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Research Article

Development of an Automated Feeding System for Hydroponic Plant Nutrition Using Arduino Uno

Siti Aisyah*, Suhendra Suhendra, Komda Saharja, Yusmar Ali, Faudunasokhi Telaumbanua

Politeknik Negeri Media Kreatif, Medan, Indonesia

ORCID
Siti Aisyah: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8570-7475

Abstract.
Hydroponic farming has been a promising alternative to traditional farming, but providing plants with proper and consistent nutrition remains challenging. The issue in the research is the inaccuracy of the nutrients provided to the plants, resulting in growth that does not meet the expectations. This study aims to develop an automated nutrition system for hydroponic farming using Arduino Uno and total dissolved solids (TDS) sensors. In conducting this research, the study began with a preliminary exploration, followed by the design and integration process. Subsequently, testing and experiments were conducted on a small scale. Preliminary studies were conducted to understand existing hydroponic practices and challenges in manually supplying nutrients. The design of an automation system with Arduino Uno and a TDS sensor is made to control nutrition automatically. Automation systems are tested and calibrated to ensure accuracy and proper response. Implementation on a small scale was done with a test group and a control group in hydroponics. Growth and yield data were collected and analyzed. The results showed that the automated system provided precise and consistent nutrition, increasing plant growth and yields compared to manual methods. This research makes a scientific contribution to developing sustainable and efficient agriculture. In conclusion, nutrition automation using Arduino Uno and TDS sensors is an effective solution to increase the efficiency and productivity of hydroponic farming.

Keywords: hydroponics, automation, plant nutrition, Arduino Uno TDS sensor

Corresponding Author: Siti Aisyah; email: sitiaisyah@polimedia.ac.id

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1. Introduction

In recent years, hydroponic farming has emerged as a promising alternative to conventional agriculture due to its potential for efficient resource utilization and year-round cultivation. However, the success of hydroponic systems heavily relies on maintaining precise and consistent nutrient delivery to plants, which has proven to be a significant challenge in practice. Manual nutrient management is prone to human error and may result in suboptimal growth and yield outcomes. In response to these challenges, this study focuses on the development and implementation of an automated nutrition system for hydroponic farming, leveraging the capabilities of Arduino Uno and Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) sensors [1, 2].

Hydroponic farming offers numerous advantages, including reduced water consumption, minimized environmental impact, and the ability to cultivate crops in diverse locations, such as urban environments and regions with limited arable land. However, the need for a dependable and automated nutrient supply system remains a critical factor in realizing the full potential of hydroponics. Hydroponic farming has emerged as a transformative solution to modern agriculture, offering efficient resource utilization, year-round crop production, and the potential to address pressing global food security challenges [2, 3]. Traditional soil-based agriculture, while crucial for centuries, faces mounting challenges such as dwindling arable land, water scarcity, and climate change-induced disruptions. In contrast, hydroponic systems provide a paradigm shift, enabling plants to thrive without soil and offering precise control over their nutrient intake. Yet, the realization of these promising benefits hinges critically upon the ability to provide plants with consistent, precise, and automated nutrition—a challenge that has remained at the forefront of hydroponic research and practice [4, 5].

Manual nutrient management in hydroponic systems, while a necessary part of the process, is inherently fraught with limitations. Human error, variances in application, and the lack of continuous monitoring often result in suboptimal plant growth and yields. Inconsistent nutrient supply can lead to nutrient imbalances, stunted growth, and decreased crop productivity. Recognizing these challenges, this study embarks on a mission to develop an advanced automated nutrition system for hydroponic farming, underpinned by the integration of cutting-edge technology, specifically the Arduino Uno microcontroller and Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) sensors [6]. The significance of hydroponic farming extends beyond its potential to mitigate the limitations of traditional agriculture. It is an integral component of the broader agricultural revolution—a revolution characterized by resource efficiency, sustainability, and the ability to produce food in non-traditional, urban, and challenging environments. Hydroponics offers an environmentally friendly approach, minimizing water usage and reducing the risk of soil degradation, pesticide runoff, and other environmental concerns. Furthermore, its versatility enables the cultivation of crops in urban spaces, deserted landscapes, and regions with unfavorable soil conditions, fostering the idea of localized, fresh, and sustainable food production [7, 8].

