

Exploring Advanced Techniques for Agricultural Area Mapping: Comparative Analysis of U-Net and Mask-Based Approaches in Satellite Imagery

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Abstract:

Deep learning methodologies have rapidly gained prominence in the realm of statistical analysis for remote sensing data. These techniques are instrumental in processing spectral information, conducting identification statistics, and performing segmentation and classification of objects in satellite imagery. Image segmentation enhances the accuracy of object statistics by effectively distinguishing objects from their backgrounds. This paper delves into the application of Mask Based Approaches and U-Net in satellite imagery segmentation. An experimental study is conducted to evaluate the suitability of these models in this domain. The experimental results, measured in terms of mean average precision (mAP), indicate a remarkable performance, with a precision of 93.21% for Mask-Based Approaches and 90.69% for U-Net, based on a dataset comprising satellite images of Pakistan. These findings underscore the potential of these techniques in advancing the accuracy and efficiency of object segmentation in satellite imagery analysis.

Keywords: Unet, Machine Learning, Satellite Imagery, Segmentation, Agriculture

INTRODUCTION

Satellite imagery or remote sensing imagery refers to data collected from satellites, civil aircraft, dedicated aircraft, or drones, utilizing sensors and video cameras to capture objects on the Earth's surface [1]. These images are crucial for various scientific studies, such as weather forecasting, natural disaster prediction, geological studies [2], forestry monitoring, and agricultural applications. In agriculture, remote sensing plays a significant role in management, statistics, and farming activities [3]. It enables tasks like agricultural production forecasting, geographic information analysis, agricultural mapping, deforestation warning, and vegetation index monitoring [4]. Deep learning, a subset of artificial intelligence, has revolutionized several fields since 2012 [5, 6], including healthcare, data processing, and image recognition. Deep learning models, inspired by the human neural network, excel in information processing and transmission, making them faster and more accurate in solving complex problems [7]. Agricultural satellite image processing is one area where deep learning methods are applied to identify and segment agricultural objects in satellite images [8, 9]. Despite the advancements, there is limited research comparing the effectiveness of different deep learning models in agricultural area segmentation, especially in developing countries like Pakistan [10]. Pakistan, being the second-largest rice exporter globally and with agriculture contributing significantly to its GDP, presents a unique case for studying agricultural practices in Eastern countries [11-13]. In this study, we focus on comparing two prominent models, Mask and U-Net, for agricultural area segmentation in satellite images [14]. Mask, an extension of Faster, incorporates a mask layer for object segmentation [15]. U-Net, initially designed for biomedical object segmentation, has shown high efficiency in various fields, including satellite image segmentation [16, 17]. This research aims to assess the effectiveness of Mask and U-Net in agricultural remote sensing. The experiments are conducted on datasets from both Pakistan and other regions (The Americas or Europe) [18], providing insights into the models' accuracy in different agricultural settings. By evaluating these models on Eastern agricultural areas, particularly in Pakistan, this study contributes

valuable knowledge about their applicability in diverse contexts. In this research study, we investigated the application of two advanced models, Mask and U-Net, for agricultural image segmentation on satellite imagery. The paper is organized into six main sections. The first section provides an overview of the research, outlining its scope and objectives. In the second section, we delve into the current landscape of deep learning applications in agricultural satellite image processing. The third section details the methodologies employed for utilizing the Mask and U-Net models in segmenting agricultural areas on satellite images. Moving on, the fourth section elaborates on the specific training processes conducted for these models. In the fifth section, we present the results obtained from the application of Mask and U-Net to real agricultural satellite images, highlighting the accuracy of each model and offering a comprehensive comparison of their effectiveness in agricultural area segmentation. Finally, the sixth section concludes the study, summarizing the findings, and discusses potential directions for future research and development in this field.

