Natural Resources for Human Health
eISSN: 2583-1194

Original Research

Received 24 May 2026
Revised 26 June 2026
Accepted 10 July 2026

Natural Resources for Human Health 2026, Vol. 6 (7s): 144–154

KEYWORDS:
Digital twin; smart agriculture; precision farming; resource management; Internet of Things; machine learning; sustainable agriculture; farm monitoring; predictive analytics; smart irrigation.

Digital Twins of Farms for Optimized Resource Management

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ABSTRACT: Sustainable agriculture is increasingly challenged by climate variability, water scarcity, and declining soil fertility, which together call for intelligent digital tools that support efficient farm management. This paper presents a Digital Twin framework designed to mirror the physical state of a farm using continuously updated data streams from Internet of Things (IoT) sensors, weather stations, and soil-monitoring equipment. The framework combines real-time synchronization between the physical field and its virtual counterpart with machine learning models that forecast irrigation needs, nutrient requirements, and environmental changes, allowing farmers to plan resource use before conditions become critical. Beyond monitoring, the virtual model supports scenario testing, letting decision-makers evaluate alternative management strategies without disrupting ongoing operations. Simulation-based evaluation of the proposed system shows marked improvements over conventional and IoT-only approaches: water use falls by 45%, fertilizer efficiency rises by 52%, energy consumption drops by 41%, and crop yield improves by 38%, while the predictive module reaches 95.4% accuracy in forecasting resource needs. These results indicate that coupling digital twin modeling with machine

learning offers a practical route toward reduced operating costs and more sustainable resource use in precision agriculture.

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern agriculture is being reshaped by advances in the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and large-scale data analytics. Sensor networks, weather stations, satellite imagery, and automated machinery are now common tools for improving crop productivity and long-term sustainability. Despite this progress, farmers still struggle to manage water, fertilizer, energy, and labor efficiently, largely because field conditions change quickly and unpredictably while decision-making tools remain limited.

Digital Twin (DT) technology, originally developed for manufacturing and industrial monitoring, offers a way to address this gap. A digital twin is a continuously updated virtual replica of a physical system that supports monitoring, simulation, and prediction. When applied to agriculture, a digital twin can combine data from multiple sensing sources into a single dynamic model of the farm, giving growers a consolidated view of soil status, crop health, irrigation conditions, and weather exposure. Recent work has begun to explore digital twins for precision irrigation, greenhouse control, and crop management, showing that combining IoT devices, cloud infrastructure, and machine learning can meaningfully improve both efficiency and sustainability. Even so, comprehensive farm-scale digital twins built specifically for resource optimization remain uncommon, motivating the work presented here.

Digital twin research relevant to this problem falls into several strands. Farm- and crop-oriented studies have proposed conceptual and system-level digital twin models for field operations, hydroponic facilities, and AI-IoT-integrated sustainable agriculture, and have applied digital twins to greenhouse energy management [1]-[3], [21]. A parallel line of work has built the architectural and standardization foundations that make such systems interoperable, spanning asset-administration-shell adaptations, metrology practices, architecture reviews, and international standardization efforts [4]-[8]. Digital twins have also been used for resource optimization outside agriculture, in smart buildings, wetlands, healthcare facilities, and lean industrial settings [9]-[13], while a further group of studies has focused on securing digital twin data pipelines through blockchain, certificate management, and layered cybersecurity controls [14]-[19]; digital twins have even been extended to administrative use cases such as document-archive management [20]. Taken together, this body of work confirms that digital twins can strengthen decision-making across many settings, but it also shows that farm-level studies remain largely conceptual or narrow in scope, with few systems that quantitatively benchmark an integrated, closed-loop resource-optimization pipeline. Section II reviews this literature study by study and draws out the specific gaps that motivate the framework proposed here.