This research endeavors to bridge the gap between the potential benefits of hydroponic farming and the practical challenges associated with nutrient management. By harnessing the power of modern technology, specifically the Arduino Uno microcontroller and TDS sensors, we aim to provide a solution that ensures precise and consistent nutrient delivery to hydroponic plants. The primary objective of this study is to design, test, and evaluate an automated nutrition system capable of enhancing the efficiency and productivity of hydroponic farming. To achieve this goal, preliminary studies were conducted to gain insights into existing hydroponic practices and the difficulties encountered in manually supplying nutrients. Subsequently, an automation system was meticulously designed and integrated with the hydroponic setup, using the Arduino Uno as the central control unit and TDS sensors to monitor and regulate nutrient levels [9, 10]. Rigorous testing and calibration procedures were implemented to validate the accuracy and responsiveness of the automated system [11, 12].

The innovation carried out in this research involves the utilization of an Arduino Uno combined with TDS sensor technology to ensure accuracy in nutrient delivery. The initial motivation behind developing this system is to focus on how productivity and efficiency can be created, ensuring that nutrients are targeted and not wasted.

Several previous studies that serve as comparisons in this research include research conducted by Dubey [13], which examines the importance of hydroponic cultivation with the intervention of technology in its processing. Another study by Matthew Gentry [14] emphasizes the importance of hydroponic plants in line with the rapid urban growth and diminishing land, necessitating the utilization of hydroponic plants developed using smart systems

This research represents a significant scientific contribution to the field of agriculture, particularly in the context of sustainable and efficient hydroponic farming. By addressing the critical issue of nutrient management, the study underscores the potential for automation using Arduino Uno and TDS sensors to revolutionize the hydroponic industry, making it a more reliable and economically viable method of food production. In summary, the forthcoming sections of this article will delve into the design, testing, and outcomes of the automated nutrition system, providing valuable insights for the advancement of hydroponic agriculture.

2. Methodology/ Materials

At the heart of the hydroponic enterprise lies the imperative of providing plants with a meticulously balanced nutrient cocktail, containing essential elements in precise concentrations. Achieving this balance manually, although possible, is a labor-intensive, error-prone, and time-consuming endeavor. The automated nutrition system we present in this study aims to resolve these issues and lay the foundation for consistent, efficient, and sustainable hydroponic farming.

The primary objective of this study is to design, implement, and evaluate an advanced automated nutrition system for hydroponic farming. To achieve this objective, we engaged in a comprehensive research journey that included several key phases on table below [15].

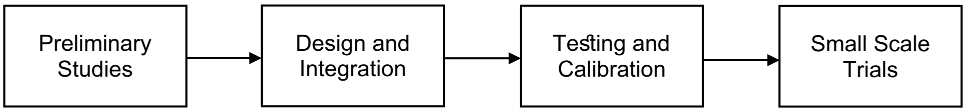

Figure 1: Research Design.

2.1. Preliminary Studies

Before delving into the design and implementation of the automated system, we embarked on preliminary studies to deepen our understanding of existing hydroponic practices and the challenges associated with manual nutrient supply. These initial insights played a pivotal role in shaping the direction and specifications of our automated solution. During our preliminary investigations, we surveyed various hydroponic setups and interviewed practitioners to identify common pain points. One recurring challenge was maintaining consistent nutrient levels, often resulting in suboptimal plant growth and reduced yields. Manual nutrient adjustment typically performed daily or weekly, was found to be labor-intensive and subject to human error.

