

Intelligent Weed Detection and Crop Classification Using a ResNet50-Based Convolutional Neural Network for Precision Agriculture

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ARTICLE INFO

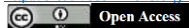
Keywords:

Precision agriculture,
ResNet50,
Transfer learning,
Weed detection,
Crop classification,
Deep learning,
Computer vision.

Vol.01, No.03, 2026

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ABSTRACT

The increasing impact of weed infestation on crop production has created the need for intelligent and automated weed detection systems capable of improving agricultural productivity while reducing excessive herbicide application. This study developed and evaluated an intelligent weed detection and crop classification system based on a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) using the ResNet50 architecture with transfer learning. A diverse image dataset comprising maize, rice, beans, soybeans, groundnuts, and weed samples was collected and prepared through image preprocessing, normalization, and data augmentation techniques. All images were resized to 224×224 pixels, and the dataset was partitioned into training, validation, and testing subsets using a stratified ratio of 80%, 10%, and 10%, respectively. Transfer learning using the ResNet50 architecture was adopted, followed by fine-tuning of the upper network layers to enhance feature extraction and classification performance while class weighting and optimization strategies were applied to address class imbalance and enhance learning performance. The developed model was evaluated using accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, confusion matrix, and validation loss. The results showed that the proposed model achieved a classification accuracy of 94.86%, demonstrating its ability to distinguish weeds from crops under varying illumination, background complexity, and plant growth stages. Rice achieved perfect classification performance, while Beans, Groundnuts, Maize, and Soybeans also recorded high precision, recall, and F1-score values. Although the Weed class exhibited relatively lower recall due to limited sample availability and morphological variability, it maintained perfect precision, indicating highly reliable predictions whenever weeds were detected. The results further demonstrate that the residual learning mechanism of ResNet50 effectively captured discriminative visual features, including leaf morphology, texture, and plant structure, thereby enhancing classification performance under varying agricultural field conditions. The developed model outperformed comparable CNN-based weed detection approaches reported in the literature with a classification accuracy of 89.30%, confirming the effectiveness of ResNet50 and transfer learning for agricultural image classification. The study concludes that the proposed system provides a robust, accurate, and computationally efficient solution for intelligent weed detection and crop classification, with significant potential for deployment in precision herbicide spraying, agricultural robotics, and real-time smart farming applications.

1. Introduction

Agriculture is fundamental to global food security, economic development, and sustainable livelihoods, providing food, raw materials, and employment for a rapidly growing global population. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), global food production must increase substantially by 2050 to meet the demands of an estimated population of nearly 10 billion people (FAO, 2023). Despite this growing demand, agricultural productivity continues to face numerous challenges, among which weed infestation remains one of the most significant. Weeds compete aggressively with cultivated crops for essential resources such as water, nutrients, sunlight, and space, resulting in substantial reductions in crop yield, quality, and profitability. Uncontrolled weeds are estimated to account for approximately 34% of global agricultural yield losses, making them one of the most destructive biological constraints to crop production (Oerke, 2006; Duke, 2012). This problem is

particularly severe in staple crops such as maize, rice, beans, soybeans, and groundnuts, where efficient weed management is crucial for achieving sustainable food production.

Conventional weed control methods, including manual weeding and blanket herbicide application, have long been employed to manage weed infestations. However, these approaches present several limitations. Manual weeding is labour-intensive, time-consuming, and increasingly impractical for large-scale farming due to labour shortages and rising production costs. Likewise, indiscriminate herbicide application often leads to excessive chemical use, environmental pollution, biodiversity loss, and the emergence of herbicide-resistant weed species (Duke & Powles, 2008; Van Acker, 2009; Heap, 2023). These challenges have increased the demand for intelligent weed management systems capable of accurately identifying weeds and supporting site-specific herbicide application to minimize chemical inputs while maintaining high crop productivity.

The rapid advancement of precision agriculture has created new opportunities to improve farming efficiency through the integration of artificial intelligence (AI), geographic information systems (GIS), unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), robotics, and advanced sensing technologies (Zhang, Wang, & Wang, 2002; Gebbers & Adamchuk, 2010). Among AI techniques, deep learning, particularly Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), has demonstrated exceptional performance in image classification by automatically learning hierarchical feature representations from images without the need for manual feature extraction (LeCun, Bengio, & Hinton, 2015). This capability enables CNN-based models to accurately distinguish crops from weeds under varying illumination conditions, complex backgrounds, plant occlusion, and different growth stages (Lottes *et al.*, 2017; Bah *et al.*, 2018; Ferentinos, 2018).

