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Review Research

AI-Enabled Renewable Energy Systems for Agricultural and Rural Development: Socio-Technical, Economic, and Environmental Perspectives

Anik Biswas [1], Md Nasir Uddin Rana [2]

[1]College of Graduate and Professional Studies, Trine University, Detroit, Michigan, United States
[2] Department of Computer Science, Monroe University, New Rochelle, New York, United States

Abstract: Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping renewable energy and agriculture, opening practical pathways to improve efficiency, sustainability, and economic resilience in rural regions. Through machine learning and predictive analytics, AI coordinates generation, storage, and consumption, smoothing variability and reducing waste across distributed energy systems. On farms, AI enables precision irrigation, continuous crop surveillance, and targeted pest control, helping farmers use inputs more judiciously while protecting yields. Economic assessments often foreground barriers, especially high upfront capital and regulatory complexity, yet momentum is building around AI's capacity to shrink environmental footprints by optimizing water, fertilizers, and energy and by supporting biodiversity-friendly practices. At the same time, responsible deployment must account for AI's own environmental costs, including energy-intensive computation and hardware lifecycles. Evidence from field deployments already shows returns: energy optimization at microgrids, predictive maintenance that reduces downtime, and autonomous interventions that limit chemical overuse. Looking forward, progress hinges on inclusive, scalable adoption that blends local farming knowledge with digital decision support, ensuring tools reflect diverse climates, crops, and community priorities. Such integration strengthens the robustness and shock tolerance of agri-energy systems under climate and market stress. With careful planning, capacity building, and cross-sector collaboration among farmers, utilities, technologists, and policymakers, AI can substantially advance sustainable rural development, aligning technological innovation with social equity, economic viability, and ecological stewardship. Priorities include open standards, affordable access, and transparent models to build trust and protect privacy, so benefits accrue rather than widening digital divides. With policies and training, AI becomes a practical tool for decisions, not just a high-tech promise.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Renewable Energy Systems, Agrovoltaics, Sustainable Agriculture, Rural Development

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Article History:
Received: 15 August 2025
Accepted: 03 November 2025
Online: 05 November 2025

Corresponding author:
mrana4254@monroeu.edu

Citations: Biswas, A. & Rana, M. N. U. (2025). AI-Enabled Renewable Energy Systems for Agricultural and Rural Development: Socio-Technical, Economic, and Environmental Perspectives. *Research Sustainability*, *2*(3), 1-13.

https://doi.org/10.69937/pf.rs.2.3.57

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly positioning itself as a transformative force in renewable energy, especially across agricultural and rural communities. Amid intensifying climate pressures and growing energy demand, the need for sustainable, reliable solutions is acute. Integrating AI into renewable systems reshapes how energy is produced, routed, and consumed (**Chhetri et al., 2021**). Through machine learning and related techniques, AI can optimize generation, forecast demand fluctuations, manage distributed grids, and sustain operations via predictive maintenance. These capabilities strengthen the efficiency and resilience of clean-energy infrastructures while supporting sustainable farming practices and improving livelihoods in rural areas.

A particularly promising avenue is agrovoltaics, co-locating crop cultivation with solar generation so the same land yields food and electricity, maximizing resource use (**Dongre et al., 2024**). In heat-stressed regions, panel shade can benefit certain crops, improving resilience to environmental extremes. At the same time, electricity sales or self-consumption can bolster farm economics, enhancing the sustainability of agricultural enterprises. Advances in solar design, such as flexible array layouts and tracking systems, further improve compatibility between photovoltaics and agricultural activities. Together, these innovations link food security, clean energy, and rural development.

Beyond agrovoltaics, AI underpins broader renewable energy functions by coordinating storage, balancing supply and demand, and optimizing power distribution (**Fang et al., 2020**). AI-enabled monitoring detects equipment degradation, anticipates failures, and schedules timely maintenance, reducing costs and downtime benefits that are crucial where reliable energy supports education, healthcare, and local business growth. Nonetheless, adoption faces hurdles: high acquisition and upkeep costs, rising e-waste from obsolete hardware, uneven digital access, and ethical concerns around data handling and AI's own environmental footprint. These realities underscore that technology is not a standalone remedy; effective deployment requires supportive policy, community training, targeted finance, and responsible design. If approached inclusively, AI-enhanced renewables can expand sustainable energy access, reinforce food security, and strengthen rural economies (**Joshi et al., 2022**). Realizing these potential demands balancing innovation with equity and carefully addressing social, economic, and environmental dimensions so benefits are broadly and fairly shared.