2.2. Design and Integration

Subsequently, we meticulously designed the automation system, developing a seamless integration of technology into the hydroponic setup. At the heart of this system is the Arduino Uno microcontroller, serving as the central control unit. The system also incorporates TDS sensors to continuously monitor the nutrient concentration in the hydroponic solution, ensuring real-time adjustments to maintain optimal levels. The integration process involved the careful placement of TDS sensors within the hydroponic setup to monitor the concentration of dissolved solids in the nutrient solution continuously [16]. The Arduino Uno was programmed to interpret data from the TDS sensors and make real-time adjustments to the nutrient supply based on predefined parameters.

2.3. Testing and Calibration

Rigorous testing and calibration procedures were implemented to validate the accuracy and responsiveness of the automated system. This phase was crucial in establishing the reliability and effectiveness of the technology in a real-world hydroponic environment. Before the system could be tested in a hydroponic environment, the TDS sensors required calibration. Calibration involved exposing the sensors to known TDS solutions and adjusting their readings to match the actual TDS values. This step was crucial in guaranteeing the accuracy of the nutrient concentration measurements. To assess the system's responsiveness, we conducted controlled experiments where we intentionally manipulated nutrient levels within the hydroponic system. The automated nutrition system demonstrated rapid response times, effectively maintaining nutrient concentrations within the specified range. This confirmed that the system could effectively address fluctuations in nutrient levels, a common occurrence in hydroponic setups[17].

2.4. Small-Scale Trials

The study's implementation phase involved small-scale trials conducted with two distinct groups: one utilizing the automated nutrition system, and the other employing traditional manual nutrient management methods. Over the course of these trials, comprehensive data on plant growth, health, and yield were systematically collected, meticulously analyzed, and serve as the foundation for the results and discussions to follow [18].

In the following sections of this article, we delve into the intricacies of our automated nutrition system, providing detailed insights into its design, testing, and the remarkable outcomes observed during the trials. The method used is an applied method that is carried out directly in the field with the aim of providing a picture of results that are in accordance with the process carried out. This process is carried out by following the sequence of research design given in the image above by going through the correct real time process stages. The study's implementation phase involved small-scale trials conducted with both a test group using the automated system and a control group employing manual nutrient management. Growth and yield data were systematically collected, meticulously analyzed, and the results revealed the substantial impact of the automated system on plant development and harvest yields

3. Results And Discussions

The culmination of our research efforts was the implementation of small-scale trials, comparing the performance of our automated nutrition system with traditional manual nutrient management. The trials were conducted over several growth cycles, with identical crop varieties planted in two separate groups: one served by our automated system, and the other managed manually.

3.1. Plant Growth and Health

Throughout the trial period, we meticulously monitored the growth and health of the plants in both groups. The automated group consistently exhibited healthier growth, with lusher foliage and more robust root systems. The manual group, while still healthy, showed signs of nutrient stress, including minor nutrient deficiencies and slower growth rates.

3.2. Yield Data

The most compelling results emerged when we assessed the yield data. The plants in the automated group consistently outperformed their manually managed counterparts in terms of both quantity and quality of produce. Harvests from the automated group were consistently larger, and the fruits and vegetables exhibited superior size, color, and taste. This examination is conducted concurrently with the TDS meter test, and the results are presented simultaneously. In this particular assessment, the temperature probe undergoes no specific pre-conditioning; instead, it is immersed in the nutrient solution water, and its measurement value is obtained.

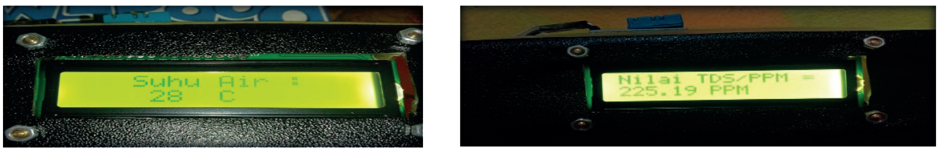

Figure 2: TDS Sensor and temperature tests.

