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Smart Agriculture: IoT-Based Automation and Monitoring for Enhanced Farming Efficiency

Vijayshankar Singh[1,*], Akansha Bhingare[1], Vrushabh Dhamne[1], Sanjay Jadhav[2]

Abstract

This study presents the development of an innovative agriculture automation and monitoring system designed to improve farming efficiency through the integration of low-cost sensors and microcontrollers. The system utilizes components such as PIR motion sensors, soil moisture sensors, DHT11 humidity sensors, and a relay motor pump for precise automation of irrigation and environmental monitoring. NodeMCU (ESP8266) acts as the primary controller, facilitating real-time data gathering and decision-making. Results show significant potential for optimizing water usage, soil moisture reading, and reducing manual labor. The proposed solution incorporates machine learning-based decision-making, enabling adaptive irrigation scheduling based on environmental conditions. Additionally, solar-powered integration enhances energy efficiency, making the system sustainable for remote agricultural regions. Experimental results demonstrate significant improvements in water conservation, optimized soil moisture levels, reduced human intervention, and enhanced crop health. This work contributes to the field of precision agriculture, IoT-driven smart farming, and real-time environmental automation, showcasing the potential for widespread adoption in modern farming practices.

Keywords: Soil moisture, humidity, temperature, sensors, irrigation

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a cornerstone of global food security, yet challenges such as water scarcity, climate change, and labor shortages necessitate the adoption of advanced technologies. Agriculture is the foundation of human civilization, ensuring food security and economic stability for billions of people worldwide. However, modern agriculture faces multiple challenges, including climate change, unpredictable weather patterns, water scarcity, soil degradation, labor shortages, and inefficient farming methods. These challenges highlight the urgent need for smart and sustainable solutions to improve productivity while preserving natural resources [1–6]. The Internet of Things (IoT) is transforming agriculture by providing farmers with various methods, such as precision and sustainable farming, to address field challenges. IoT technology enables the collection of data on factors like weather, moisture, temperature, soil fertility, crop growth, and overall farming conditions. It allows farmers to stay connected to their farms at any time and from anywhere. Wireless sensor networks are employed to track farm conditions, while microcontrollers manage and automate farming operations. Sustainable farming practices can be reinforced through smart irrigation techniques, predictive analytics, and renewable energy sources (e.g., solar-powered systems). These innovations contribute to eco-friendly farming solutions, making agriculture more

*__Author for Correspondence__
Vijayshankar Singh
E-mail: vsraghavan16@gmail.com

[1]Student, Department of Computer Engineering, Gopinath Mahadeo Vedak Institute of Technology, Tala-Raigad, Maharashtra, India
[2]Professor, Department of Computer Engineering, Gopinath Mahadeo Vedak Institute of Technology, Tala-Raigad, Maharashtra, India

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profitable and resilient against environmental fluctuations. A smartphone allows farmers to stay informed about the current conditions of their agricultural land through IoT, no matter the time or location. IoT technology has the potential to lower costs and improve the efficiency of traditional farming methods. The system aims to address issues related to over-irrigation, resource management, and environmental monitoring. This study explores the design and implementation of an automation and monitoring system for agriculture using low-cost and efficient components. The use of mobile applications and cloud computing enables farmers to stay connected to their farms from anywhere in the world, ensuring continuous monitoring and control [7–11].

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

This flowchart in Figure 1 displays the sequence for implementing and verifying the integrated software and hardware system. It is broken down into two parts: General Workflow and Integration of Hardware and Software.

General Workflow for a Project

- *Identification of a Project Problem and Review of Related Literature:* In this phase, a problem is identified, and literature data pertaining to the project is reviewed to gather useful information regarding previous studies done on the topic.
- *Project Scheduling:* A comprehensive outline of how the project will be conducted over time is created.
- *Hardware and Software Development:* The project is composed of two parts, development of hardware and development of software.
  - *Hardware Development:* This entails the designing of the hardware module and all related fabrication activities.
  - *Software Development and Testing:* The software module is developed and tested with the use of a simulation tool.
- *Hardware and Software Integration:* The system is fully integrated to allow for complete functioning of all parts.
- *Verification of the System and Project report:* The system is fully functional hence tested and the findings are stored in the project report.
- *Project Closing:* Close out of the project is undertaken when the required components of the project have been performed and finished.