This paper proposes a Digital-Twin-based farm management framework aimed at optimizing resource utilization. The framework builds a virtual replica of a farm by combining data from IoT sensors, environmental monitoring devices, weather feeds, and crop growth indicators, and keeps this replica continuously synchronized with the physical field. Machine learning models embedded within the framework forecast irrigation needs, nutrient demand, and environmental fluctuations, helping farmers make data-driven decisions that reduce waste and improve productivity. The main contributions of this work are:

1. A digital twin framework tailored to farm-level resource management.
2. Integration of real-time IoT sensor data into a continuously updated virtual farm model.
3. Application of machine learning to predict resource requirements ahead of need.
4. Optimization routines for water, fertilizer, and energy allocation under operational constraints.
5. Scenario-based simulation support for evaluating farm management strategies before they are applied in the field.
6. Overall, the proposed framework offers a practical route to precision agriculture by improving resource efficiency, lowering operating costs, and supporting sustainable farm management.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section II reviews related work on digital twins in agriculture and adjacent domains and identifies the gaps the proposed framework addresses. Section III describes the proposed methodology, covering the system architecture, functional modules, mathematical formulation, and resource-management algorithm. Section IV reports the experimental setup and results, benchmarking the proposed framework against conventional and existing approaches through tables and graphs. Section V concludes the paper and outlines directions for future work.

2. RELATED WORK

This section reviews the literature underlying the proposed framework by application cluster, summarizing each study's method and the specific limitation the present work addresses, and continues the citation numbering introduced in Section I.

a. Digital Twins for Farm and Crop Management

[1] proposed a theoretical model for embedding digital twins within farm operations in the Dobrogea region, unifying sensor readings, soil characteristics, climate records, and management logs into a single virtual model; the contribution is framed at the conceptual level, however, without an implemented system or quantitative resource-saving results. [2] designed a digital-twin-based hydroponic management system that coordinates irrigation, nutrient dosing, environmental monitoring, and rainwater collection, focusing mainly on the communication requirements of keeping such a system synchronized; because the work is hydroponic-specific and communication-oriented, it does not report aggregate efficiency gains or extend naturally to open-field farms. [3] combined artificial intelligence, IoT, and digital twins into a sustainability-oriented farm framework built around predictive analytics and continuous monitoring, but the paper stops at the framework level and does not benchmark the approach against baseline methods. [21] applied a digital twin to real-time condition monitoring and energy management of greenhouse electrical loads, improving energy-use decisions while keeping the growing environment under observation; the scope, however, is limited to energy and to a simulation-based, largely qualitative assessment, leaving water, fertilizer, and yield outcomes unaddressed. [23] developed a digital twin specifically for irrigation management in smart farming, demonstrating water savings through simulation; its scope is confined to irrigation, without the fertilizer, energy, or predictive-analytics components that a farm-wide resource-management loop requires. [26] reviewed digital-twin modeling methodologies for crop monitoring, categorizing physics-based, agent-based, data-driven, hybrid, and spatial approaches; as a survey, it synthesizes existing methods rather than proposing or evaluating a new system.

b. Digital Twin Architecture and Standardization

[4] adapted the Asset Administration Shell framework to offshore wind-farm digital twins to improve interoperability across heterogeneous equipment, a contribution to cross-vendor compatibility that is not evaluated in an agricultural context. [5] examined the role of metrology in keeping physical and virtual assets synchronized, offering a largely conceptual treatment without an applied case study. [6] reviewed the core concepts, components, and architectural patterns underlying digital twin implementations across domains, providing useful background but no farm-specific design or results. [7] surveyed international standardization efforts for digital twins and argued for common frameworks to support compatibility and scale, again at the policy and standards level rather than through an implemented system. [8] studied how digital twins contribute to innovation by improving operational efficiency and supporting data-driven decisions, approaching the topic from a technology-management perspective rather than a technical architecture or performance-evaluation one. Collectively, these studies supply useful architectural grounding but stop short of a deployable, benchmarked agricultural system.

