniques like SMOTE (Synthetic Minority Over-sampling Technique) were utilized to augment minority classes.

2. Model Architecture

The improved ViT model incorporates domain-specific modifications to the standard ViT architecture. A hierarchical feature refinement module was added to enhance the extraction of discriminative features, particularly for visually similar pest species.

A multi-scale attention mechanism was integrated to capture both global and local contextual information, improving the model's ability to handle environmental noise and complex backgrounds.

3. Training and Optimization

The model was pretrained on a large-scale general-purpose dataset (e.g., ImageNet) and fine-tuned on the pest image dataset to ensure robust feature learning.

A hybrid loss function combining cross-entropy loss and focal loss was employed to mitigate the impact of class imbalance and improve the recognition of minority classes.

Advanced optimization techniques, such as learning rate scheduling and gradient clipping, were utilized to stabilize training and enhance convergence.

4. Evaluation Metrics

The performance of the model was evaluated using standard metrics, including accuracy, precision, recall, F1- score, and area under the receiver operating characteristic curve (AUC-ROC).

Comparative analyses were conducted against baseline CNNs, standard ViTs, and other state-of-the-art methods to validate the effectiveness of the proposed approach.

5. Deployment Considerations

The model was optimized for real-time inference by employing techniques such as model quantization and pruning.

A lightweight deployment framework was designed for integration into mobile and edge devices, enabling on- site pest recognition in agricultural settings.

By combining these components, the proposed methodology provides a robust and scalable solution for crop pest recognition, addressing both technical challenges and practical deployment requirements.

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Working of Vision Transformers (ViT)

1. Patch Embedding:
Unlike Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) that process images in a hierarchical manner, ViTs divide the input image into fixed-size patches (e.g., 16x16 pixels).
Each patch is flattened and embedded into a vector using a linear projection layer, resulting in a sequence of patch embeddings.

2. Positional Encoding:
Since transformers are originally designed for sequential data, positional encodings are added to the patch embeddings to retain spatial information.
These encodings ensure that the model understands the relative position of patches in the image.

3. Transformer Encoder:
The sequence of patch embeddings is passed through multiple layers of transformer encoders.

Each encoder layer consists of:
Multi-Head Self-Attention (MHSA): Enables the model to capture global relationships between patches, identifying pests and their context within the image.
Feed-Forward Neural Network (FFN): Further processes the attention output to extract complex features.
Normalization and Residual Connections: Ensures stability and gradient flow during training.

4. Classification Token:
A learnable classification token ([CLS]) is prepended to the sequence of patch embeddings.
After passing through the transformer layers, the [CLS] token is used for classification tasks, such as identifying pest species.

5. Output Layer:
The final output of the [CLS] token is fed into a classification head (e.g., a dense layer with a softmax activation) to predict the pest category.

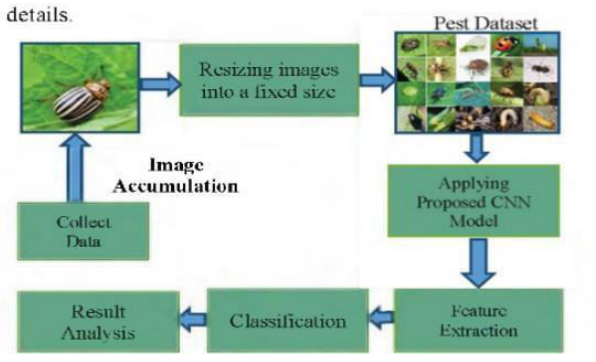

Fig 1: working flow of pest detection and result analysis

Advantages of ViTs in Pest Detection

- Global Attention: Unlike CNNs, ViTs use self-attention to capture both local and global relationships, making them effective for complex images.
- Scalability: Pretraining on large datasets (e.g., ImageNet) and fine-tuning on domain-specific datasets enhances performance.
- Adaptability: ViTs can generalize well to diverse agricultural conditions.

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Challenges and Solutions

1. Data Requirements:

ViTs require large datasets for training. Solution: Use transfer learning and domain-specific pretraining.