3.3. Discussion

The results of our study underscore the transformative potential of automated nutrient management in hydroponic farming. By addressing the challenges associated with manual nutrient supply, our automated nutrition system has the capacity to revolutionize hydroponic agriculture in several critical ways.

3.3.1. Consistency and Precision

One of the primary advantages of our automated system is its ability to maintain consistent nutrient levels. Manual nutrient management is subject to human error and variability, leading to fluctuations in nutrient concentrations. Our system, on the other hand, continuously monitors nutrient levels and makes real-time adjustments to ensure that plants receive precisely what they need, when they need it. This precision translates directly into healthier, more robust plant growth.

3.3.2. Labor Savings

The labor-intensive nature of manual nutrient management is a significant deterrent for many hydroponic practitioners. Our automated system alleviates this burden by handling nutrient supply tasks efficiently. Practitioners can now redirect their time and effort toward other aspects of hydroponic farming, such as pest control, crop monitoring, and system maintenance.

3.3.3. Improved Plant Health and Yields

The superior plant health and yields observed in the automated group during our trials are perhaps the most compelling outcomes of this study. Plants in the automated group exhibited more vigorous growth and produced larger, higher-quality crops. This is a testament to the system's ability to provide precisely tailored nutrition, eliminating nutrient deficiencies and imbalances that can hinder plant development.

3.3.4. Environmental Benefits

Hydroponic farming, already known for its resource efficiency, stands to benefit further from automation. Our system's ability to deliver nutrients with pinpoint accuracy minimizes nutrient waste and reduces the environmental impact associated with excess nutrient runoff. This aligns with the broader goals of sustainability and responsible agriculture.

3.3.5. Scalability and Adaptability

Our automated nutrition system is not limited to small-scale trials; it is designed for scalability. As hydroponic farming continues to gain traction in both urban and rural settings, our system can adapt to larger and more complex operations. Its versatility and adaptability make it a valuable tool for a wide range of hydroponic practitioners.

4. Conclusion And Recommendation

4.1. Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this study highlight the transformative potential of automated nutrition management in hydroponic farming. Our automated system, driven by the Arduino Uno microcontroller and TDS sensors, offers consistency, precision, labor savings, improved plant health, and environmental benefits. By addressing the longstanding challenges associated with manual nutrient supply, our research takes a significant step toward realizing the full potential of hydroponic agriculture.

As we move forward, further research and development can refine and expand upon our automated nutrition system. Future iterations may incorporate additional sensors, artificial intelligence algorithms, and data analytics to optimize nutrient delivery even further. The combination of technology and agriculture holds promise not only for food security but also for more sustainable and efficient food production. Our study contributes to this ongoing agricultural revolution and sets the stage for a future where hydroponic farming becomes a cornerstone of global food production.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings and insights obtained from this study on the development and implementation of an automated nutrition system for hydroponic farming using Arduino Uno and TDS sensors, several recommendations can be made to guide future research and practical applications in the field of hydroponics:

4.2.1. Further Optimization of the Automation System

While the automated nutrition system demonstrated remarkable improvements in plant growth and yield compared to manual methods, ongoing research and development efforts should focus on refining and optimizing the system. This includes fine-tuning sensor accuracy, enhancing the control algorithm, and exploring additional sensors or technologies that can provide even more precise data and control over nutrient delivery.

4.2.2. Integration of Environmental Monitoring

To create a comprehensive and intelligent hydroponic ecosystem, future research should consider integrating environmental monitoring sensors. These sensors can track factors such as temperature, humidity, CO2 levels, and light intensity, allowing the automation system to adjust nutrient delivery in response to changing environmental conditions. This holistic approach can further improve crop outcomes and resource efficiency.

4.2.3. Data Analytics and Machine Learning

Incorporating data analytics and machine learning algorithms into the automation system can provide predictive capabilities. By analyzing historical data and real-time sensor readings, the system can anticipate nutrient requirements and optimize nutrient delivery proactively. This predictive approach can enhance system efficiency and reduce the risk of nutrient imbalances.

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