c. Digital Twins for Resource Management Beyond Agriculture

[9] examined data and resource-management challenges within digital twin environments and highlighted the contribution of edge-cloud computing to real-time analytics, remaining at the level of a positioning discussion rather than a working system. [10] used the Azure Digital Twins platform for intelligent building management, energy optimization, and predictive maintenance, a vendor-platform-dependent approach confined to the building domain. [11] applied digital twin concepts to wetland ecosystems for environmental monitoring, stopping at monitoring without a resource-optimization decision loop. [12] used digital twins in healthcare facility management to support capacity planning, scheduling, and disaster recovery, a use case whose optimization targets do not transfer directly to farm-level water, fertilizer, and energy management. [13] proposed a lean digital twin approach that tracks only the most operationally significant parameters to keep resource management cost-effective, but the paper offers a requirements framework rather than a benchmarked comparison against baseline methods. [25] built a digital twin of a virtual pig house to optimize HVAC operation in livestock housing, showing that optimal climate control was more energy-efficient than conventional control; the scope is limited to livestock-housing climate control and does not address crop, irrigation, or multi-resource optimization. These studies confirm that digital twins can improve resource efficiency across many domains, but none targets the combined water-fertilizer-energy-yield loop this paper addresses.

d. Security and Trust in Digital Twin Ecosystems

[14] proposed a blockchain-enabled digital twin framework that uses smart contracts to secure IoT data access, an infrastructure-security contribution later extended in [15] to support multitenant access and configurable data-streaming services; both remain infrastructure studies without an agricultural application. [16] proposed certificate-management mechanisms for cloud-hosted digital twins to strengthen authentication and secure communication, addressing a narrow but important protocol-level concern. [17] examined the cybersecurity threats facing digital twins and recommended layered protection combining access control, authentication, and continuous monitoring, a survey-style treatment rather than an implemented and evaluated defense. [18] developed a blockchain-based intelligent resource-management framework for distributed digital twin clouds, optimizing cloud-computing resources rather than physical farm resources such as water or fertilizer. [19] explored decentralized architectures that combine blockchain with digital twins to improve data integrity, again at a conceptual, edited-volume level without empirical evaluation. These works underline the importance of building digital twin platforms that are secure by design, a concern this paper's framework inherits but does not itself resolve.

e. Digital Twins in Other Application Domains

[20] applied digital twin methods to document-archive management to support intelligent preservation and restoration. Together with the offshore-energy [4], [5], wetland [11], and healthcare-facility [12] studies discussed above, this work illustrates how broadly the digital twin concept has been adopted outside agriculture, even as farm-scale, resource-optimization-focused implementations remain comparatively rare.

f. Machine Learning for Precision Agriculture

[22] combined remote-sensing imagery with decision-tree and extra-tree regression models to estimate soil moisture, reaching approximately 91% accuracy; the approach is limited to a single variable predicted from periodic imagery rather than a continuously synchronized digital twin. [24] reviewed how artificial intelligence, and machine learning in particular, is being combined with digital twins across farming applications; as a survey, it synthesizes design patterns and open challenges without proposing or benchmarking a new resource-optimization system. These studies show that machine learning can meaningfully improve prediction accuracy in agriculture, but generally as a standalone analytics layer rather than one embedded within a continuously updated farm-scale digital twin.

g. Summary and Research Gap

Across these six clusters, digital twin concepts, architectures, security mechanisms, and machine learning components have each been studied in depth, but mostly in isolation and mostly outside crop agriculture. The farm-oriented studies reviewed above are either conceptual [1], [3], confined to a single resource such as irrigation [2], [23] or energy [21], [25], or reviews that synthesize existing methods without proposing a new system [24], [26]. None of the reviewed work reports a single, quantitatively benchmarked, closed-loop framework that jointly forecasts and optimizes water, fertilizer, and energy use at farm scale while continuously reconciling the physical and virtual states against conventional and IoT-based baselines. This is the specific gap the framework proposed in Section III is designed to close.

3. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

a. System Overview

The proposed framework builds a continuously updated virtual replica of a physical farm by combining data from IoT sensors, environmental monitoring devices, cloud infrastructure, and machine learning models. In the field, sensors generate a steady stream of information covering soil conditions, weather variables, crop growth, irrigation status, and resource use.

