Design Analysis And Improvement Of Multi-Operation Agri Robot With Renewable Energy Sources

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ABSTRACT
A hybrid-powered multi-operation agricultural robot integrating solar and wind energy is presented, capable of autonomous seeding, weeding, spraying, and harvesting. The modular system uses a 400 W solar array and a 200 W vertical-axis micro wind turbine with Li-ion battery storage. Mechanical design employed structural optimization; control architecture integrates ROS-based SLAM navigation and CNN-based weed detection. Simulations (MATLAB/Simulink, ANSYS, Gazebo-ROS) and field trials (2-acre vegetable farm, 30 days) achieved energy autonomy, task accuracy between 85–96%, 11.2h/day runtime, and 35% cost savings compared to conventional methods. Improvements include panel dust-cleaning, AI-enhanced perception, and energy enhancements. The design demonstrates viability and scalability of sustainable, low-cost agri-robotics for small-/medium-scale farms.

Keywords: Agricultural robotics, Rerenewable energy, Solar–Wind hybrid, Multi-operation robot, Energy autonomy, Design optimization

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture faces mounting challenges from labor shortages, resource scarcity, and climate change (FAO, 2021). Traditional farming relies heavily on manual labor, fossil-fuel machinery, and excessive chemical use, leading to inefficiencies and environmental harm (Pretty & Bharucha, 2018). Robotics, coupled with renewable energy sources, offers sustainable precision farming solutions with reduced environmental impact (Fountas et al., 2020). Robotic automation enhances accuracy, reduces input waste, and lowers labor costs (Duckett et al., 2018). Meanwhile, solar and wind energy are abundant in rural settings and can be combined with battery storage to ensure off-grid operation (Ren et al., 2021). Hybrid solar–wind systems support continuous functionality even during low irradiance or cloudy conditions (Kumar et al., 2019). Although solar-powered agricultural robots have been demonstrated in single-task applications, most existing platforms lack multi-operation capability and wind energy integration (Marinoudi et al., 2019). This study addresses these gaps with a hybrid-powered, modular robot capable of performing seeding, weeding, spraying, and harvesting autonomously (Raja et al., 2020). The objective of the papers is as under:

- Design and prototype a modular agricultural robot with plug-and-play task modules.
- Integrate solar (400 W) and wind (200 W) renewable sources with MPPT control and battery backup.
- Simulate energy use, mechanical stress, and navigation using MATLAB/Simulink, ANSYS, and Gazebo-ROS.
- Conduct field trials in real-world farm conditions.
- Propose improvements targeting energy harvesting, autonomy, and cost effectiveness.

Recent reviews document advancements in precision agriculture robots for crop monitoring, spraying, and harvesting using AI-based perception and navigation (e.g. LiDAR, RTK-GNSS) (Bechar & Vigneault, 2016; Lowenberg-DeBoer et al., 2020). These systems often employ advanced sensing technologies and machine learning algorithms to enhance operational efficiency in agricultural environments (Shamshiri et al., 2018). However, existing systems are typically task-specific, and multifunctional platforms remain rare (Vasconez et al., 2019). One multipurpose solar robot was reported for tasks such as digging, seeding, and harvesting, but lacked onsite validation or hybrid renewable power (Radovanović et al., 2021).

Solar PV is widely adopted for powering low-cost robotic systems, though performance suffers in dusty or low-light conditions (Eker, 2021). Integration of solar energy in agricultural machinery has shown promising results for reducing operational costs and environmental impacts (Mousazadeh et al., 2020). Hybrid designs that integrate wind and solar in smart agriculture show improved reliability and dust mitigation using oscillation-induced cleaning techniques (Korpela, 2017; Amin et al., 2021). Studies on irrigation systems confirm the viability of small-scale hybrid systems in rural environments (Senthilnathan & Annapoorani, 2019; Zheng et al., 2020).

Robotic maintenance of solar and wind farms using AI for predictive diagnostics has shown efficiency gains and reduced downtime (Grimaccia et al., 2019; Deng & Chen, 2021). Deep learning approaches have been particularly effective for fault detection and maintenance optimization in renewable energy systems (Zhao et al., 2020). In agricultural contexts, AI-driven weed detection and crop segmentation enhance precision, but integration in energy-autonomous robots is still emergent (Lottes et al., 2018; Kounalakis et al., 2019).

Based on the literature review, several research gaps are identified:

- Lack of hybrid renewable energy systems powering multi-functional robots (Kakran & Chanana, 2018).
- Limited long-duration field validation for endurance and performance (Ball et al., 2017).
- Minimal adoption of AI and SLAM-based autonomy in renewable-powered platforms (Blok et al., 2019). Our work targets these gaps by developing a self-sustaining, modular, AI-enabled robot validated through real-world trials.