Among modern CNN architectures, ResNet50 has emerged as one of the most effective models for agricultural image analysis because of its residual learning framework, which overcomes the vanishing-gradient problem and enables the successful training of deeper neural networks with improved classification performance (He *et al.*, 2016). Through transfer learning, ResNet50 effectively utilizes features learned from large-scale image datasets to achieve high classification accuracy even when agricultural datasets are relatively limited (He *et al.*, 2016; Too *et al.*, 2019). Previous studies have reported its superior performance in plant disease recognition, crop classification, and weed detection compared with conventional machine learning algorithms and shallower CNN architectures (Mohanty, Hughes, & Salathé, 2016; Too *et al.*, 2019; Hasan *et al.*, 2021).

Despite these advancements, intelligent weed detection remains a challenging computer vision task because of the morphological similarities between crops and weeds, varying environmental conditions, complex backgrounds, plant occlusion, and the computational requirements of real-time deployment (Kamilaris & Prenafeta-Boldú, 2018; Hasan *et al.*, 2021; Yang *et al.*, 2022). To address these challenges, this study proposes a ResNet50-based intelligent weed detection and crop classification for maize, rice, beans, soybeans, and groundnuts. The collected image dataset was preprocessed through resizing, normalization, and data augmentation to improve model robustness and minimize overfitting (Shorten & Khoshgoftaar, 2019). The ResNet50 model was subsequently fine-tuned and evaluated using standard performance metrics, including accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and confusion matrix analysis. The proposed model is expected to support precision agriculture by enabling accurate crop and weed classification and selective herbicide application, thereby reducing unnecessary chemical usage, lowering production costs, minimizing environmental pollution, and mitigating the development of herbicide-resistant weed populations. Furthermore, the integration of deep learning-based computer vision into precision agriculture has the potential to reduce dependence on manual labour, improve operational efficiency and crop productivity, and promote environmentally sustainable farming practices that enhance food security and agricultural profitability.

2. Literature Review

Advances in artificial intelligence, machine learning, and deep learning have significantly transformed weed detection and crop classification in precision agriculture. Early studies mainly relied on conventional image processing techniques, whereas contemporary research increasingly employs deep learning architectures, particularly Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and transfer learning models such as ResNet50, to improve classification accuracy, robustness, and computational efficiency under diverse field conditions.

Several researchers have demonstrated the effectiveness of CNNs for automated weed detection. Chegini *et al.*, (2023) developed a CNN-based model for detecting California thistle, achieving a detection accuracy of 95% and demonstrating the effectiveness of deep learning for automatic feature extraction and site-specific weed management. However, the proposed model was limited to a single weed species, reducing its applicability in agricultural environments containing multiple weed species. Similarly, Kavitha *et al.*, (2023) proposed a CNN-based framework that integrates image preprocessing, segmentation, feature extraction, and classification to identify multiple weed species, including bluegrass, *Chenopodium*, *Cirsium setosum*, and sedge. Although the study demonstrated the feasibility of deep learning for automated weed identification, the absence of quantitative performance metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score, together with limited implementation details, restricted the reproducibility and objective evaluation of the proposed framework.

Transfer learning has also emerged as an effective approach for improving crop and weed classification performance. Hasan *et al.*, (2023) evaluated several deep learning architectures, including ResNet50, DenseNet121, and EfficientNet, and reported that ResNet50 achieved the highest classification accuracy of 98.2% because of its superior feature extraction capability and robustness under varying illumination and growth conditions. Likewise, Khan *et al.*, (2024) compared ResNet50, MobileNetV2, InceptionV3, and EfficientNetB0 for crop and weed classification using field images and found that ResNet50 outperformed the competing models with an overall classification accuracy of 98.6%. The study further demonstrated that transfer learning significantly reduced training time and computational cost while maintaining high classification performance. However, both studies focused primarily on image classification and did not investigate real-time deployment for intelligent precision spraying or autonomous agricultural systems.