Implementation of Hardware and Software

Hardware

1. Information is gathered from the site.
2. The information is uploaded to the software system.
3. The software runs to produce results.
4. Results are examined.

Project Methodology Flowchart

The given Figure 1 represents the Project Methodology Flowchart, outlining the structured approach followed from project initiation to closure.

MATERIALS

Hardware Requirement

The essential hardware components for this project are vital for ensuring the system operates efficiently. These components facilitate data acquisition, processing, and seamless interaction with the software. Listed below are the key hardware requirements (Figures 2–9):

- *PIR Motion Sensor:* Detects motion to trigger security measures.
- *Soil Moisture Sensor:* Monitors soil moisture levels to automate irrigation.
- *DHT11 Sensor:* Measures temperature and humidity for environmental monitoring.

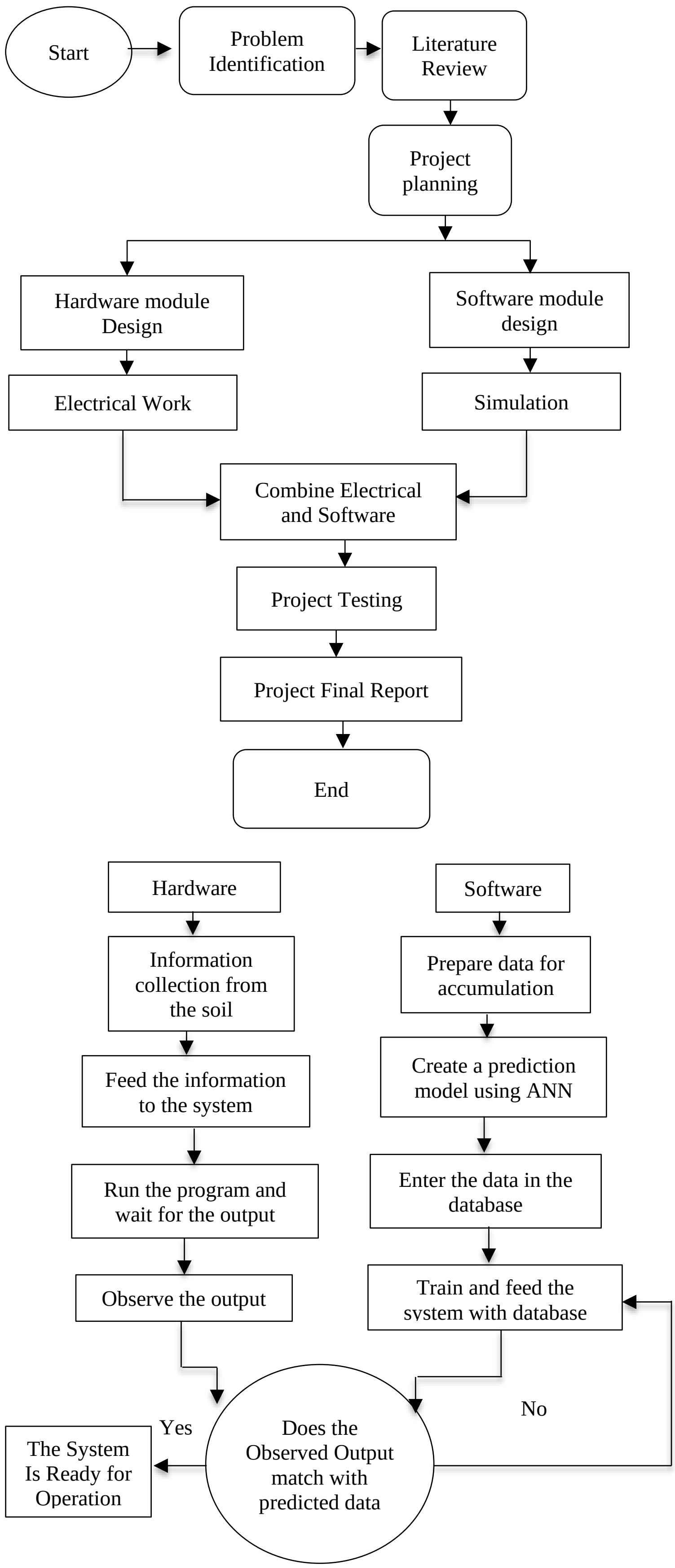