I. DEEP LEARNING IN AGRICULTURAL SATELLITE IMAGE SEGMENTATION

Agricultural satellite imagery processing presents a spectrum of challenges, ranging from basic object classification to more complex tasks like object detection and segmentation [19]. Previous studies have utilized various deep learning models to address these challenges [20, 21, 22]. For instance,

P. Helber [23] and colleagues successfully employed a deep learning model to classify 10 different land objects with remarkable accuracy exceeding 96[24]. Chang et al integrated object classification and detection, specifically identifying diverse forest types, showcasing the potential of deep learning methods in this domain. Object segmentation, a higher-level processing task, involves delineating objects from background data, enabling precise analysis. Several models have been explored in this context [25,26]. K.M. Masoud experimented with the improved FCN model, achieving certain effectiveness in agricultural area segmentation [27]. However, complex architectures like FCN require substantial computational resources [28]. U-Net, a simpler yet efficient model, has gained traction in agricultural satellite image segmentation [29]. Studies by Andrei Stoian applied U-Net to segment soil distributions, demonstrating its effectiveness, albeit with a focus on multiple object types [30]. Mask models, akin to Mask, have shown promise in solving object recognition problems. W. Zhang successfully employed Mask based approaches to segment Arctic glaciers, achieving an impressive Mean Average Precision (mAP) accuracy of 70various object segmentation tasks, its potential in agricultural area segmentation remains relatively unexplored [31]. Comparative evaluations between models such as Mask and U-Net have been conducted in specific contexts. However, in the realm of agricultural area segmentation, a comprehensive and generalized comparison between these models is lacking. In our research, we aim to bridge this gap by conducting an in-depth analysis and comparison of the effectiveness of Mask models and U-Net in agricultural satellite image segmentation, particularly in complex agricultural areas.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCESS

The experimental process comprises six main steps.

1) *Data Collection::* We meticulously curated our dataset by capturing 24000 images of agricultural areas in Pakistan and other countries using Google Maps and Microsoft's Snipping tool. Ensuring a diverse range of object categories was essential to impart the necessary attributes for effective learning.

2) *Assigning Data Labels::* Utilizing the VGG Image Annotator tool, we assigned precise location labels to objects in the dataset photos. Accurate data labeling is pivotal as the model relies on these annotations during training. Incorrect labels could hinder the model's ability to grasp object properties, leading to inaccurate predictions.

A. Model Training:

The core of the training process involved feeding the model with labeled data to extract object features. Different models have unique learning styles, requiring careful adjustment of learning parameters to achieve

optimal results. Training involved enabling the model to recognize and confirm objects in unseen images

B. Model Testing:

Testing assessed the model's learning progress. If the model did not perform as expected, we refined the data or adjusted learning parameters. Evaluation was based on predicted results in images and learning curve graphs. Choosing the optimal model depended on several factors, including problem requirements, dataset criteria, and object features.

C. IMPLEMENTATION AND TRAINING

Based on the data from step 4 and accurate model measurements, we compared the experimental models against theoretical expectations. A detailed evaluation was conducted, comparing the quality and effectiveness of both models in segmenting the same images. This assessment gauged the models' performance in solving agricultural area segmentation challenges in satellite imagery

D. Processing Predicted Results:

In this step, we post-processed the test model results to enhance accuracy. False predictions were eliminated, missing predictions added, and inaccurate ones refined. This refinement improved segmentation values, making them more reliable for various applications, including generating new training datasets and agricultural area statistics. A higher degree of accuracy in images enhanced their reliability for statistical analysis

II. IMPLEMENTATION AND TRAINING

A. Training Data

In remote sensing, the accuracy of information collection devices significantly impacts the reliability of subsequent analysis. However, these devices can be costly. Given our limited research funding, we opted for readily available free satellite image sources. We utilized Google Maps, a versatile software offering satellite views with adjustable altitudes (ranging from 5m to 2000km). Our dataset was meticulously curated from Google Maps' public domain. During data collection, we ensured that each selected image contained at least one object, with over 50% of the image representing the agricultural land to be segmented. Objects, such as tree shadows, tractors, and wells, were carefully labeled, while confusing data was restricted. The number of objects in each image varied between 1 to 20.