In addition to image classification, object detection and instance segmentation techniques have become increasingly important for automated weed identification in precision agriculture. Silva *et al.*, (2024) evaluated several state of the art deep learning models, including YOLOv8, YOLOv7, YOLOv5, U-Net, and Mask R-CNN, for UAV-based weed detection and segmentation using an augmented dataset of 3,021 aerial images. Among the evaluated models, YOLOv8s achieved the highest performance with 99.7% precision, 99.0% recall, and 97.0% mean Average Precision (mAP), demonstrating excellent capability for automated weed mapping and precision herbicide application. However, the study was limited to soybean and bean crops, thereby restricting its generalisation to other crop species and agricultural environments. Likewise, Bhalke and Dandvate (2024) proposed a YOLOv3-based framework that first detects crop plants before classifying the remaining green vegetation as weeds. Although the proposed methodology simplifies weed detection and reduces computational complexity, the study lacked experimental validation and quantitative performance metrics, making its effectiveness difficult to assess.

Another important direction in the literature has focused on achieving a balance between detection accuracy and computational efficiency. Nasir *et al.*, (2025) developed a CNN-based weed detection prototype that employed image preprocessing techniques before CNN classification, achieving an accuracy of 89.82%, precision of 93.94%, recall of 86.11%, and an F1-score of 88.08%. Although the model demonstrated satisfactory performance and computational efficiency, its relatively small dataset limited its ability to generalise across different crop species and field conditions. Patel *et al.*, (2025) also proposed a ResNet50-based transfer learning framework for simultaneous crop classification and weed recognition. Through data augmentation and fine-tuning, the proposed model achieved an overall classification accuracy exceeding 98%, confirming the effectiveness of ResNet50 for intelligent agricultural monitoring. Nevertheless, the study did not evaluate inference performance on embedded edge devices required for real-time agricultural applications. Furthermore, Safiullah *et al.*, (2026) proposed a Faster R-CNN model with a ResNet50 Feature Pyramid Network (FPN) backbone for cotton weed detection. The model achieved a mean Average Precision (mAP@0.5) of 92.3%, precision of 93.2%, and recall of 91.5%, outperforming YOLOv8 and MobileNet-SSD in detection accuracy. Although the model demonstrated excellent localisation performance, its higher computational complexity and slower inference speed present challenges for real-time deployment on resource-constrained agricultural platforms.

Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates a clear transition from conventional machine learning approaches to advanced deep learning architectures for intelligent weed detection and crop classification. CNN-based models, particularly ResNet50, together with object detection frameworks such as YOLOv8 and Faster R-CNN, consistently deliver superior classification accuracy by automatically learning discriminative image features under complex field conditions. Nevertheless, existing studies remain constrained by limited datasets, crop-specific evaluations, insufficient real-time deployment, computational complexity, and reduced generalisability across multiple crops and weed species. These limitations highlight the need for a robust and computationally efficient ResNet50-based Convolutional Neural Network capable of simultaneously performing intelligent weed detection and crop classification across multiple economically important crops under diverse agricultural environments.

3. Methodology

This section presents the methodology adopted to achieve the objectives of this study. It describes the procedures involved in the acquisition and preparation of the crop and weed image dataset, the implementation of the ResNet50-based Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) using transfer learning, image preprocessing and augmentation, model training and fine-tuning, and the evaluation of the developed model using standard classification performance metrics.

3.1 Crop and Weed Dataset Curation

The first stage of the study involved the collection of image data comprising maize, rice, beans, soybeans, groundnuts, and weed species from the Federal Polytechnic Bali (FPB) farms using a Sony Cyber-shot DSC-W800 digital camera. The acquired images were manually inspected and accurately labelled according to their respective crop and weed classes to create a supervised learning dataset suitable for intelligent crop classification and weed detection. To ensure compatibility with the ResNet50 architecture, all images were preprocessed by resizing them to 224×224 pixels, which corresponds to the standard input dimension of the pre-trained ResNet50 model. The resized images were subsequently normalized using the ResNet50 preprocessing function to standardize pixel values and improve convergence during model training. To enhance dataset diversity, improve model generalisation, and minimise overfitting, several data augmentation techniques were employed, including random rotation, horizontal flipping, width and height shifting, zooming, and shear transformation. These augmentation operations enabled the model to learn robust feature representations under varying field conditions such as changes in illumination, camera orientation, plant growth stages, and background complexity. Following preprocessing and augmentation, the dataset was randomly partitioned into training, validation, and testing subsets in the ratio of 80%, 10%, and 10%, respectively. A fixed random seed value of 42 was used during dataset splitting to ensure consistency, reproducibility, and fairness throughout the evaluation. The resulting dataset was subsequently used to train, validate, and evaluate the proposed ResNet50-based CNN model for intelligent weed detection and crop classification in precision agriculture. The pseudocode for Crop and Weed Dataset Curation is given in Algorithm 1.

