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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the role of precision agriculture technologies in enhancing farm productivity in Kenya.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study indicated that precision agriculture technologies play a crucial role in enhancing farm productivity by enabling more efficient and effective farming practices. These technologies, which include GPS-guided equipment, remote sensing, and data analytics, allow farmers to precisely monitor and manage their crops and soil. By using GPS and GIS (Geographic Information Systems), farmers can create detailed maps of their fields, identifying variations in soil types and nutrient levels. Remote sensing technologies, such as drones and satellites, provide real-time data on crop health, helping to detect issues like pest infestations and water stress early on. Data analytics tools then process this information, offering actionable insights for optimizing irrigation, fertilization, and planting schedules. This targeted approach reduces waste, lowers costs, and increases yields. Moreover, precision agriculture promotes sustainable farming by minimizing the environmental impact through the judicious use of inputs like water, fertilizers, and pesticides. Overall, the integration of these technologies leads to more informed decision-making, greater efficiency, and improved productivity in modern farming.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Diffusion of innovations theory, resource-based view and sociotechnical systems theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the role of precision agriculture technologies in enhancing farm productivity in Kenya. Farmers should be provided with tailored implementation strategies that consider local conditions such as soil types, crop varieties, and climate. Governments should develop policies that provide financial incentives and subsidies for the adoption of PAT.

Keywords: *Precision, Agriculture Technologies, Farm Productivity*

INTRODUCTION

Precision agriculture technologies have significantly enhanced farm productivity in developed economies like the USA and Japan. In the USA, the adoption of precision agriculture technologies such as GPS-guided tractors and variable rate technology (VRT) has led to a 15-20% increase in crop yields and a 10-15% reduction in input costs, according to a study by Schimmelpfennig (2018). In Japan, the integration of robotic systems and AI in agriculture has improved labor efficiency by 30% and increased overall productivity by 25% (Ninomiya, 2020). These advancements have allowed farmers to optimize their use of resources, reduce waste, and enhance the precision of their farming practices. The trend towards digitalization in agriculture is evident, with the market for precision farming tools projected to grow at a CAGR of 12.7% from 2020 to 2025 (Markets and Markets, 2021).

In the UK, precision agriculture technologies are being adopted to address labor shortages and increase efficiency. The use of drones for crop monitoring and precision irrigation systems has resulted in a 20% increase in water use efficiency and a 15% reduction in pesticide use (Zarco-Tejada, 2019). Additionally, data analytics and IoT devices have enabled farmers to make data-driven decisions, enhancing crop management practices and boosting yields by 10-15%. The implementation of these technologies aligns with the UK's agricultural policy goals of increasing productivity while reducing environmental impact. The overall trend indicates a steady increase in the adoption of precision farming tools, driven by advancements in technology and growing awareness among farmers.

In developing economies, precision agriculture technologies are gradually gaining traction, with countries like India and Brazil leading the way. In India, the adoption of remote sensing technology and soil health monitoring systems has improved crop yields by 10-15% and reduced fertilizer use by 20%, as reported by Pathak (2021). These technologies have empowered smallholder farmers to make informed decisions, optimize resource use, and enhance their productivity. In Brazil, precision farming techniques such as satellite-based monitoring and precision planting have increased soybean yields by 18% and reduced planting costs by 12% (Dias, 2020). The growing awareness and availability of affordable technology are driving the adoption of precision agriculture, which is expected to expand further as infrastructure improves.

Moreover, developing economies like Vietnam and Indonesia are also embracing precision agriculture to enhance productivity. In Vietnam, the implementation of precision irrigation and climate-smart agriculture practices has improved rice yields by 10-15% and reduced water use by 25% (Nguyen, 2020). These technologies help farmers adapt to changing climate conditions, optimize resource use, and increase their resilience to environmental stresses. In Indonesia, the use of digital platforms and remote sensing technologies has enhanced palm oil productivity by 20% and reduced deforestation rates associated with agricultural expansion (Santoso, 2019). The positive impact of precision agriculture in these countries is supported by increasing investment in agricultural technology and infrastructure, which is expected to further drive the adoption and benefits of these innovations.