Figure 1. Flowchart of the proposed system (Software and Hardware system).

- *Relay Motor Pump:* Controls the DC water pump for irrigation.
- *16×2 I2C LCD:* Displays real-time data for user convenience.
- *NodeMCU ESP8266:* The NodeMCU development board is equipped with Wi-Fi functionality, analog and digital pins, as well as serial communication protocols.
- *I2C Module:* It is used to simplify communication between microcontrollers and devices like sensors, displays, and EEPROMs.
- *Jumper Wires:* Jumper wires are used for connecting different components in your circuit without soldering.

TESTS

Soil Moisture Sensor Calibration Test

Purpose

To determine dry, moist and wet soil threshold values for automation.

Figure 2. PIR motion sensor.

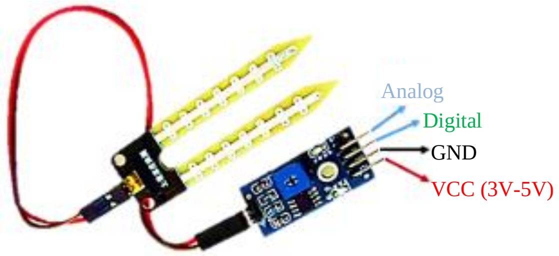

Figure 3. Soil moisture sensor.

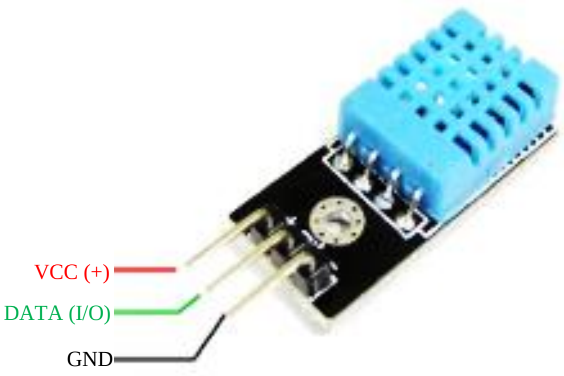

Figure 4. DHT11 sensor.

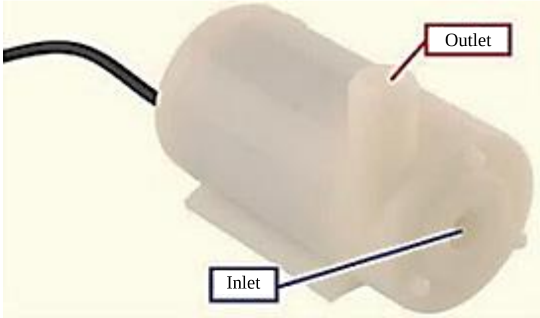

Figure 5. Relay motor pump.

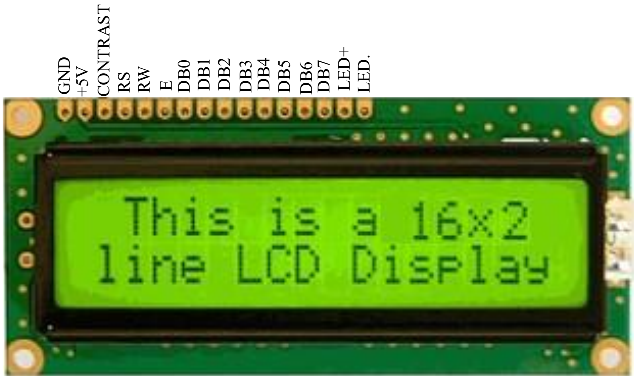

Figure 6. 16×2 I2C LCD.