Algorithm 1: The pseudocode for Crop and Weed Dataset Curation

Input:

*Images of maize, rice, beans, soybeans, groundnuts, and weeds
captured from FPB farms*

Output:

Training, validation, and testing datasets

Begin

1. Collect crop and weed images using a Sony Cyber-shot DSC-W800 camera.
2. For each captured image do
 - a. Inspect the image for quality.
 - b. Assign the correct class label

(Maize, Rice, Beans, Soybeans, Groundnuts, or Weed).

End For

3. For each labelled image do

a. Resize image to 224×224 pixels.

b. Apply ResNet50 preprocessing (image normalization).

End For

4. Apply data augmentation to the training images by performing:

a. Random rotation

b. Horizontal flipping

c. Width shifting

d. Height shifting

e. Zoom transformation

f. Shear transformation

5. Set random seed = 42.

6. Randomly partition the dataset into:

a. Training set = 80%

b. Validation set = 10%

c. Testing set = 10%

7. Store the prepared datasets for model training, validation, and performance evaluation.

End

Figure 3.1: The pseudocode for Crop and Weed Dataset Curation.

3.2 Development of the ResNet50-Based Crop Classification and Weed Detection Model

A ResNet50-based Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) was developed using transfer learning to classify agricultural images into six classes: maize, rice, beans, soybeans, groundnuts, and weeds. The pre-trained ResNet50 model was adapted by removing its original classification layer (include_top=False) and incorporating a Global Average Pooling layer, Batch Normalization, two Dense layers with 512 and 256 neurons, Dropout layers (0.5 and 0.3), and a Softmax output layer for multi-class classification. The model was trained in two phases. Initially, the ResNet50 backbone was frozen while the newly added classification layers were trained using the Adam optimizer with a learning rate of 0.001, a batch size of 32, and 20 epochs. Subsequently, the upper layers of the backbone were fine-tuned with a reduced learning rate of 0.0001 for an additional 25 epochs to improve classification performance. To enhance model robustness and reduce overfitting, class weighting, Batch Normalization, Early Stopping, ReduceLROnPlateau, and Dropout were employed during training. These optimization strategies improved model convergence, generalisation, and overall performance for intelligent weed detection and crop classification in precision agriculture.

Algorithm 2: The pseudocode for the ResNet50-Based Model development

Input:

Preprocessed training, validation, and testing datasets

Output:

Trained ResNet50-based CNN model for crop classification and weed detection

Begin

1. Load the pre-trained ResNet50 model.

2. Remove the original classification layer

Set include_top = False.

3. Construct the new classification head by adding:
 - a. Global Average Pooling (GAP) layer
 - b. Batch Normalization layer
 - c. Dense layer (512 neurons, ReLU activation)
 - d. Dropout layer (rate = 0.5)
 - e. Dense layer (256 neurons, ReLU activation)
 - f. Dropout layer (rate = 0.3)
 - g. Softmax output layer (6 classes)
4. Freeze all layers of the ResNet50 backbone.
5. Compile the model using:
 - Optimizer = Adam
 - Learning rate = 0.001
 - Loss function = Categorical Cross-Entropy
 - Metrics = Accuracy
6. Train the classification layers using:
 - Batch size = 32
 - Epochs = 20
 - Class weights
 - Early Stopping
 - ReduceLROnPlateau
7. Unfreeze the upper layers of the ResNet50 backbone.
8. Recompile the model using:
 - Adam optimizer
 - Learning rate = 0.0001
9. Fine-tune the model for:
 - Batch size = 32
 - Epochs = 25
 - Class weights
 - Early Stopping
 - ReduceLROnPlateau
10. Save the trained ResNet50 model.
11. Evaluate the model using the testing dataset.
- End

Figure 3.2: The pseudocode for Res Net 50-Based Model development

3.3 Evaluation of the Developed ResNet50 Model

The performance of the proposed ResNet50-based Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) was assessed using widely adopted multi-class classification metrics, namely Accuracy, Precision, Recall, and F1-score. These metrics were selected to comprehensively evaluate the model's capability to correctly classify crop and weed images while providing balanced performance measures across all classes. In addition to these quantitative metrics, the classification results were analysed using a confusion matrix, classification report, and sample prediction outputs to provide detailed insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed model. Precision (Pr) measures the proportion of correctly predicted positive samples among all samples classified as positive, indicating the reliability of the model's positive predictions. Recall (Rc), also referred to as sensitivity, evaluates the model's ability to correctly identify actual positive samples from the dataset. Accuracy (A) represents the overall proportion of correctly classified samples relative to the total number of observations, while the F1-score (F1) combines precision and recall into a single performance measure through their harmonic mean, providing a balanced assessment of the classifier, particularly in the presence of class imbalance (Sokolova & Lapalme, 2009). These evaluation metrics are expressed mathematically in Equations (1)–(4).