Our dataset comprises 24000 images, divided into two categories: satellite images of agricultural areas in Pakistan and those from other regions. The images predominantly focus on key agricultural areas. In the Pakistan dataset, approximately 75% of images are from the southern region, 20% from the northern region, and 5% from the central region. The Non-Pakistan dataset consists of 40% images from America, 40% from Europe, 15% from Africa, and 5% from Pakistan's unique geographical features, including its intricate river network, pose challenges. Agricultural satellite images in this area often contain various interfering objects such as houses, rivers, lakes, and canals. Moreover, the characteristics of the river network influence agricultural land planning, leading to diverse shapes and sizes of agricultural lands in Pakistan. The limited application of high technology, like segmenting agricultural areas using commercial satellites, further complicates obtaining a comprehensive set of agricultural images from different regions in Pakistan.

III. RESULT AND EVALUATION

In the evaluation of the Mask and U-Net models on agricultural datasets from Pakistan and other regions, several key observations were made. The training process for Mask exhibited an initial decrease in error followed by an increase due to overfitting, caused by a high learning rate and an excessive number of training steps. Early stopping was implemented to mitigate this issue, selecting the model with the lowest error for evaluation. The evaluation was conducted using Intersection over Union (IoU), precision, recall, and mean Average Precision (mAP) metrics. For Mask, the evaluation results showed that Mask based Non-Pakistan outperformed Mask Pakistan. This superiority was

attributed to the larger training dataset used for Non Pakistan, leading to better model performance. The IoU values for Mask Non-Pakistan (0.8070) were higher than those for Mask Pakistan (0.7980), indicating better accuracy in predicting object overlaps. Similarly, precision and recall values were better for Mask Non-Pakistan, demonstrating higher accuracy in model projections and reduced omission of correct objects, respectively. The mAP parameter, which measures prediction accuracy, was significantly higher for Mask Non-Pakistan (0.9521) compared to Mask Pakistan (0.8574). In the case of U-Net, the training error decreased steadily over time. The evaluation was carried out using IoU, Dice coefficient, and mAP metrics. U-Net Non-Pakistan outperformed U-Net Pakistan, showcasing the impact of a larger training dataset. The IoU value for U-Net Non Pakistan (0.8302) was higher than that for U-Net Pakistan (0.7284), indicating improved accuracy in predicting object overlaps. The Dice coefficient, which evaluates accuracy based on the overlap of predicted values and correct object labels, also demonstrated superior performance for U-Net Non-Pakistan (0.9048) compared to U-Net Pakistan (0.8368). Additionally, the mAP parameter was significantly higher for U-Net Non-Pakistan (0.9269) compared to U-Net Pakistan (0.7924). Comparing the two models, it was evident that the quantity and quality of training data significantly influenced the performance of both Mask and U-Net. Although the agricultural areas in Pakistan exhibited lower sharpness, leading to challenges in learning object attributes and potential confusion with other objects, the deviations in evaluation parameters between Pakistan and Non Pakistan datasets were not substantial within each model. This suggests that deep learning models, including Mask and U-Net, can effectively handle agricultural area segmentation in satellite imagery, and their performance is consistent across different regions.

IV. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

In this study, we explored the effectiveness of two image segmentation models, Mask and U-Net, for segmenting agricultural land in Pakistan. Our experiment utilized a satellite image dataset extracted from Google Maps, emphasizing the influence of image quality on model performance. U-Net, originally designed for high-quality medical data, exhibited enhanced efficiency when trained on the Non-Pakistan dataset, which featured higher-quality images compared to the Pakistan dataset. Both models demonstrated high accuracy when applied to agricultural areas in Pakistan and other global regions, as evidenced by the model evaluation metrics. This involves addressing false predictions, refining inaccurate ones, and filling in missing predictions. By combining model-generated predictions with manual results, we aim to create a dataset that is accurate and reliable. These enhanced datasets will not only improve the training of our models but also streamline the complexities associated with manual data labeling. Additionally, the refined datasets can find practical applications in various areas, including remote sensing support for land area statistics, mapping, and related fields.

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