Figure 7. Node MCU ESP8266.

Figure 8. I2C Module.

Figure 9. Jumper wire.

Steps

1. Connect the soil moisture sensor to NodeMCU (ESP8266).
2. Open the serial monitor in Arduino IDE.
3. Insert the sensor into dry soil and note the analog reading (e.g., ~850).
4. Add water to make the soil moderately moist, then note the new reading (e.g., ~500).
5. Water the soil to make it fully wet, then record the final reading (e.g., ~300).
6. Set threshold values in your code for automation (e.g., dry >700, moist 400–700, wet <400).

Expected Output

1. The sensor readings should change based on soil moisture levels.
2. The system should detect dry soil and trigger watering when needed.

Automatic Water Pump Activation Test

Purpose

To verify if the relay and DC water pump activate when the soil is dry.

Steps

1. Set threshold values in your code based on the calibration test.
2. Insert the sensor into dry soil and check if the relay module activates (turns the pump ON).
3. Water the soil manually or wait for the pump to work.
4. Observe if the pump turns OFF when soil moisture reaches the wet threshold.

Expected Output

1. The pump should activate when the soil moisture level falls below the set threshold.
2. The pump should stop when the soil becomes sufficiently wet.

Remote Monitoring Test Via Blynk App

Purpose

To ensure real-time monitoring of soil moisture through the Blynk IoT app.

Steps

1. Connect NodeMCU to Wi-Fi and link it with the Blynk app.
2. Create a virtual pin in Blynk to display soil moisture readings.

3. Insert the soil moisture sensor into different soil conditions (dry, moist, wet).
4. Check if real-time data updates in the Blynk app.
5. Verify if a notification is triggered when the soil moisture level goes below the threshold.

Expected Output

1. The Blynk app should display soil moisture levels in real-time.
2. A notification alert should be sent when the soil is dry.

Multi-Sensor Integration Test

Purpose

Ensure the system works correctly with multiple sensors (e.g., temperature, humidity, PIR motion sensor).

Steps

1. Connect DHT11 (temperature and humidity) along with the soil moisture sensor.
2. Display real-time data from both sensors on an LCD or Blynk app.
3. Ensure soil moisture and temperature do not interfere with each other's readings.

Expected Output

1. Both sensors should send accurate and independent readings.
2. The automation should work without conflicts.

RESULTS

Agricultural automation has proven successful in streamlining the monitoring and irrigation tasks in farming. The system accurately gauges soil moisture levels, triggers the water pump when required, and ensures ideal moisture conditions for crop development.

Through thorough testing and assessment, it has shown effectiveness in water management, precise moisture measurement, and dependable pump control (Figures 10–13). Real-time monitoring and the analysis of historical data have offered useful insights, helping farmers make well-informed decisions on irrigation timing and maximizing water efficiency. The system has demonstrated its potential to conserve water, enhance crop yields, and reduce the need for manual labor.

