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Biosensors in Agriculture: Enhancing Crop Health and Yield

Gomorova Alexey*

Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, Harper Adams University, Newport, UK

Introduction

Biosensors are transforming modern agriculture by providing real-time monitoring and precise detection of plant health, soil conditions and environmental factors. These innovative devices help farmers make data-driven decisions to enhance crop yield, minimize resource wastage and reduce the environmental impact of agricultural practices. By integrating biosensors into precision farming techniques, farmers can detect diseases, nutrient deficiencies and pest infestations early, ensuring timely interventions that improve productivity and sustainability. One of the most significant applications of biosensors in agriculture is soil health monitoring. The quality of soil directly affects crop growth and imbalances in nutrients, moisture and pH levels can lead to reduced yield and poor plant health. Traditional soil testing methods require laboratory analysis, which is time-consuming and may not reflect real-time conditions. Biosensors equipped with nanomaterials and microfluidic technology can instantly measure soil nutrient levels, detect contaminants like heavy metals or pesticides and monitor soil moisture. These sensors provide immediate feedback, enabling farmers to optimize fertilizer use, reduce over-application and enhance soil fertility management [1,2].

Description

Plant disease detection is another critical area where biosensors are making a significant impact. Crop diseases caused by bacteria, fungi and viruses can spread rapidly, leading to massive yield losses if not detected early. Conventional methods of disease diagnosis often involve visual inspections or laboratory testing, which may not be fast enough to prevent outbreaks. Biosensors offer a rapid, cost-effective and highly sensitive approach to identifying plant pathogens even before visible symptoms appear. For example, electrochemical biosensors can detect specific proteins or DNA sequences of pathogens, providing farmers with early warnings and enabling targeted disease control measures. This not only reduces the use of harmful pesticides but also helps in maintaining sustainable farming practices [3]. In addition to disease monitoring, biosensors play a crucial role in detecting pest infestations. Insect pests such as aphids, beetles and caterpillars can cause extensive damage to crops if not controlled in time.

Water management is another key area where biosensors are enhancing agricultural efficiency. With climate change leading to unpredictable rainfall patterns, efficient water use has become essential for sustainable farming. Biosensors that monitor soil moisture, water salinity and irrigation quality enable farmers to optimize water distribution, preventing both over-irrigation and drought stress. These sensors are particularly beneficial for water-scarce regions, where precise water management can significantly improve crop resilience and yield. The integration of biosensors with Internet of Things (IoT) technology is further revolutionizing agriculture. Smart farming systems equipped with wireless biosensors can transmit real-time data to cloud platforms, where AI algorithms analyze the information and provide actionable insights. Farmers can access this data through mobile applications, receiving instant notifications about soil conditions, disease outbreaks, or pest threats. Smart biosensors integrated with artificial intelligence can identify the chemical signals released by plants under pest attack [4].

This connectivity allows for remote monitoring of large farmlands, reducing the need for manual inspections and enabling precision agriculture at scale. Scientists are developing biodegradable biosensors that decompose after use, reducing environmental waste. Additionally, nanotechnology-enabled biosensors with higher sensitivity and multi-target detection capabilities will allow farmers to monitor multiple parameters simultaneously. AI-driven predictive analytics combined with biosensor data will enable farmers to anticipate crop diseases, optimize planting schedules and improve overall farm productivity. Their ability to provide real-time, precise and cost-effective monitoring is transforming traditional farming into a more sustainable and efficient practice. As biosensor technology continues to evolve, it will play an even greater role in ensuring global food security and supporting environmentally friendly agricultural practices. These sensors help farmers implement precision pest management strategies, reducing the overuse of chemical pesticides and promoting eco-friendly alternatives such as biological pest control [5].

Conclusion

Biosensors are also playing a crucial role in monitoring food safety and crop quality. Contaminants such as pesticide residues, mycotoxins and heavy metals can pose health risks if present in agricultural produce. Rapid biosensor-based testing methods allow farmers and food producers to detect these contaminants before crops reach the market, ensuring compliance with food safety regulations. Portable biosensors, for example, can be used to test fruits, vegetables and grains for pesticide residues, providing immediate results without the need for complex laboratory procedures. Another promising application of biosensors in agriculture is their use in Genetically Modified (GM) crop monitoring. GM crops are engineered for better yield, pest resistance and environmental adaptability, but concerns about their safety and labeling require effective monitoring systems. Biosensors capable of detecting specific genetic markers in GM crops help regulatory agencies and farmers verify crop authenticity and ensure compliance with legal standards.

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***Address for Correspondence:** Gomorova Alexey, Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, Harper Adams University, Newport, UK, E-mail: alexygomva222@gmail.com*

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