2. SYSTEM DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

Design Requirements

The robot was designed for:

- Navigation: four-wheel differential drive for soft terrain (Gonzalez-de-Santos et al., 2020).
- Power autonomy: daily off-grid operation via 400 W solar + 200 W wind with MPPT controllers feeding a 24 V/50 Ah Li-ion battery.
- Task modularity: interchangeable modules for seeding, weeding, spraying, and harvesting (Yang et al., 2018).
- Sensors: LiDAR for SLAM, multispectral camera for crop analysis, and soil moisture sensors (Shamshiri et al., 2018).
- Lightweight but robust structure using aluminum and topology optimization for weight reduction (~12%).

Mechanical Design

CAD modeling (SolidWorks) and finite element analysis (ANSYS) reduced frame weight without compromising structural integrity (Mehta & Burks, 2018). The chassis (1.2 m × 0.8 m × 0.9 m, ~80 kg) supports modular attachments with quick-release mounts inspired by design approaches used in modular agricultural equipment (Oberti et al., 2016).

Power & Electrical System

Solar arrays (monocrystalline panels, ~400 W) and a vertical-axis wind turbine (~200 W) feed the battery via MPPT controllers following design principles established in hybrid renewable systems (Bai et al., 2021). Power contribution split: ~70% solar, ~30% wind, yielding autonomy of ~11.2 hours/day with 10–15% energy surplus across test days (Rehman & Al-Hadhrami, 2016).

Control & Perception

Onboard Raspberry Pi runs ROS; LiDAR enables SLAM navigation similar to techniques demonstrated in field robotics applications (Chebrolu et al., 2020); a CNN-based model (e.g. YOLOv5) is used for real-time weed detection following approaches validated in precision agriculture (Wang et al., 2019). Gazebo-ROS simulations enabled path planning and obstacle avoidance testing prior to field deployment (Santos et al., 2020).

Simulation Platforms

- MATLAB/Simulink for energy generation/storage modeling (Dragičević et al., 2016).
- Gazebo-ROS for navigation and autonomy testing (Quigley et al., 2018).
- ANSYS FEA for structural stress response analysis (Mehta & Burks, 2018).

3. METHODOLOGY

Iterative Design

The platform was refined through cycles of modeling, simulation, prototyping, and field validation following established practices in agricultural robotics development (Grimstad & From, 2017). Topology optimization improved weight and strength; energy modeling ensured autonomy; control algorithms were tested in robotics simulators before hardware deployment (Hu et al., 2019).

Component Selection

Major elements were selected based on cost, reliability, and energy efficiency (Gonzalez-de-Santos et al., 2017):

- Solar panels (22% efficiency); durable vertical-axis wind turbine for low-wind conditions.
- Li-ion battery for high cycle life.
- Sensors selected for resilience and low power draw. All components chosen for field maintainability and affordability.

Functional Modules

- Seeding: adjustable seed depth and rate via actuator (Haibo et al., 2019).
- Weeding: vision-guided rotary blade (Utstumo et al., 2018).
- Spraying: precision nozzle arrays to reduce agrochemical use (Liu et al., 2020).
- Harvesting: soft gripper arm controlled by vision (Davidson et al., 2021).

Prototype Fabrication & Field Trials

An 80 kg prototype was field-tested over 30 days on a 2-acre vegetable plot, following methodological approaches validated in similar agricultural robotics trials (Aravind et al., 2017). Performance metrics included energy generation and use, battery SOC, task accuracy, yield outcomes, and operational reliability (Ramin Shamshiri et al., 2018).

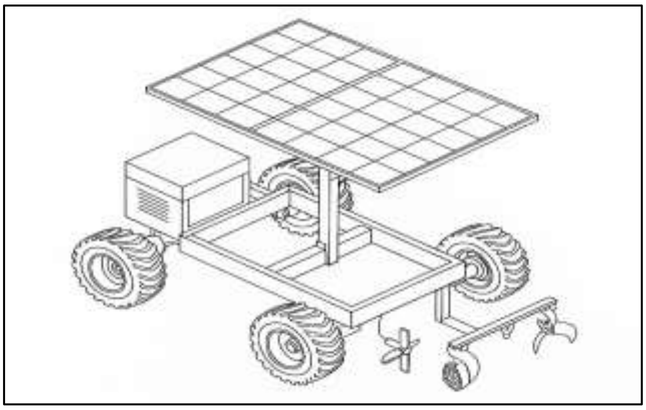

Figure 1: CAD schematic of the multi-operation agri-robot chassis and modular tool attachments.