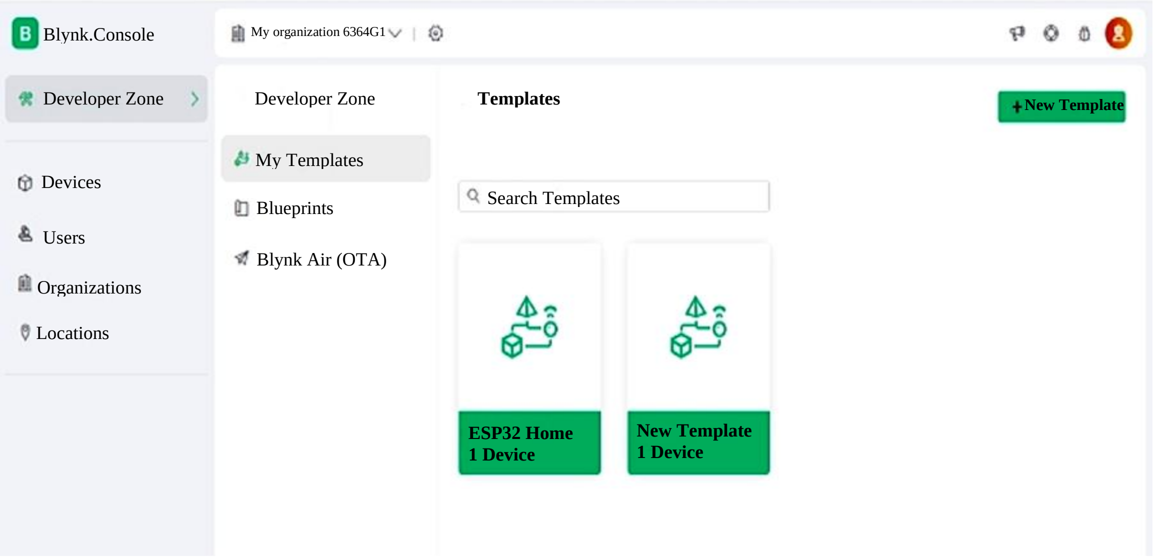

Figure 10. Blynk app template.

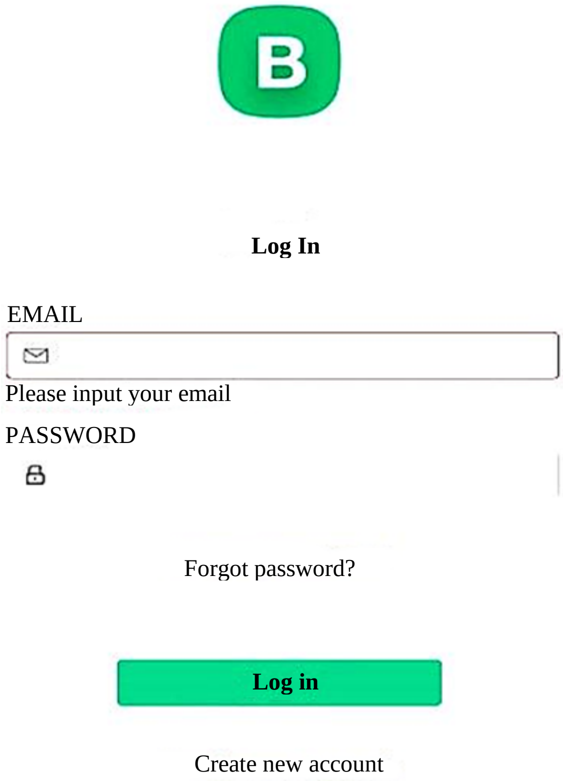

Figure 11. Blynk app login page.

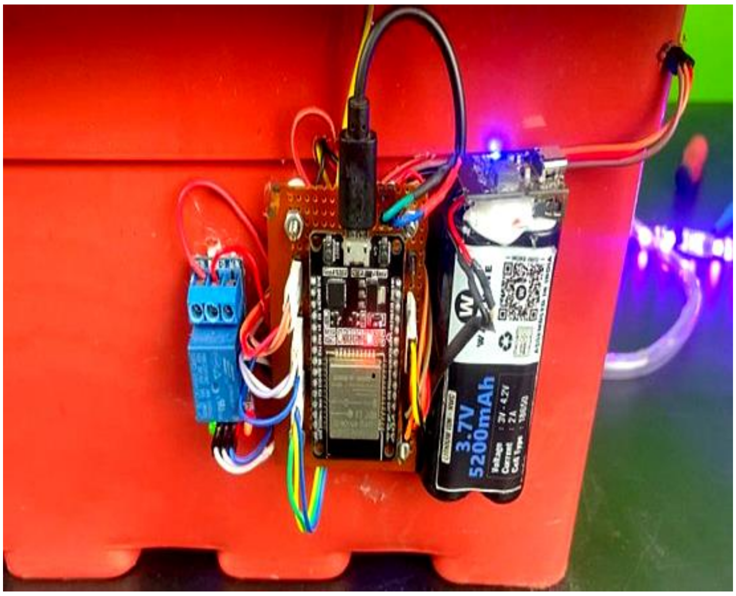

Figure 12. Final hardware setup.