$$Pr = \frac{TP}{TP+FP} \quad (1)$$

$$Rc = \frac{TP}{TP+FN} \quad (2)$$

$$A = \frac{TP+TN}{top} \quad (3)$$

$$F1 = 2 \times \frac{Pr \times Rc}{Pr+Rc} \quad (4)$$

Where:

TP denotes True Positives, TN represents True Negatives, FP denotes False Positives, and FN represents False Negatives. Collectively, these performance indicators provide a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness, robustness, and reliability of the proposed ResNet50-based intelligent weed detection and crop classification model for precision agriculture.

4. Results and discussion

This section presents the results obtained from the training, validation, and testing of the proposed ResNet50-based Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) for intelligent weed detection and crop classification. The model was evaluated using standard classification metrics, including accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, confusion matrix analysis, and prediction visualization, to assess its effectiveness in distinguishing maize, rice, beans, soybeans, groundnuts, and weeds under varying agricultural conditions

4.1 Test Accuracy Results

The performance of the proposed ResNet50-based Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) for intelligent weed detection and crop classification was evaluated using an independent test dataset that was excluded from both the training and validation stages. Evaluating the model on previously unseen images provides an objective assessment of its generalisation capability and its ability to accurately classify maize, rice, beans, soybeans, groundnuts, and weeds under real agricultural conditions. The proposed model achieved a test accuracy of 94.86%, as presented in Figure 4.1, demonstrating its effectiveness in learning discriminative visual features required for accurate crop classification and weed detection. Figure 4.1 below illustrates the training and validation accuracy curves over the 15 training epochs, showing a steady improvement in classification performance and demonstrating the effective convergence and stability of the proposed ResNet50-based CNN model for intelligent weed detection and crop classification.



Figure 4.1: Training and validation accuracy curves of the proposed ResNet50-based CNN

The high classification accuracy obtained can be attributed to the transfer learning strategy employed in this study, together with the fine-tuning of the upper layers of the pre-trained ResNet50 architecture. During training, the model successfully extracted high-level features related to leaf morphology, plant texture, colour patterns, and structural characteristics, enabling reliable

discrimination between crops and weeds despite variations in illumination, background complexity, and plant growth stages. The two-stage training strategy further improved feature learning and accelerated model convergence while reducing computational cost. In addition, the high test accuracy, coupled with the low test loss obtained during model evaluation, indicates that the proposed ResNet50 model generalised effectively to unseen data with minimal evidence of overfitting. This performance demonstrates the effectiveness of the adopted preprocessing techniques, including image resizing, normalization, data augmentation, and transfer learning, in improving model robustness and classification reliability.

4.2 Classification Report Results

The performance of the proposed ResNet50-based Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) for intelligent weed detection and crop classification was assessed using standard evaluation metrics, including precision, recall, F1-score, and overall classification accuracy. These metrics provide a comprehensive evaluation of the model's ability to correctly classify the six target classes: beans, groundnuts, maize, rice, soybeans, and weeds. The detailed classification results obtained from the test dataset are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Classification Report

Class	Precision	Recall	F1-Score	Support
Beans	0.93	1.00	0.96	12
Groundnuts	1.00	0.93	0.97	15
Maize	0.95	1.00	0.96	14
Rice	1.00	1.00	1.00	12
Soybeans	1.00	0.93	1.00	13
Weeds	1.00	0.67	0.84	6
Overall Accuracy			0.94	54
Macro Average	0.97	0.92	0.93	54
Weighted Average	0.97	0.96	0.95	54

The results presented in Table 4.1 indicate that the proposed ResNet50-based CNN achieved excellent classification performance across the majority of the crop classes. Rice recorded perfect precision, recall, and F1-score values of 1.00, indicating that all rice images were correctly classified. Similarly, groundnuts and soybeans achieved outstanding classification performance, while beans and maize also recorded high precision, recall, and F1-score values above 0.90. Although the weed class obtained perfect precision (1.00), its recall (0.67) and F1-score (0.84) were comparatively lower due to the limited number of weed samples available in the test dataset. Overall, the model achieved a classification accuracy of 94.86%.