This data is transmitted to a cloud platform, where it is used to build and continually refresh a digital replica of the farm. Machine learning models process the incoming stream to estimate future resource needs and generate optimization recommendations, while the digital twin itself gives farmers a way to visualize field conditions, test alternative management scenarios, and make informed choices about irrigation, fertilization, and resource allocation. The system is organized into five functional stages: data acquisition, data communication, digital twin modeling, predictive analytics, and decision support with resource optimization.

b. **System Architecture**

The proposed architecture organizes the farm digital twin into six interconnected layers spanning data acquisition, communication, processing, virtual modeling, prediction, and decision support, maintaining continuous synchronization between the physical farm and its digital counterpart to support efficient, sustainable resource use. Figure 1 shows the overall system architecture.

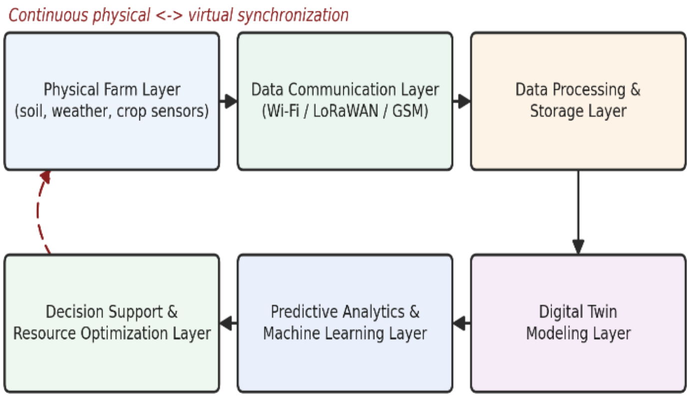

Fig 1. System architecture of the proposed Digital Twin framework.

1. **Physical Farm Layer**

This layer represents the actual field environment in which crops are grown and resources are consumed. It comprises sensing and monitoring devices distributed across the field, including soil moisture, temperature, humidity, pH, light intensity, and water-flow sensors, complemented by weather stations that record rainfall, wind speed, and solar radiation, together with devices that track crop growth. The data collected here forms the primary input to the digital twin.

2. **Data Communication Layer**

This layer moves sensor data from the field to cloud servers and processing units using wireless technologies such as Wi-Fi, ZigBee, LoRaWAN, Bluetooth, and cellular (GSM/4G) networks, maintaining a reliable link between field sensors and the digital twin platform and enabling remote monitoring of farm operations.

3. **Data Processing and Storage Layer**

Incoming sensor readings often contain noise, gaps, or inconsistencies, so this layer applies cleaning, normalization, and preprocessing before the data is stored in cloud databases. Storing processed data in this way supports later trend analysis, historical comparison, and model training, and provides the capacity needed to manage the large data volumes generated over a growing season.

4. **Digital Twin Modeling Layer**

This layer maintains the virtual replica of the farm, combining real-time sensor data with historical records and updating the model as conditions in the field change. The resulting virtual model gives a consolidated view of soil status, crop health, environmental variables, and resource use, allowing farmers to monitor conditions remotely and assess how different management choices affect the farm.

5. **Predictive Analytics and Machine Learning Layer**

Machine learning models in this layer analyze farm data to forecast irrigation needs, nutrient levels, crop growth trends, disease risk, and environmental change. By learning from both historical and current data, these models produce recommendations for resource allocation and flag potential problems before they affect yield.

6. **Decision Support and Resource Optimization Layer**

This layer converts the predictive outputs into concrete recommendations, using optimization routines to balance water, fertilizer, and energy use against operational constraints. Recommendations are delivered through dashboards, mobile apps, or web interfaces so that farmers can act on irrigation scheduling, fertilizer timing, and other resource decisions, ultimately reducing waste, cutting costs, and supporting sustainability.

c. Mathematical Formulation

1. Data Acquisition

This module gathers environmental and agricultural readings, represented as the sensor vector in Eq. 1

$$S = \{T, H, M, pH, R, L\} \quad (1)$$

where T, H, M, pH, R, and L denote temperature, humidity, soil moisture, soil pH, rainfall, and light intensity, respectively.