In addition to the previously mentioned countries, other developing economies such as Mexico and Thailand are making significant progress in precision agriculture. In Mexico, the adoption of remote sensing technologies and precision irrigation has led to a 10% increase in maize yields and a 15% reduction in water use (Hernández, 2020). These technologies allow farmers to monitor crop health, soil moisture levels, and make data-driven decisions to optimize input use. In

Thailand, the integration of IoT-based smart farming systems has improved the productivity of rice farms by 12% and reduced fertilizer use by 18% (Srisuwannaket, 2021). These advancements are supported by government initiatives aimed at modernizing the agricultural sector and improving food security.

Additionally, in Colombia and the Philippines, precision agriculture technologies are being increasingly adopted to enhance productivity and sustainability. In Colombia, the use of geographic information systems (GIS) and precision planting techniques has resulted in a 15% increase in coffee yields and a 10% reduction in input costs (Rodriguez, 2020). These technologies help farmers manage their crops more efficiently and improve overall farm management. In the Philippines, the deployment of drones for crop monitoring and precision spraying has led to a 12% increase in rice yields and a 20% reduction in pesticide use (Martinez, 2019). These efforts are part of broader strategies to boost agricultural productivity, reduce environmental impact, and ensure sustainable farming practices.

In addition to previously mentioned nations, precision agriculture is also gaining traction in countries like Turkey and Peru. In Turkey, the adoption of precision farming technologies such as soil sensors and GPS-guided equipment has led to a 12% increase in wheat yields and a 10% reduction in fertilizer use (Yildirim, 2019). These technologies enable farmers to monitor soil conditions in real-time and apply inputs more accurately, optimizing resource use and improving crop productivity. Similarly, in Peru, the implementation of satellite imagery and variable rate technology (VRT) in potato farming has resulted in a 15% increase in yields and a 20% reduction in pesticide use (Cruz, 2020). These advancements are facilitated by both governmental and non-governmental efforts to modernize agriculture and improve food security in the region.

Moreover, countries like Egypt and Pakistan are also seeing positive impacts from precision agriculture. In Egypt, the use of remote sensing and precision irrigation in cotton farming has led to a 10% increase in yields and a 25% reduction in water usage (El-Gindy, 2021). These technologies help farmers to optimize water resources, which is crucial in a water-scarce region. In Pakistan, the integration of GIS and mobile-based advisory services for wheat farmers has improved yields by 15% and reduced input costs by 12% (Khan, 2018). These services provide real-time information on weather conditions, pest outbreaks, and best practices, enabling farmers to make informed decisions and enhance productivity. The trend towards adopting precision agriculture in these countries is supported by increasing access to technology and international collaborations aimed at improving agricultural efficiency.

Despite the challenges of limited access to technology and financial constraints, many developing countries are witnessing positive trends in precision agriculture. For instance, the use of mobile-based advisory services in Kenya has led to a 15% increase in maize yields and a 10% reduction in input costs (Wainaina, 2019). These services provide farmers with real-time information on weather conditions, pest outbreaks, and best farming practices, enabling them to make timely and effective decisions. The trend towards digital agriculture in developing economies is supported by government initiatives and international collaborations aimed at improving agricultural productivity. As technology becomes more accessible, the adoption of precision agriculture is expected to accelerate, leading to significant improvements in farm productivity.

In sub-Saharan economies, precision agriculture is in its nascent stages but shows promising potential for enhancing farm productivity. In South Africa, the use of GPS-based mapping and precision irrigation has resulted in a 15% increase in crop yields and a 20% reduction in water use

(Mothapo, 2021). These technologies have enabled farmers to optimize their resource use, reduce costs, and improve their overall efficiency. In Nigeria, the implementation of drone technology for crop monitoring has improved pest management and increased yields by 10% (Olaniyi, 2020). The adoption of these technologies is gradually increasing, driven by the need to improve food security and adapt to climate change.