4.3 Confusion Matrix Analysis

The confusion matrix was employed to provide a detailed evaluation of the classification performance of the proposed ResNet50-based Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) for intelligent weed detection and crop classification. It compares the actual class labels with the predicted class labels, thereby identifying correctly classified samples and highlighting instances of misclassification across the six target classes: maize, rice, beans, soybeans, groundnuts, and weeds. The confusion matrix of the developed ResNet50 model is presented in Figure 4.2.

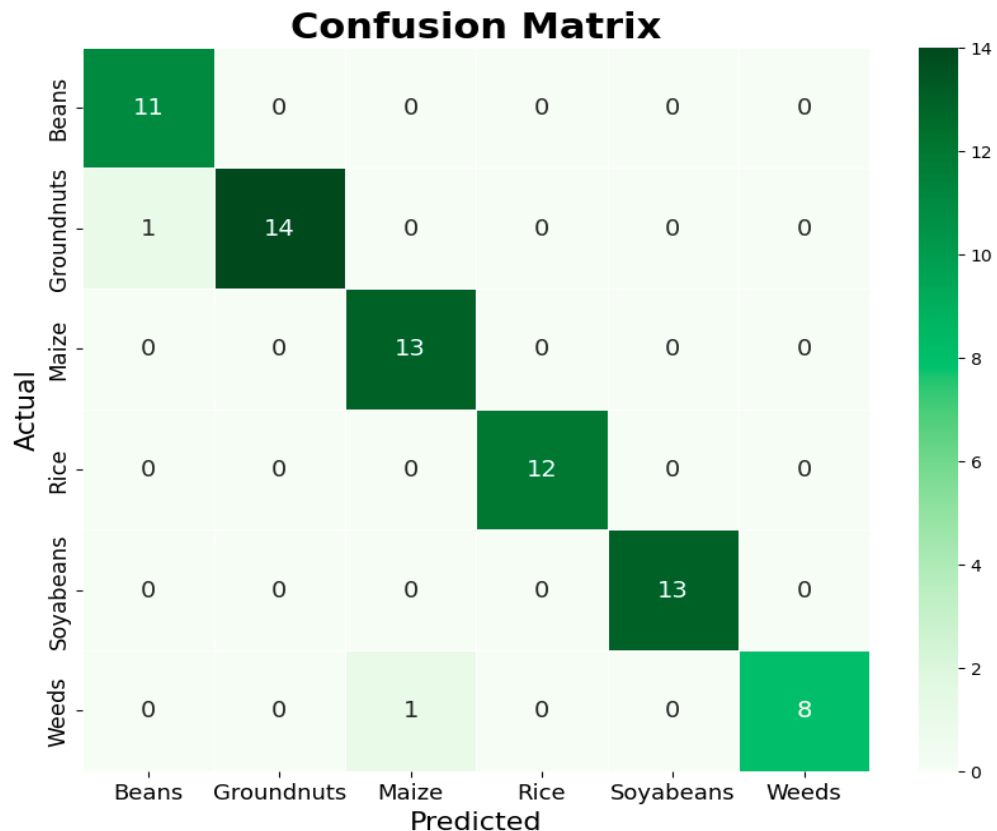


Figure 4.2: Confusion Matrix of the Proposed ResNet50-Based CNN Model

The confusion matrix reveals that the proposed ResNet50 model accurately classified the majority of the test images, as evidenced by the high concentration of correctly predicted samples along the principal diagonal. This indicates that the model effectively learned discriminative features associated with each crop and weed class, including differences in leaf morphology, texture, plant structure, and colour characteristics.

5. Conclusion

This study developed a ResNet50-based Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) for intelligent weed detection and crop classification in precision agriculture. The proposed model successfully classified beans, groundnuts, maize, rice, soybeans, and weeds, achieving an overall accuracy of 94.86%, which demonstrates the effectiveness of transfer learning and the ResNet50 architecture for agricultural image classification. The integration of image preprocessing, data augmentation, fine-tuning, and optimization techniques improved model robustness, reduced overfitting, and enhanced generalization performance. The findings indicate that the developed model can support automated crop monitoring, accurate weed detection, and site-specific herbicide application, thereby reducing chemical usage, lowering production costs, and promoting sustainable farming practices. In conclusion, this research highlights the potential of deep learning to advance precision agriculture and provides a reliable foundation for future intelligent weed management systems.

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