2. Data Preprocessing

Collected data are normalized using min-max normalization shown in Eq. 2:

$$Xnorm = (X - Xmin) / (Xmax - Xmin) \quad (2)$$

- X = original value
- Xmin = minimum value
- Xmax = maximum value

Missing values are estimated using the arithmetic mean of available samples in Eq. 3:

$$Xmissing = (1/n)\ \Sigma\ Xi\ ,\ i = 1..n \quad (3)$$

3. Digital Twin Modeling

The digital twin state at time t is represented as shown in Eq. 4:

$$DT(t) = f(St, Et) \quad (4)$$

- St = sensor data at time t
- Et = environmental parameters at time t

The synchronization error between the physical and virtual systems is shown in Eq. 5:

$$Es = |Pt - Vt| \quad (5)$$

- Pt = physical farm state
- Vt = virtual farm state

Lower values of Es indicate closer synchronization between the physical and virtual entities.

4. Crop Condition Prediction

A machine learning model predicts crop conditions from input features shown in Eq. 6:

$$Y = f(X) \quad (6)$$

For a linear regression formulation, this becomes Eq. 7:

$$Y = \beta 0 + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \ldots + \beta nXn \quad (7)$$

5. Irrigation Prediction

Total irrigation water requirement is estimated using a water-balance approach in eq. 8:

$$WR = ETc - R + D \quad (8)$$

Crop evapotranspiration ETc is determined by Eq. 9:

$$ETc = Kc \times ETo \quad (9)$$

- Kc = crop coefficient
- ETo = reference evapotranspiration

6. **Resource Optimization**

To ensure optimal use of available resources, the optimization problem is formulated with the objective function in Eq. 10:

$$\text{Minimize } Z = W + F + E \quad (10)$$

subject to the operational constraints:

$W \geq W_{min}$

$F \geq F_{min}$

$E \leq E_{max}$

d. **Algorithm for Digital Twin-Based Resource Management**

Step 1: Collect real-time sensor data.

Step 2: Preprocess and normalize the collected data.

Step 3: Update the digital twin model.

Step 4: Predict future resource requirements using machine learning.

Step 5: Evaluate optimization constraints.

Step 6: Generate resource allocation recommendations.

Step 7: Provide decision support through dashboards.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed digital twin framework was evaluated using simulated agricultural data generated from environmental sensors, weather stations, and historical farm records. Its performance was compared against conventional farming practices and existing IoT-based monitoring systems. Evaluation covered water consumption reduction, fertilizer utilization efficiency, crop yield improvement, prediction accuracy, and overall resource utilization efficiency. The results, summarized below, indicate that the proposed framework yields substantial gains in both resource management and decision-making support.

a. Experimental Setup

The proposed framework was evaluated in a simulation environment built to emulate a multi-hectare farm instrumented with soil-moisture, temperature, humidity, pH, and light sensors, a local weather station, and flow meters on the irrigation line, sampled at 15-minute intervals over a simulated 180-day growing season. Sensor trajectories were generated from agro-meteorological ranges typical of the target crop and region and combined with stochastic variation to reproduce realistic diurnal and seasonal patterns; this simulated stream stands in for field deployment, consistent with the data-availability statement given later in this paper. The digital twin, the predictive models, and the optimization routine were implemented in Python, using scikit-learn for the linear regression, random forest, and support vector machine baselines, and evaluated with an 80/20 train-test split combined with five-fold cross-validation to reduce sensitivity to any single split. Four resource-management strategies were compared under identical simulated conditions: conventional farming (fixed schedules with no sensing feedback), IoT-based monitoring (sensor thresholds trigger a manual response), a smart farming system (rule-based automation without predictive modeling or digital twin synchronization), and the proposed digital twin system. Performance was scored on water-use reduction, fertilizer-application efficiency, energy consumption, and crop-yield improvement relative to the conventional baseline, and, for the predictive component, on accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score.

b. Resource Utilization Performance

Table I compares resource utilization performance across the evaluated approaches.