While the adoption of precision agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa faces challenges such as limited infrastructure and high costs, there are significant efforts to overcome these barriers. Initiatives like the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) are working to promote the use of precision farming technologies and provide training to farmers. As a result, countries like Kenya and Ghana are starting to see the benefits of precision agriculture, with increases in crop productivity and resource efficiency. The trend towards digital agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to continue growing, supported by international partnerships and investments in agricultural technology. With ongoing efforts to improve access to technology and education, precision agriculture has the potential to significantly boost farm productivity in the region.

Precision agriculture technologies significantly enhance farm productivity by optimizing resource use, improving crop management, and reducing environmental impact. Farmers using precision technologies such as GPS-guided equipment, soil sensors, and variable rate technology (VRT) often experience increased yields and reduced input costs compared to those who do not use these technologies. For instance, studies have shown that GPS-guided tractors can increase crop yields by 15-20% and reduce fuel and labor costs by 10-15% (Schimmelpfennig, 2018). Similarly, soil sensors that monitor moisture and nutrient levels in real-time can improve water use efficiency by 20% and increase yields by 10-15% (El-Gindy, 2021). The use of precision irrigation systems can lead to a 25% reduction in water usage and a 15% increase in crop productivity, highlighting the significant advantages over traditional farming methods (Nguyen, 2020).

On the other hand, farmers who do not adopt precision agriculture technologies may face lower productivity due to inefficient resource use and less precise crop management. Without GPS-guided equipment, farmers may struggle with suboptimal planting patterns and inefficient use of inputs, leading to higher costs and lower yields. Additionally, the lack of real-time data on soil and crop conditions can result in over- or under-application of water and fertilizers, reducing overall farm efficiency and sustainability (Zhang, 2019). The absence of precision irrigation systems can exacerbate water wastage and decrease crop yields, particularly in regions with scarce water resources (Pathak, 2021). Therefore, the adoption of precision agriculture technologies is crucial for enhancing farm productivity and achieving sustainable agricultural practices.

Problem Statement

Despite significant advancements in agricultural practices, many farms continue to face challenges related to inefficient resource use, environmental degradation, and inconsistent crop yields. Traditional farming methods often rely on uniform application of inputs such as water, fertilizers, and pesticides, leading to overuse or underuse in different areas of a field, which can diminish productivity and increase costs (Nerlich, Karcher & Schierhorn, 2019). Furthermore, environmental concerns such as soil degradation, water scarcity, and pollution from agricultural runoff necessitate more sustainable farming practices. Precision agriculture technologies offer promising solutions by enabling precise application of inputs and real-time monitoring of crop conditions, potentially enhancing productivity and sustainability (Sweeney & Mortensen, 2020). However, the adoption and effective utilization of these technologies remain limited due to barriers such as high initial costs, lack of technical knowledge, and inadequate infrastructure, particularly in developing regions (Shirani Bidabadi, Safavi & Abbaspour-Fard, 2021). Therefore, there is a critical need to explore and address these challenges to fully realize the potential of precision agriculture in enhancing farm productivity.

Theoretical Framework

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory, originated by Everett Rogers in 1962, explains how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures. The main theme of this theory is that innovation adoption follows a process influenced by communication channels, time, social systems, and the characteristics of the innovation itself. In the context of precision agriculture, this theory helps to understand the adoption patterns of advanced farming technologies and the factors influencing farmers' decisions to adopt these technologies (Klerkx & Rose, 2020). By analyzing the diffusion process, researchers can identify barriers and facilitators to the adoption of precision agriculture technologies, ultimately enhancing farm productivity.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View, developed by Jay Barney in the early 1990s, posits that a firm’s competitive advantage is derived from its ability to acquire and manage valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources. The main theme of RBV is that internal resources and capabilities are crucial for gaining and sustaining competitive advantages. In the realm of precision agriculture, RBV suggests that farms that effectively leverage precision technologies as strategic resources can enhance their productivity and profitability (Barney, 2020). Precision agriculture technologies, when integrated effectively, can be viewed as critical resources that provide substantial productivity gains.

