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Opinion Article

Artificial Intelligence Impact on Disease Management and Feed Optimization in Aquaculture

Foong Gao*

Department of Ocean Technology, Shanghai Ocean University, Shanghai, China

DESCRIPTION

Aquaculture, the cultivation of aquatic organisms such as fish, crustaceans, mollusks, and aquatic plants, is a rapidly growing industry worldwide. This sector plays a significant role in food security, economic development, and environmental sustainability. As the demand for seafood increases and wild fish stocks decline, aquaculture has become an essential component of the global food supply chain. However, the industry faces significant challenges, including disease management, water quality control, feed optimization, and environmental impact. Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers innovative solutions to these challenges, transforming aquaculture into a more efficient, sustainable, and profitable venture. AI encompasses a range of technologies, including machine learning, neural networks, computer vision, and robotics, which can be applied to various aspects of aquaculture. By leveraging AI, aquaculture operations can achieve higher productivity, reduced costs, and improved sustainability. Below, we explore several key areas where AI is making a significant impact in aquaculture. Disease outbreaks are a major threat to aquaculture, causing significant economic losses and environmental damage. Early detection and effective management of diseases are vital for maintaining healthy stocks and minimizing losses. AI technologies, particularly machine learning and computer vision, are being used to monitor and diagnose diseases in aquaculture. For example, AI-powered image recognition systems can analyze images of fish and other aquatic organisms to detect signs of disease, such as lesions, discoloration, or abnormal behavior. These systems can process large volumes of data quickly and accurately, providing real-time alerts to farm operators. Additionally, machine learning algorithms can analyze historical data on disease outbreaks, environmental conditions, and treatment efficacy to predict and prevent future outbreaks. Water quality is a critical factor in the health and growth of aquatic organisms. Parameters such as temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen, ammonia, and nitrate levels need to be monitored and controlled to ensure optimal conditions for aquaculture.

Traditional methods of water quality monitoring can be labor-intensive and time-consuming. AI-driven sensors and IoT (Internet of Things) devices can continuously monitor water quality parameters and transmit data to a central system for analysis. Machine learning algorithms can then analyze this data to identify trends, detect anomalies, and predict potential issues. For example, AI can predict harmful algal blooms or oxygen depletion events, allowing farmers to take preventive measures. Feed is the largest operational cost in aquaculture, accounting for up to 70% of total expenses. Efficient feed management is essential for reducing costs and minimizing environmental impact. Overfeeding can lead to wasted resources and water pollution, while underfeeding can stunt growth and reduce yields. AI-powered systems can optimize feed management by analyzing data on fish behavior, growth rates, and environmental conditions. Computer vision technology can be used to monitor fish activity and adjust feeding schedules in real-time. Machine learning algorithms can predict the optimal amount and timing of feed based on various factors, such as water temperature, fish size, and species. This ensures that fish receive the right amount of nutrition while minimizing waste.

Accurate estimation of biomass, or the total weight of fish in a farming unit, is important for effective management and planning in aquaculture. Traditional methods of biomass estimation, such as manual sampling, can be labor-intensive, invasive, and prone to errors. AI technologies, particularly computer vision and machine learning, offer non-invasive and accurate methods for biomass estimation. Underwater cameras and drones equipped with AI algorithms can capture images and videos of fish populations. These images are then analyzed to estimate the size and weight of individual fish, providing accurate biomass estimates. This information can be used to optimize feeding, harvest planning, and inventory management. Aquaculture operations can have significant environmental impacts, including water pollution, habitat destruction, and biodiversity loss. Sustainable aquaculture practices are essential for minimizing these impacts and ensuring the long-term viability of the industry. AI can contribute to environmental

Correspondence to: Foong Gao, Department of Ocean Technology, Shanghai Ocean University, Shanghai, China, E-mail: Foonggao@gmail.com

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sustainability by providing tools for monitoring and managing the environmental impact of aquaculture. For example, machine learning algorithms can analyze data on nutrient discharge, water quality, and ecosystem health to assess the environmental impact of farming activities. AI can also optimize farming practices to reduce waste, improve resource efficiency, and promote sustainable development. SalmoBreed, a Norwegian salmon breeding company, partnered with IBM Research to develop AI models for predicting the growth and health of salmon. By analyzing data on genetics, feed, and environmental conditions, the AI models can optimize breeding programs and improve the quality of farmed salmon. Aquabyte, a startup based in San Francisco, uses computer vision and machine learning to monitor fish health and growth. Their system uses underwater cameras to capture images of fish, which are then analyzed to detect signs of disease, estimate biomass, and optimize feeding schedules. Aquabyte's technology has been successfully deployed in salmon farms in Norway and Chile. eFishery, an Indonesian startup, developed an AI-powered automated feeding system for fish and shrimp farming. The system uses sensors to monitor fish behavior and environmental conditions, adjusting feeding schedules and quantities in real-time. This has led to significant cost savings and improved growth rates for farmers in Southeast Asia.