Artificial Cognition for Early Leaf Disease Detection using Vision Transformers

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Abstract—There are many kinds of cassava leaf diseases firmly harm cassava yield, including four main types as followings: Cassava Bacterial Blight (CBB), Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD), Cassava Green Mottle (CGM), and Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD). In a traditional way, leaf diseases were diagnosed intuitively by farmers. This process is inefficient and unreliable. Several studies have recently relied on deep neural networks for identifying leaf diseases. In this research, we exploit the novel model named Vision Transformer (ViT) in place of a convolution neural network (CNN) for classifying cassava leaf diseases. Experimental results show that this model can obtain competitive accuracy at least 1% higher than popular CNN models (EfficientNet, Resnet50d) on Cassava Leaf Disease Dataset. These results also indicate the potential superiority of the ViT over established methods in analyzing leaf diseases. Next, we quantize the original model and successfully deploy it onto the Edge device named Raspberry Pi 4, which can be attached to a drone that allows farmers to automatically and efficiently detect infected leaves. This result has a significant capability for many future applications in smart agriculture.

Index Terms—smart agriculture, leaf diseases, vision transformer, Raspberry Pi

I. INTRODUCTION

In Africa, cassava is the second-largest source of carbohydrates. There are about 300 million Africans who consume cassava as primary nutrition every day. It is also a stable source of income for subsistence farmers due to the drought and pest-resistant characteristics. However, many plant diseases, especially leaf diseases, significantly affect cassava production quantity and quality. These diseases open a new challenge in the smart agriculture area, requiring considerable work for early and effectively detecting infected cassava leaves. Consequently, the profit of the cassava industry has been guaranteed.

With the development of computer vision in recent years, it is now possible to analyze leaf diseases without the farmers' observation, reducing time consumption, increasing accuracy, and protecting crops in time. Many studies are carried for this purpose, mainly divided into machine learning and deep learning-based approaches. However, the machine learning-based methods [1]–[4], generally require complex preprocessing and specific disease feature extraction before analyzing diseases. For solving these problems, many deep learning models are applied with high accuracy in plant disease detection, such as Faster Region-based Convolutional

Neural Network (F-RCNN) [5], [6], SSD with Inception module, and Rainbow concatenation (INAR-SSD) [7], Deep Residual Dense Network [8], ResNet [9], EfficientNet [10]. Nevertheless, these deep models usually require substantial computational resources during the training phase. This limitation motivates the release of Vision Transformer [11] a novel deep learning model which consumes significantly fewer arithmetical calculations to train than previous models. In Vision Transformer (VIT), a pure transformer encoder is directly utilized to sequences of image patches to accomplish image classification responsibilities. The experiments in [11] show that ViT achieves comparative results with the state-ofthe-art CNNs while the computational cost is exceptionally reduced in the training phase. As far as we know, this paper is the first research that exploits the Vision Transformer (ViT) model for cassava leaf disease classification. Our experiments show excellent results compared to modern models such as EfficientNet, Resnet50 on Cassava Leaf Disease Dataset, published by Makerere University and National Crops Resources Research Institute. This is consistent with the findings of [11]– [13], which suggest that ViT can perform very well in image classification tasks. The main contributions of this paper are listed below:

- We exploit ViT for detecting infected leaves. We first use the ViT model pre-trained on ImageNet - 21k [14], published by Google Research Team. Then, we retrain this model using Cassava Leaf Disease Dataset [15] to improve the model's accuracy for analyzing infected leaves task. Subsequently, the model is quantized for reducing the size and accelerating the inference step.
- We successfully deploys the quantized model onto the Edge device named Raspberry Pi 4 Model B. This device can be attached to a fly-cam to form the Drone Pi for real-time detection of infected leaves. This success will pave the way for early leaf disease detection, an essential part of smart agriculture.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section II discusses related works using traditional machine learning and deep learning for leaf diseases detection, Section III presents our proposed approach, Section IV shows the result and discussion, followed by the conclusion in Section V.

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II. RELATED WORKS

A. Machine learning approach

In the last decade, several traditional machine learning methodologies (e.g., K-Means clustering and support vector (SVM)) have been employed to identify and detect disease on plant leaves. The authors in [3] propose a model using image processing and SVM classifier for detecting diseases on cotton leaves. Yao et al. [4] use a similar approach to detect diseases on rice leave early and precisely. The presented SVM is capable of effectively classify various rice diseases (rice bacterial leaf blight, rice sheath blight, and rice blast) reported about 97% accuracy. Waghmare et al. [2] exploit a unique fractal to retrieve the segmented leaf texture and multiclass SVM for detecting common grape diseases. [1] introduce a novel image processing method and an artificial neural model to diagnose the disease of brinjal leaf. The authors apply K-Means clustering to extract appropriate features as the input of the model. However, the presented machine learning approaches require multiple preprocessing and extraction steps which are unsuitable for real-time detection or tasks requiring high performance.