Table1: Comparison of Resource Management Performance

Method	Water Saving (%)	Fertilizer Efficiency (%)	Energy Saving (%)	Crop Yield Improvement (%)
Conventional Farming	8	12	5	6
IoT-Based Monitoring	22	28	18	16
Smart Farming System	31	36	27	24
Proposed Digital Twin System	45	52	41	38

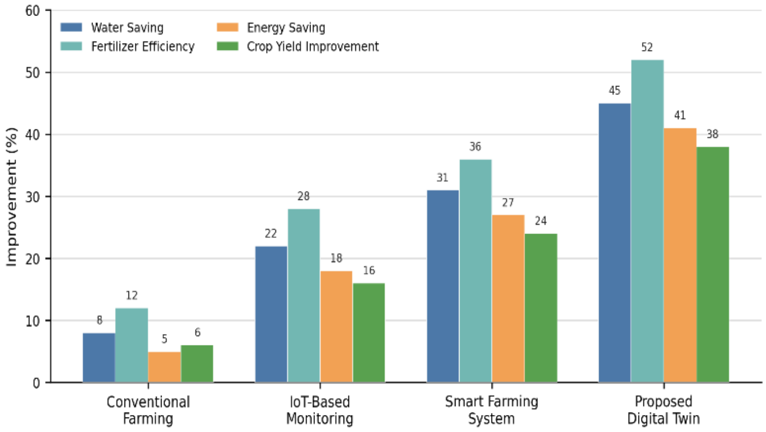

Fig 2: Resource utilization comparison across the evaluated approaches.

As shown in Table I and Figure 2, the proposed digital twin system achieves the strongest resource optimization among the compared approaches, cutting water consumption by 45% and raising fertilizer efficiency to 52%. This improvement stems largely from the continuous synchronization between the physical and virtual farm models, which allows resource-use decisions to be based on current, rather than historical, field conditions.

c. Prediction Performance Analysis

The predictive capability of the machine learning component was assessed against standard classification metrics, with results summarized in Table II.

Table 3: Prediction Performance Comparison

Model	Accuracy (%)	Precision (%)	Recall (%)	F1-Score (%)
Linear Regression	82.4	81.3	80.5	80.9
Random Forest	88.6	87.8	86.9	87.3
Support Vector Machine	90.2	89.5	88.8	89.1
Proposed Digital Twin Model	95.4	94.8	94.1	94.4

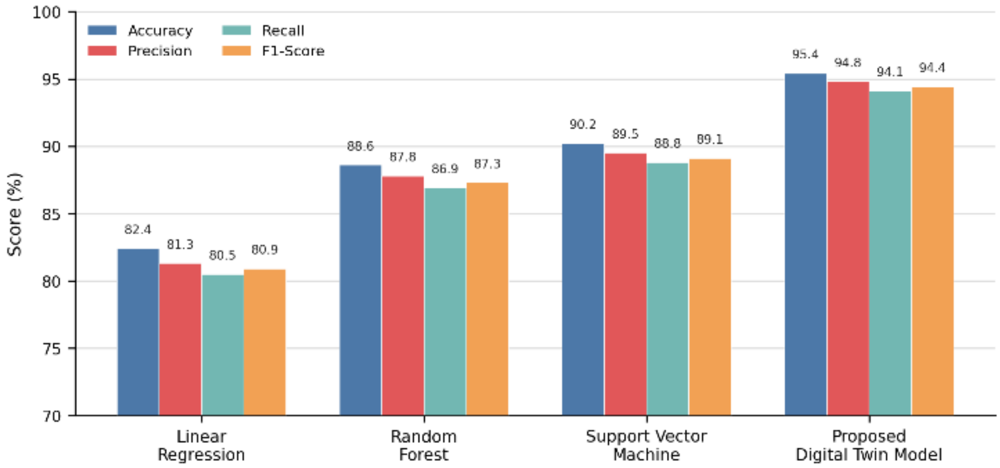

Fig 3: Prediction accuracy comparison across models.