Sociotechnical Systems Theory

Sociotechnical Systems Theory, developed by Eric Trist and Ken Bamforth in the 1950s, focuses on the interrelatedness of social and technical aspects of an organization. The theory posits that for optimal performance, both the social and technical systems must be jointly optimized. This theory is relevant to precision agriculture as it emphasizes the need for alignment between technological advancements and the social structures of farming communities (Mumford & Fath, 2020). Understanding how precision agriculture technologies fit within the broader social context of farming can help in designing interventions that enhance productivity while being socially acceptable and sustainable.

Empirical Review

Smith and Williams (2018) evaluated the impact of variable rate technology on corn yield and input costs. Their field experiments, carried out across multiple farms, utilized variable rate application for fertilizers to compare its effectiveness against traditional uniform application methods. The study found that the use of variable rate technology led to a significant improvement in corn yields, with an increase of 10%, and a reduction in fertilizer use by 15%. This reduction in input costs without compromising yield highlights the efficiency of variable rate technology in precision agriculture. Smith and Williams recommended that farmers adopt variable rate technology to achieve higher productivity and cost savings, suggesting that such technologies can lead to more sustainable farming practices. They also noted the potential environmental benefits from reduced fertilizer runoff. The study emphasized the importance of real-time data and precision application in optimizing resource use. These findings underscore the transformative potential of precision agriculture technologies in enhancing farm productivity. The empirical evidence provided a strong case for the widespread adoption of such technologies. Furthermore, the study highlighted the need for training and support to help farmers integrate these advanced tools into their operations.

Jones and Brown (2019) assessed the economic benefits of precision irrigation in wheat production. By conducting a comparative study between precision irrigation and traditional irrigation methods on several wheat farms, they were able to gather comprehensive data on water usage and crop yields. The results demonstrated that precision irrigation significantly improved wheat yields by 12% while simultaneously reducing water usage by 20%. This dual benefit of increased productivity and resource conservation highlights the effectiveness of precision irrigation technologies. The authors recommended the implementation of precision irrigation to improve water use efficiency and crop productivity, particularly in regions facing water scarcity. They also pointed out the potential for significant cost savings for farmers through reduced water bills. The study's findings emphasize the role of precision agriculture in promoting sustainable farming practices. Additionally, the adoption of precision irrigation can mitigate the environmental impact of excessive water use. Jones and Brown's work contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting precision agriculture technologies. They stressed the importance of policy support and farmer education to facilitate the transition to these advanced irrigation systems.

Chen and Li (2020) explored the effects of drone-based crop monitoring on rice production. Their experimental plots were monitored using drones equipped with multispectral cameras to detect crop health and stress indicators. The study found that drone monitoring allowed for the early identification of stress areas, leading to timely interventions and a 15% increase in rice yield. This early detection capability is crucial for preventing crop losses and optimizing input use. Chen and Li recommended integrating drone technology into regular crop monitoring routines to enhance productivity and crop quality. They highlighted the cost-effectiveness of drones compared to traditional monitoring methods. The study also pointed out the potential for drones to collect large amounts of data quickly and accurately. These advantages make drones a valuable tool in precision agriculture. The authors suggested further research into the integration of drone data with other precision agriculture technologies. This integration could lead to even greater efficiency and productivity gains. Chen and Li's study underscores the importance of advanced monitoring technologies in modern farming.

Garcia and Lopez (2021) examined the role of GPS-guided machinery in soybean farming efficiency. By comparing farms using GPS-guided machinery to those employing traditional methods, they were able to measure differences in fuel consumption and crop yield. The study revealed that GPS-guided machinery reduced fuel consumption by 18% and increased soybean yield by 8%. These findings highlight the potential for significant cost savings and productivity improvements through the adoption of precision agriculture technologies. Garcia and Lopez recommended that farmers adopt GPS-guided machinery to enhance operational efficiency and profitability. They also emphasized the environmental benefits of reduced fuel use. The study's results contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of precision agriculture technologies. Additionally, the authors noted the importance of training and support for farmers to effectively utilize these advanced tools. They suggested further research into the long-term benefits of GPS-guided machinery. The study underscores the transformative potential of precision agriculture in enhancing farm productivity.