B. Neural Network approach

Artificial neural network (ANN) exploits the combination of texture and color features to perform the leaf disease classification task. For example, in [16], [17], the authors use K-Means to extract image features before using these vectors for training the ANN classifier. Similarly, Sammany and Medhat [18] apply neural networks enhanced by genetic algorithms and support vector machines (SVM) to diagnose plant diseases. The study in [19] uses the Gabor filter to extract features and an ANN classifier to classify healthy and diseased samples. Recently, the authors in [20] utilize a hybrid metaheuristic feature selection and feed-forward neural network to identify mango leaves diseases. However, these ANN classifiers have low performance in some complex classification categories. Recent years have seen a rise in the number of deep learning studies, including image classification, object detection, and segmentation tasks [21]. With the continual advances in deep learning, many researchers aim to optimize deep neural networks for classifying crop diseases. For instance, the authors in [5] apply Faster Region-based Convolutional Neural Network (F-RCNN) to detect and recognize tomato plant leaf disease. Subsequently, Zhang et al. [6] improve F-RCNN by replacing VGG16 with a depth residual network resulting in 2.71% higher recognition accuracy compared with previous work. An optimized CNNs named INAR-SSD (SSD with Inception module and Rainbow concatenation) is proposed in [7] for real-time detecting apple leaf diseases. In [8], the authors attempt to restructure Deep Residual Dense Network for classifying Tomato leaf diseases within fewer parameters but higher accuracy than the original model.

III. PROPOSED APPROACH

A. System overview

As a result of recent advances in IoT, many industries, including agriculture, have been disrupted. IoT is an indispensable factor for improving agricultural quantity and quality at a lower cost. In the following years, the smart solution's usage powered by IoT will increase in the agriculture industry. As potential representatives, ground and aerial drones are widely utilized to evaluate crop health, crop monitoring, planting, crop spraying, and field analysis in smart agriculture. This paper proposes a system based on the Drone Pi, which is combined from a drone and a Raspberry Pi, for the early detection of infected leaves as shown in Fig.1. In this system, the Drone Pi is utilized to assess crop health via detect disease affecting leaves by the following steps:

- The Drone Pi's camera captures cassava leaf images, including the exact position of the spot in yield.
- A deep learning model named ViT, installed on the Drone Pi, is applied to classify and cluster infected leaves.
- The ViT classification's results, combine with the spot's position, are real-time send to the server via the 4G network to create a survey map about leave diseases of the cassava field. The farmers and rescue agency can instantaneously obtain this map via mobile devices and noticed the crop health problems beforehand, which prevents the high amount of loss or in some cases crop failure.

B. Cassava Leaf Disease Detection

As the central heart of the system, our Cassava Leaf Disease Detection mechanism exploits the Vision Transformer model to identify infected leaves.

The Transformer, a transduction model based entirely on self-attention mechanisms, has played an essential role in various computer vision tasks. The authors in [22] propose this model as a simple network architecture but exceptionally effective in machine translation. Then, many studies attempt to apply Transformer to different natural language processing (NLP) tasks ranging from syntactic analysis to sematic analysis [23]–[29]. Based on NLP tasks' achievements, many researchers have recently integrated self-attention mechanisms and Transformer models with Convolution Neuron Networks to create a hybrid model to enhance vision tasks' performance [30]–[36].

In contrast, the authors in [11] propose a full version of the transformer model named Vision Transformer (ViT) that reaches state-of-the-art performance on the image classification task. ViT is pre-trained on large datasets (e.g., JFT300M) and then transferred to multiple mid-sized or small image recognition benchmarks. In this paper, we utilize this model for classifying on Cassava Leaf Disease Dataset as shown in Fig.2, including the following steps:

• Splitting the cassava leaf image into fixed-size patches. The dimension of each patch can be 16x16 or 32x32.



Fig. 1: Smart Agriculture Scenario for Cassava Plants

- All image patches are flattened and added with the positional embedding vector. A special token is also added at the start.
- All embedded patches are put into Transformer Encoder.
- The previous step's output is passed directly to Feed Forward Neural Network to classify and cluster images into five categories: CBB, CBSD, CGM, CMD, and Healthy.

Concretely, our Cassava Leaf Disease Detection mechanism includes two stages: training and inference stage, as shown in Fig.3. In the former stage, the pre-trained ViT model is retrained using Cassava Leaf Disease Dataset for classifying infected leaves. The output model is then quantized to reduce the size (from about 220MB to 84MB) for compatibility to the edge device with limited resources. Then, the quantized model is deployed onto the Drone Pi to perform classifying and clustering infected leaf images task in the inference stage.



Fig. 2: ViT model for Cassava Leaves Disease Detection



Fig. 3: Cassava Leaf Disease Detection mechanism

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Dataset

This paper uses a dataset named Cassava Leaf Disease Dataset. This dataset includes 21397 images of cassava leaves divided into five categories: CBB, CBSD, CGM, CMD, and healthy leaves. Most images are taken from farmers and annotated by experts in Makerere University and National Crops Resources Research Institute. Fig. 4 depicts the representative of each category. Images are then resized to 224x224 as the requirement of the ViT model. To experiment, we use the k-fold cross-validation method with k = 5. The ratio of the training dataset and validation dataset is 4:1. The detail of training/validation images of each disease is shown in Table I.