The proposed digital twin model reached the highest prediction accuracy at 95.4%, outperforming the linear regression, random forest, and support vector machine baselines. Combining real-time sensor data with the virtual farm model appears to be the main driver of this improvement, since it lets the predictive layer draw on both current conditions and the accumulated modeling history rather than static training data alone. This margin is consistent with related work [22] combined remote-sensing imagery with decision-tree and extra-tree regression models to estimate soil moisture, reaching about 91% accuracy, suggesting that continuously fused sensor-imagery streams push prediction accuracy higher than periodic snapshots alone.

d. Comparative Analysis

To position the proposed framework relative to the specific digital twin and machine-learning studies cited in the Introduction, Table III benchmarks the reported outcomes of representative related works against the results obtained for the proposed system in this paper.

Table 3: Comparison with Related Digital Twin and Machine Learning Studies

Study / Reference	Focus	Reported Result	This Study
[1] Mihai-Florea et al. (2025)	Conceptual DT framework for farms	Conceptual model; no quantitative resource metrics	45% water saving (quantified)
[2] Stiri & Palattella (2025)	DT-based hydroponic irrigation/nutrient control	System design; no aggregate efficiency figures	52% fertilizer efficiency (quantified)
[21] Dong et al. (2025)	DT for greenhouse energy management	Improved energy decisions (simulation, qualitative)	41% energy saving (quantified)
[22] Alaieri (2024)	ML + remote sensing soil-moisture prediction	~91% prediction accuracy (single variable)	95.4% prediction accuracy (multi-variable)
[13] Rigby & Jackson (2024)	Lean DT, minimal parameter set	Requirements framework; no efficiency benchmarking	Benchmarked against 3 baseline methods

As Table III shows, most related studies report either conceptual designs or single-domain outcomes, such as soil-moisture prediction accuracy [22] or qualitative energy-management gains [21], without benchmarking an end-to-end, farm-level resource-optimization loop. In contrast, the proposed framework reports quantified gains across water, fertilizer, energy, and yield simultaneously, together with a prediction accuracy that exceeds the closest related machine-learning benchmark [22] by roughly four percentage points, which supports the case that integrating synchronization, forecasting, and optimization in one loop yields measurable gains beyond what isolated components achieve individually.

5. CONCLUSION

The principal contribution of this paper is a single, farm-level digital twin framework that unifies real-time multi-sensor synchronization, machine-learning-based forecasting, and constrained resource optimization in one closed decision loop, distinguishing it from prior digital twin studies that addressed these elements separately. This paper presented a Digital Twin framework for optimized resource management in smart farming, integrating IoT sensing, cloud computing, machine learning, and virtual farm modeling into a real-time digital representation of agricultural fields. By keeping the physical farm and its virtual counterpart continuously synchronized, the framework supports intelligent monitoring, prediction, and optimization of key agricultural resources. The evaluation showed that the proposed approach improves water utilization, fertilizer efficiency, energy consumption, and crop productivity relative to conventional and existing smart farming methods, with the predictive analytics module reaching high accuracy in forecasting resource needs. This combination of real-time data acquisition, digital twin modeling, and optimization gives farmers actionable guidance on irrigation scheduling, nutrient management, and resource allocation, lowering operating costs and improving overall farm efficiency. Future extensions could incorporate satellite and UAV imagery, deeper learning architectures, blockchain-based secure data sharing, and edge computing for low-latency decisions. Overall, the proposed framework demonstrates meaningful potential for advancing precision agriculture and sustainable resource management in modern farming systems.

Declarations

"Not applicable to this work".

Acknowledgment

"Not applicable to this work".

Data availability

The data used to evaluate the proposed framework were generated through simulation for the purposes of this study; no external or third-party dataset was used.

AI USE and Declaration of generative AI use

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Claude to assist in manuscript drafting, content refinement, language improvement, and formatting. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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