Hernandez and Martinez (2019) investigated the impact of precision soil sampling on nutrient management in maize cultivation. Their comparative study, conducted over two growing seasons, compared precision soil sampling methods with traditional sampling techniques. The results showed that precision soil sampling improved nutrient use efficiency by 25% and increased maize yields by 10%. These improvements underscore the importance of accurate soil data in optimizing fertilizer applications. Hernandez and Martinez recommended the adoption of precision soil sampling to enhance nutrient management and yield improvement. They also highlighted the potential environmental benefits of reduced nutrient runoff. The study's findings emphasize the role of precision agriculture in promoting sustainable farming practices. Additionally, the authors pointed out the cost savings associated with more efficient nutrient use. They suggested further research into the integration of precision soil sampling with other precision agriculture technologies. This integration could lead to even greater productivity gains. Hernandez and Martinez's study underscores the importance of accurate data in modern farming.

Lee and Kim (2020) assessed the effectiveness of automated weather stations in optimizing irrigation schedules. Their comparative study involved using automated weather stations and traditional weather data for irrigation scheduling in vineyards. The results indicated that automated weather stations optimized irrigation schedules, reducing water usage by 22% and increasing grape yield by 9%. These findings highlight the potential for significant productivity gains and resource conservation through the use of precision agriculture technologies. Lee and Kim recommended that vineyards adopt automated weather stations for more efficient irrigation management. They also emphasized the environmental benefits of reduced water use. The study's findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of precision agriculture technologies. Additionally, the authors pointed out the potential cost savings for farmers. They suggested further research into the integration of weather data with other precision agriculture tools. The study underscores the transformative potential of precision agriculture in enhancing farm productivity.

Miller and Johnson (2022) evaluated the impact of sensor-based nitrogen management on wheat yield and environmental sustainability. Their comparative study analyzed the effectiveness of sensor-based nitrogen application versus conventional methods in wheat fields. The results showed that sensor-based management reduced nitrogen use by 20% and increased wheat yield by 12%, while also reducing nitrogen runoff. These findings highlight the dual benefits of enhanced productivity and environmental sustainability through precision agriculture technologies. Miller and Johnson recommended the implementation of sensor-based nitrogen management to improve yield and sustainability. They also emphasized the potential cost savings for farmers. The study's findings contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of precision agriculture technologies. Additionally, the authors pointed out the importance of training and support for farmers. They suggested further research into the long-term benefits of sensor-based nitrogen management. The study underscores the importance of advanced nutrient management technologies in modern farming.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gaps: The existing studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of various precision agriculture technologies (PAT) such as variable rate technology, precision irrigation, drone-based monitoring, GPS-guided machinery, precision soil sampling, automated weather stations, and sensor-based nitrogen management in enhancing farm productivity and reducing input costs (Smith & Williams, 2018; Jones & Brown, 2019; Chen & Li, 2020; Garcia & Lopez, 2021; Hernandez & Martinez, 2019; Lee & Kim, 2020; Miller & Johnson, 2022). However, there are gaps in understanding the long-term impacts of these technologies on soil health and biodiversity. For example, while precision soil sampling has shown immediate benefits in nutrient management (Hernandez & Martinez, 2019), the long-term effects on soil microbial communities and overall soil health are not well understood. Similarly, the integration of various PAT tools to create a holistic farm management system needs further exploration. Studies like those by Chen and Li (2020) suggest potential benefits of integrating drone data with other technologies, but empirical evidence on the synergistic effects of such integrations remains limited.

Contextual Gaps: The studies reviewed primarily focus on the economic and productivity benefits of PAT in specific crops like corn, wheat, rice, and soybeans (Smith & Williams, 2018; Jones & Brown, 2019; Chen & Li, 2020; Garcia & Lopez, 2021). There is a need for research on the application of these technologies across a broader range of crops and farming systems, including horticultural and specialty crops. For instance, Lee and Kim (2020) explored automated weather stations in vineyards, indicating potential benefits, but similar studies are sparse in other high-value crops. Additionally, the socio-economic aspects, such as the adoption barriers faced by small-scale and resource-poor farmers, are underexplored. Understanding how PAT can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse farming communities, especially in mixed and small-scale farming systems, would provide valuable insights for broader adoption.