Block Diagram

Figure 14 shows an IoT based environment monitoring system with NodeMCU ESP8266 microcontroller. It collects data from three sensors in real-time: a Water Level Sensor for measuring water levels, a DHT sensor for temperature and humidity, and a Soil Moisture Sensor for checking soil moisture content. The NodeMCU ESP8266 computes the data and sends it to different output modules such as an IoT system for cloud monitoring, a storage device for data capturing, an alert unit for notifications, and a buzzer for instant warm alert. This configuration permits automatic tracking and effective monitoring and control in environmental as well as agricultural contexts.

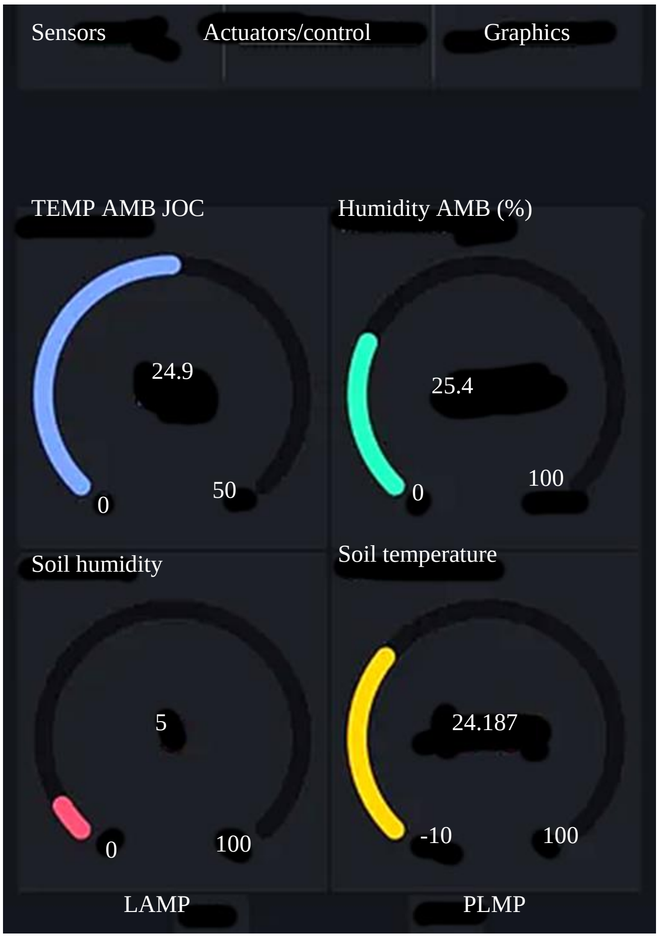

Figure 13. Data display.