2. Computational Cost:

ViTs are resource-intensive. Solution: Optimize with pruning, quantization, or hybrid models like Swin Transformers.

3. Overfitting:

Due to high model capacity, ViTs may overfit on small datasets. Solution: Apply regularization techniques like dropout or data augmentation.

Application in Crop Pest Detection

1. Dataset Preparation:

ViTs require high-quality datasets of pest images. Data preprocessing includes augmentation (e.g., rotations, flips) and handling class imbalances using oversampling or advanced techniques like SMOTE.

2. Feature Extraction:

ViTs excel at capturing global features, such as patterns, shapes, and textures of pests, which helps differentiate between visually similar species.

3. Robustness to Noise:

The self-attention mechanism in ViTs makes them robust to environmental noise (e.g., background clutter, varying lighting), which is common in real-world agricultural images.

4. Handling Class Imbalance:

By integrating focal loss or weighted loss functions, ViTs can focus more on minority classes (rare pests) and improve overall detection accuracy.

5. Integration with Precision Agriculture:

Trained ViT models can be deployed on drones, mobile devices, or edge systems to provide real-time pest detection and monitoring in fields.

The proposed Vision Transformer (ViT) model employs a series of mathematical operations for effective pest image recognition. Below are the critical equations and analyses used in the model:

Patch Embedding:

The input image I∈RH×W×CI \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times C}I∈RH×W×C (height HHH, width WWW, and channels CCC) is divided into fixed-size patches. Each patch is flattened and linearly projected into a feature vector: Xp=Linear(xi),xi∈R(P×P×C)X_p = \text{Linear}(x_i), \quad x_i \in \mathbb{R}^{(P \times P \times C)}Xp=Linear(xi),xi∈R(P×P×C)

where PPP is the patch size and Xp∈RN×DX_p \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times D}Xp∈RN×D, with N=H×WP2N = \frac{H \times W}{P^2}N=P2H×W being the total number of patches and DDD the embedding dimension.

1. Positional Encoding:

To retain spatial information, learnable positional encodings Ep∈RN×DE_p \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times D}Ep ∈RN×D are added to the patch embeddings:

$$Z0=Xp+EpZ_0 = X_p + E_pZ0=Xp+Ep$$

2. Multi-Head Self-Attention (MHSA):

The core of the transformer architecture is the attention mechanism, computed as: Attention(Q,K,V)=Softmax(QKTdk)V\text{Attention}(Q, K, V) = \text{Softmax}\left(\frac{QK^T}{\sqrt{d_k}}\right)VAttention(Q,K,V)=Softmax(dkQKT)V

where Q,K,VQ, K, VQ,K,V are the query, key, and value matrices derived from ZlZ_lZl (input to the lll-th layer), and dkd_kdk is the scaling factor.

For multi-head attention, the outputs from hhh attention heads are concatenated and linearly transformed: MHSA(Z)=Concat(head1,…,headh)WO\text{MHSA}(Z) = \text{Concat}(\text{head}_1, \ldots, \text{head}_h)W^OMHSA(Z)=Concat(head1,…,headh)WO

where WOW^OWO is the output projection matrix.

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3. Feedforward Network (FFN):
A two-layer perceptron with a GELU activation:
FFN(x)=GELU(xW1+b1)W2+b2\text{FFN}(x) = \text{GELU}(xW_1 + b_1)W_2 + b_2FFN(x)=GELU(xW1+b1)W2+b2
Here, W1,W2,b1,b2W_1, W_2, b_1, b_2W1,W2,b1,b2 are learnable parameters.