Geographical Gaps: Most of the studies reviewed have been conducted in developed economies, particularly in North America and Asia (Smith & Williams, 2018; Jones & Brown, 2019; Chen & Li, 2020; Garcia & Lopez, 2021; Hernandez & Martinez, 2019; Lee & Kim, 2020; Miller & Johnson, 2022). There is a significant research gap in understanding the applicability and benefits of PAT in developing and underdeveloped regions, particularly in Africa and Latin America. The environmental, economic, and socio-cultural conditions in these regions differ greatly, necessitating context-specific research. Studies that investigate how PAT can be adapted to local conditions, such as varying soil types, climatic conditions, and economic constraints, are crucial. Additionally, research on the potential for PAT to address food security and sustainability challenges in these regions is needed. Bridging these geographical gaps would help in creating global strategies for the adoption of PAT to enhance farm productivity sustainably.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of Precision Agriculture Technologies (PAT) in enhancing farm productivity is pivotal for sustainable agricultural development. The empirical evidence from various studies demonstrates the significant positive impacts of PAT on crop yields, resource efficiency, and environmental sustainability. Technologies such as variable rate technology, precision irrigation, drone-based monitoring, GPS-guided machinery, precision soil sampling, automated weather stations, and sensor-based nutrient management have shown promise in optimizing resource use, reducing input costs, and improving overall farm productivity.

Moreover, the integration of multi-disciplinary approaches, tailored implementation strategies, capacity building, and supportive policies are essential for maximizing the benefits of PAT. These strategies not only empower farmers with the necessary tools and knowledge but also create an enabling environment for widespread adoption and long-term sustainability. Collaborative platforms for knowledge exchange and innovation further enhance the effectiveness of PAT by facilitating continuous learning and improvement. Looking ahead, continued research, innovation, and investment in PAT are crucial for addressing future challenges such as climate change, food security, and resource scarcity. By harnessing the transformative potential of precision agriculture, we can build resilient and productive farming systems that meet the growing global demand for food while safeguarding the environment for future generations.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Future research should integrate agronomic, ecological, and technological perspectives to develop comprehensive models that predict the long-term impacts of Precision Agriculture Technologies (PAT) on farm productivity and sustainability. This will contribute to a holistic understanding of how different technologies interact within the farming ecosystem. Theoretical frameworks should be developed to understand how various PAT can be adapted to different agro-ecological zones. This includes studying the interactions between local soil types, climate conditions, and technological interventions to optimize the adoption and effectiveness of PAT in diverse environments. New theories should explore the socio-economic impacts of PAT on small-scale and resource-poor farmers. Understanding the barriers to adoption and the potential socio-economic benefits will help in creating inclusive models that support widespread technology integration.

Practice

Farmers should be provided with tailored implementation strategies that consider local conditions such as soil types, crop varieties, and climate. Precision soil sampling and drone-based monitoring can be specifically adapted to local needs, ensuring more effective use of resources. Comprehensive training programs should be developed to equip farmers with the necessary skills to use PAT effectively. This includes hands-on training, workshops, and continuous support to ensure farmers can integrate these technologies into their operations. Establishing platforms for collaboration among farmers, researchers, and technology providers can facilitate knowledge exchange and innovation. These platforms can help farmers stay updated on the latest advancements and share best practices for using PAT.

Policy

Governments should develop policies that provide financial incentives and subsidies for the adoption of PAT. This could include tax breaks, grants, and low-interest loans specifically aimed at enabling farmers to invest in precision technologies. Increased funding for research and development in precision agriculture technologies is essential. This includes supporting publicprivate partnerships to drive innovation and the development of affordable, scalable solutions tailored to the needs of diverse farming communities. Establishing clear regulatory frameworks to ensure the quality and reliability of PAT is crucial. Policies should also address data privacy and security concerns related to the use of digital technologies in agriculture.

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