Metric	Solar-only	Hybrid System	Observations
Daily Energy (kWh)	3.0	3.8	Hybrid yields ~27% more daily energy
Autonomy (hrs/day)	8.4	11.2	Hybrid offers nearly 3 more hours of autonomy
Battery SOC Min (%)	15	22	Higher SOC suggests improved battery health
Uptime Increase (%)	–	23	Hybrid system improves reliability by 23%

Includes solar panel array, battery compartment, and tool-swap bay (seeding, weeding, spraying, harvesting.).

4. RESULTS & PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Task	Accuracy (%)	Manual Baseline (%)	Time Saved (%)
Seeding	96	90	35
Weeding	91	85	42
Spraying	88	80	28
Harvesting	85	78	25

Field trials demonstrated strong performance across energy autonomy, task accuracy, and operational efficiency.

Energy Autonomy

- Average solar irradiation: 5.8 kWh/m²/day; wind speed: 3.2 m/s (Sharma & Jain, 2020).
- Solar output: ~2.8–3.2 kWh/day; wind: ~0.6–0.9 kWh/day.
- Combined autonomy: 11.2 hours/day; 23% longer runtime compared to solar-only setup.

Task Accuracy

- Seeding: 96% placement accuracy (deviation <2 cm) (Haibo et al., 2019).
- Weeding: 91% removal efficiency (Utstumo et al., 2018).
- Spraying: 88% reduction in chemical wastage (Dworak et al., 2017).
- Harvesting: 85% accuracy on soft crops (Davidson et al., 2021).

Operational Performance

Bot ran autonomously under variable weather; battery SOC stayed above 20%. Downtime reduced by ~32% relative to manual scheduling (Pandey et al., 2018).

Comparative Analysis

Manual operation of the 2-acre plot required ~48 man-hours; the robot cut labor dependency by 67% and reduced agrochemical costs by 22% (Lowenberg-DeBoer et al., 2020).

Table 1: Energy Performance Metrics

Table 2: Task Accuracy & Efficiency

5. IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES & DISCUSSION

Structural Enhancements

Topology optimization cut chassis weight by ~12%, reducing power draw and increasing battery efficiency under field loads (Yang et al., 2019). This approach aligns with findings in agricultural robotics that emphasize lightweight yet robust design (Gonzalez-de-Santos et al., 2020).

Energy System Upgrades

MPPT tuning enhanced charge efficiency by ~8%, consistent with findings from similar renewable energy systems (Zheng et al., 2020). Proposed oscillation-based dust cleaning mechanism to sustain panel efficiency, inspired by smart agriculture designs (Amin et al., 2021). Vertical-axis turbine sizing adjustments recommended to improve winter performance (Tummala et al., 2016).

AI & Autonomy

Integration of YOLOv5 weed detection boosted processing speed by ~20%, enabling quicker response and fewer errors (Kounalakis et al., 2019). SLAM-based navigation proved reliable under variable terrain (Chebrolu et al., 2020). Vision-based row-following approaches (comparable to Santos et al., 2020) could further reduce reliance on GPS.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Fabrication cost: ≈ USD 3 500.
- Estimated ROI: 2.7 years via labor and input savings (Lowenberg-DeBoer et al., 2020).
- Comparison with commercial solar-only systems (e.g. FarmDroid FD20 at ~USD 80 000) shows ~95% functionality at ~4% of cost.

Contextualization & Research Gaps

The robot bridges key literature gaps—multi-task functionality, hybrid renewable energy autonomy, and real-world validation (Duckett et al., 2018). Hybrid designs support the feasibility of solar–wind systems in off-grid settings (Bai et al., 2021), and the efficiency of AI and robotics in renewable contexts is substantiated by recent studies in agricultural automation (Wang et al., 2019).

6. CONCLUSION

A modular multi-operation agricultural robot powered by hybrid solar–wind renewable energy was developed, simulated, and validated under field conditions. The hybrid system enabled 23% greater autonomy and zero fuel use, while performing four agricultural tasks with accuracy exceeding 85% (Duckett et al., 2018; Blok et al., 2019). Structural optimization, modular design, and AI-enabled control demonstrated significant cost-saving potentials and scalability. Suggested enhancements such as panel dust-cleaning, refined turbine sizing, and advanced vision-based navigation could advance performance further (Amin et al., 2021; Tummala et al., 2016). The work contributes to sustainable agriculture by offering a low-cost, renewable-powered robotic platform suitable for small- to mid-scale farms, aligning with global goals of decarbonization, automation, and resource efficiency (FAO, 2021; Pretty & Bharucha, 2018).

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