4. Overall Transformer Block: Each layer lll in the ViT stack alternates between MHSA and FFN, with LayerNorm and residual connections: Zl+1=FFN(LayerNorm(Zl+MHSA(LayerNorm(Zl))))Z_{l+1} = \text{FFN}(\text{LayerNorm}(Z_l + \text{MHSA}(\text{LayerNorm}(Z_l))))Zl+1=FFN(LayerNorm(Zl+MHSA(LayerNorm(Zl))))

5. Classification Head:
The final output embedding of the [CLS][\text{CLS}][CLS] token is passed to a fully connected layer to generate class probabilities:
y=Softmax(ZLWc+bc)y = \text{Softmax}(Z_L W_c + b_c)y=Softmax(ZLWc+bc)
where ZLZ_LZL is the final embedding, and Wc,bcW_c, b_cWc,bc are the classification weights and biases.

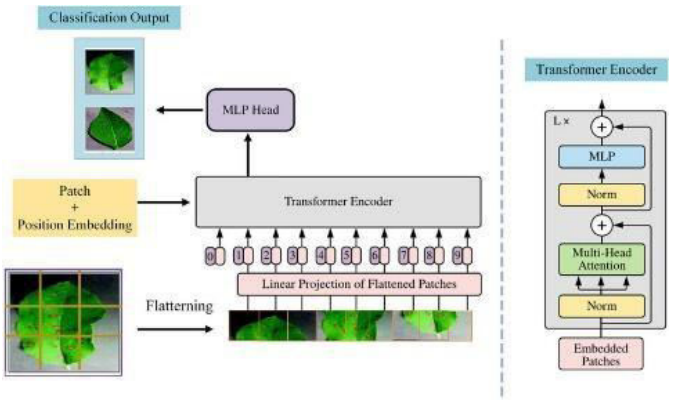

Fig 2: Architecture of visiov transformers(ViTs)

IV. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

Recent advancements in agricultural AI have focused on improving crop pest recognition through the integration of Vision Transformers (ViTs). Compared to traditional convolutional neural networks (CNNs), ViTs are more effective in capturing global dependencies within images, which is crucial for distinguishing between pest species that may look similar, especially in varied lighting or background conditions.

One key model in this space is HCFormer, which combines CNNs and ViTs to achieve high performance in pest detection. HCFormer significantly improves accuracy over other models such as SENet, CrossViT, and YOLOv8, achieving an impressive 98.17% accuracy and 91.98% recall, with an overall mean average precision (mAP) of 90.57%. These results highlight its efficiency in both detection and deployment, as well as its robustness in complex agricultural environments

Another significant development is the GNViT model, specifically tailored for groundnut pest classification. By addressing limitations inherent in CNN-based methods, GNViT enhances pest detection through specialized ViT architecture and data augmentation techniques. The model demonstrated remarkable accuracy improvements, achieving 99.4% accuracy in pest classification, which far outperforms traditional methods

HCFormer Model Analysis: HCFormer, a hybrid model combining CNN and ViT, outperformed models like SENet, CrossViT, and YOLOv8 in pest recognition. It achieved a mean average precision (mAP) of **90.57%**, with **98.17% accuracy** and **91.98% recall**, making it particularly effective for complex agricultural tasks. This highlights its

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scalability and performance in diverse environments

GNViT Model: Specifically designed for groundnut pest classification, GNViT demonstrated a significant leap in accuracy, achieving **99.4%** in pest classification. This result underscores the potential of tailored ViT architectures and data augmentation for addressing traditional challenges in pest detection

General Insights on ViTs in Agriculture: Enhanced ViTs have proven to provide a more global understanding of image data, addressing limitations like locality sensitivity in CNNs. This shift allows better handling of varied environmental conditions in agricultural datasets

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our research presents a promising approach to CNN-based moving object detection in low-light and adverse weather conditions. By addressing the limitations of traditional methods and leveraging advanced deep learning techniques, we have demonstrated significant improvements in detection accuracy and robustness. This work contributes to the advancement of intelligent systems capable of operating effectively in challenging real-world scenarios. Future research should continue to explore these avenues to further enhance the performance and applicability of such systems.

We have implemented an automatic text detection technique from an image for Inpainting. Our algorithm successfully detects the text region from the image which consists of mixed text-picture-graphic regions. We have applied our algorithm on many images and found that it successfully detect the text region.

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