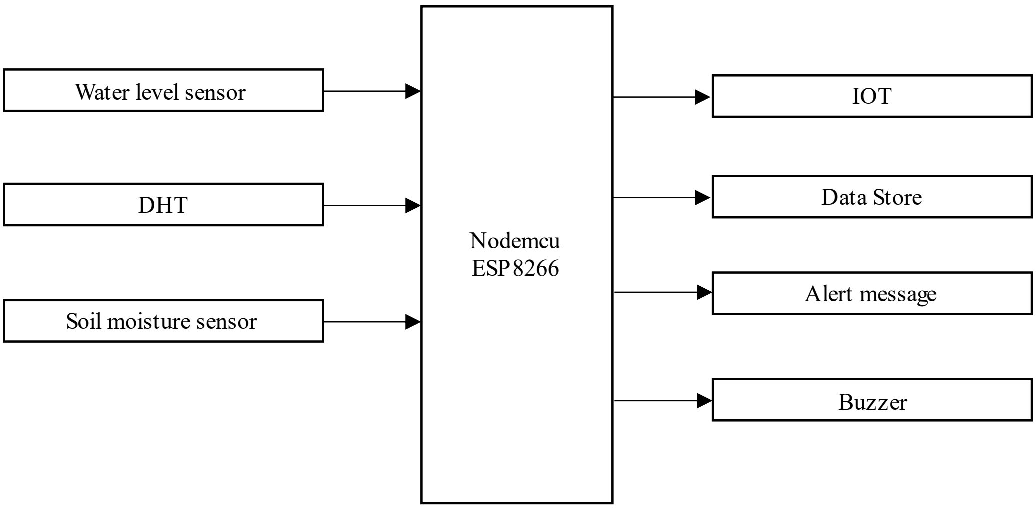

Figure 14. Block diagram of the proposed system.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the feasibility of an automated agriculture monitoring system utilizing cost-effective components and IoT technology. By automating irrigation and environmental monitoring, the system can improve resource management and reduce labor dependency. The IoT-based agriculture automation offers a practical and effective solution for farmers to monitor and optimize the growth of their crops. The system gathers and analyzes data on environmental factors like temperature, humidity, soil moisture, and light levels, offering farmers valuable insights into the condition and development of their crops. Future research could focus on expanding its capabilities for larger-scale operations. One of the key advantages of this system is its ability to automate irrigation and environmental monitoring, preventing over-irrigation, reducing water wastage, and optimizing resource usage. By minimizing labor dependency, farmers can focus on strategic planning rather than routine fieldwork. This enhances operational efficiency while also making farming more affordable and environmentally sustainable. Looking ahead, further advancements can enhance this system's scalability and functionality. Future research can explore AI-driven predictive analytics, machine learning for crop disease detection, and cloud-based remote farm management. Expanding its capabilities for larger-scale agricultural operations could revolutionize farming by making precision agriculture accessible to more farmers worldwide.

FUTURE SCOPE

The future of smart agriculture with IoT-based automation holds immense potential for further advancements. As technology continues to evolve, several key areas can be explored to enhance efficiency, scalability, and sustainability in farming practices. The following are some possible avenues for future research and development:

Incorporating Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning:

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) can improve IoT-driven smart agriculture by offering predictive insights. AI-driven models can analyze historical weather patterns, soil conditions, and crop growth data to make accurate predictions. This can assist farmers in making more informed choices regarding irrigation timing, fertilization, and pest management, resulting in improved resource efficiency and higher crop production.

Automation of Farm Machinery

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) can further enhance IoT-based smart agriculture by providing predictive analytics. AI-driven models can analyze historical weather patterns, soil conditions, and crop growth data to make accurate predictions. This can assist farmers in making more informed choices regarding irrigation timing, fertilization, and pest management, resulting in improved resource efficiency and higher crop production.

Smart Pest and Disease Detection

Pests and crop diseases are major threats to agricultural productivity. Future studies could explore the integration of image recognition and AI-based monitoring systems capable of identifying early indicators of plant diseases and pest infestations. IoT-based smart cameras and drones can monitor crops in real time, allowing farmers to take preventive actions before a disease spreads.

Expansion to Large-Scale Farming

Currently, IoT-based automation is mostly applied to small and medium-scale farms. Future developments should focus on scalability, making the technology cost-effective and efficient for large-scale agricultural operations. This includes designing robust IoT networks that can handle vast amounts of real-time data and provide reliable connectivity in remote agricultural areas.

Renewable Energy-Powered IoT Systems

Sustainability plays a vital role in contemporary agriculture. Future studies could focus on combining renewable energy sources like solar and wind power with IoT-driven systems. Solar-powered irrigation and sensor networks can help reduce dependency on conventional energy sources, making agriculture more environmentally friendly and cost-effective.

Climate-Resilient Farming Systems

With climate change affecting agricultural productivity, IoT-based smart farming can be further enhanced to develop climate-resilient solutions. AI models have the ability to forecast climate trends and recommend farming strategies that can adapt to minimize potential risks. Automated greenhouses with IoT-controlled environments can help in cultivating crops in extreme weather conditions, ensuring consistent food production.

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