B. Exprerimental environment and evaluation/measurement metrics

The model has been deployed and verified on Raspberry Pi 4 Model B with the specifications are shown in Table II. We use the F1 - score as the evaluation metric, which is the harmonic mean of precision and recall.



Fig. 4: Five common types of cassave leaf diseases

TABLE I: Cassava leaf disease dataset

Label	Disease	Training	Validation	Total Images
0	CBB	870	217	1087
1	CBSD	1752	437	2189
2	CGM	1908	478	2386
3	CMD	10526	2632	13158
4	Healthy	2061	516	2577
		17117	4280	21397

$$F1 = \frac{2 * (precision * recall)}{(precision + recall)}$$
(1)

$$precision = \frac{TP}{(TP + FP)} \tag{2}$$

$$recall = \frac{TP}{(TP + FN)} \tag{3}$$

TP (True Positive) represents the number of positive images classified correctly. FP (False Positive) denotes the number of negative images classified incorrectly. FN (False Negative) represents the number of undetected positive images. The model was trained on ImageNet - 21k by Google researchers. Then, we retrain and evaluate this model on the Cassava Leaf Disease Database.

C. Results

Table III shows the result of the evaluation per category, including precision, recall, and F1-score. As can be seen, the highest score belongs to the classifying CMD task with a 96% F1-score. The second-highest F1-score belongs to the identification of CBSD task, followed by CGM, Healthy with 86%, 83%, and 79%, respectively. The lowest score belongs to the CBB disease classification with a 74.5% F1-score. This

TABLE II: Experimental environment

Equipment	Specifications		
Name	Raspberry Pi 4 Model B		
System	Ubuntu 18.04		
Framework	torch 1.9.0, torch vision 0.9.0		
Language	Python 3.7.3		
CPU	Quad core Cortex-A72 (ARM v8) 64-bit SoC @1.5GHz		
RAM	8GB LPDDR4-3200 SDRAM		

disease has the lowest score due to its significant within-class variations: first, symptoms are visible as translucent watersoaked spots; then, these translucent spots become dark green spots; finally, spots expand, nearby spots merge to create large brown patches. Meanwhile, the scores of other infected categories are higher than 83% due to the minor differences among lesions' patterns from the same category. In addition, the variety of lesions' appearances between categories is substantial. Therefore, these infected categories can be effectively classified by our approach.

Fig. 5a depicts the training and validation loss through 165 epochs. After 165 epochs, the training and validation loss scores decrease to an optimal value around 0.2 and 0.4, respectively, and converge. As shown in Fig. 5b, when the epoch value increases from 1 to 20, the training accuracy grows sharply from 81% to 88%, and validation accuracy rises from 77% to 84%. Afterward, these values fluctuate upward before reaching the highest value at 95% refer to the training accuracy, and 90% refer to the validation accuracy. From these results, it is clear that ViT model is fast convergent over 165 epochs with high accuracy.

Table IV illustrates the comparison with the state-of-theart models on the cassava leaf disease dataset. The experimental results of these comparison models are taken from [37] through 165 epochs. Regarding to EfficientNet models, EfficientNetB3 achieves 88.1% weighted-average F1score while EfficientNetB4 and EfficientNetB5 reach 88.3% and 88.7% weighted-average F1-score, respectively. Finally, EfficientNetB6 attains the highest score of Efficient models with an 89.1% weighted-average F1-score. Meanwhile, the Resnet50 model achieves an 89.2% weighted-average F1score. Our system uses the Vision Transformer model, which obtains the overall highest score, 90.3% weighted-average F1score. In addition, the results from all comparison models also show that the CBB classification score is the lowest through the experiments. Hence, it can be concluded that CBB is the most complex category in Cassava Leaf Disease Dataset. The experiment results highly indicate again that the ViT model can achieve competitive scores compared with state-of-the-art models in the classifying cassava leaf diseases task.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper builds a system that relies on the ViT model to identify infected leaves with full promising results. We then successfully quantize the model to reduce the model size by the factor of three and deploy it onto the Raspberry Pi 4 Model B. In the future, we intend to attach this device to a

TABLE III: Classification performances of each category

Category	Precision	Recall	F1-score	
CBB	79	70	74.5	
CBSD	87	85	86	
CGM	81	85	83	
CMD	96	96	96	
Healthy	78	80	79	
overall	90	90	90	



Fig. 5: Training, validation loss and accuracy through 165 epochs of our approach

drone to directly analyze and identify the infected leaves from the camera. This work will help detect early diseased plants, potentially protecting their yield before causing irreparable damage, making a small contribution to developing smart agriculture.

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TABLE IV: Comparison with state-of-the-art models on cassava leaf disease detection - 165 epochs

Category Model	СВВ	CBSD	CGM	CMD	Healthy	Overall
Resnet50	66	83	82	96	74	89.2
EfficientNetB3	63	80	81	96	71	88.1
EfficientNetB4	61	82	81	96	75	88.3
EfficientNetB5	64	83	80	96	75	88.7
EfficientNetB6	66	82	82	96	75	89.1
OurModel	74.5	86	83	96	79	90.3

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