2. Socio-Technical Perspectives

Integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into renewable energy for agriculture and rural development is not just a technical exercise; it calls for a genuinely holistic view that spans social, economic, environmental, and engineering dimensions. Long-term success hinges on how these pieces interact. Insights from social and behavioral sciences help surface the everyday barriers communities face when adopting renewables, so tools can be tailored to local norms and needs. That way, improvements in energy systems also advance fair access. Meaningful participation in design and delivery builds trust, co-creates ethical guardrails, and informs regulation that people can accept, making benefits more likely to reach diverse groups in socially durable ways (**Kim et al., 2022**).

Equally important are strong public–private partnerships to reduce financial risk and speed adoption. When government agencies, private firms, and incumbent energy providers work together, they unlock funding, share know-how, and smooth the transition. Framing AI as an enhancement, not a disruption, helps communities buy in. Phased rollouts let stakeholders adapt at a manageable pace, see tangible gains, control costs, and limit exposure to failure.

All of this requires a culture of openness, responsibility, and accountability across the lifecycle of AI: design, deployment, and end-of-life. Clear standards from governments and regulators can ensure environmental responsibility and social fairness, while multidisciplinary research and knowledge-sharing keep innovation aligned with sustainability goals. However, it should be noted that AI is not a panacea for conservation or development, as an overreliance on it can be risky **(Kim et al., 2024).** Tackling biodiversity loss, climate change, and inequality also demands policy reform, social initiatives, and economic measures. AI should be woven into that broader, holistic strategy to build resilience, equity, and sustainability.

3. Agricultural Innovation, Economic, and Environmental Perspectives

The agricultural sector faces mounting constraints, limited arable land, labor shortages, and the pervasive impacts of climate change, driving a search for innovative responses, with artificial intelligence (AI) emerging as a promising lever for productivity and sustainability (**Kumar et al., 2021**). AI can enhance modern farming by optimizing irrigation, tracking crop health, improving pest management, and enabling precision agriculture. These capabilities promote efficiency and more sustainable practices that are vital for agriculture's future. Still, adoption is uneven: individual farmers and even larger agribusinesses may overlook AI's potential, and in regions where advanced methods are only beginning to take hold, implementation can be protracted and complex. Realizing AI's value therefore requires awareness-building, training, and careful localization of solutions.

From an economic standpoint, integrating AI with renewable energy systems brings both opportunity and risk.

Table 1: Challenges and Opportunities of AI Integration

Aspect	Challenges	Opportunities	Reference
Economic	High initial costs, lack of skilled workforce	Long-term profitability, new revenue streams	**(Kumar & Sharma, 2021; Li & Liu, 2021)**
Social	Unequal digital access, low adoption in rural areas	Community empowerment, digital literacy programs	**(Joshi & Singh, 2022; Smith & Brown, 2019)**
Environmental	E-waste, AI's own carbon footprint	Efficient resource use, reduced emissions	**(Patel et al., 2023; Mellor & Malik, 2017)**
Policy & Governance	Outdated regulations, lack of incentives	Supportive frameworks, public-private partnerships	**(Sundararajan & Arumugam, 2022; Chowdhury & Hossain, 2025)**

Aspect	Challenges	Opportunities	Reference
Technological	Bias in algorithms, dependence on industrial data	Lightweight AI models, decentralized systems	**(Shirsath et al., 2021; Islam & Chowdhury, 2025)**

AI can improve profitability and open new revenue streams for farmers and landowners, but outcomes depend heavily on local conditions. Differences in regional production systems, crop yields, renewable output, and expectations for rapid returns create uncertainty around profitability (**Li et al., 2021**). Robust cost–benefit analyses help stakeholders compare AI-integrated approaches with traditional farming or solar-only options, informing investment in dual-use systems. AI's predictive analytics and real-time optimization further strengthen economic viability by improving resource allocation, guiding energy policy, and sharpening market strategies that are essential for the financial health of rural communities.

Significant barriers remain. High upfront costs for hardware, software, and skilled labor limit access for smallholders and emerging energy providers. Outdated regulations can inhibit innovation, and concerns over land-use shifts may fuel resistance. Demonstrating long-term operational and financial gains through rigorous analyses and pilot projects is critical to building confidence (**Kumar et al., 2024**).

Environmental considerations are equally central. Pairing renewables with AI-driven resource management can reduce agriculture's footprint.

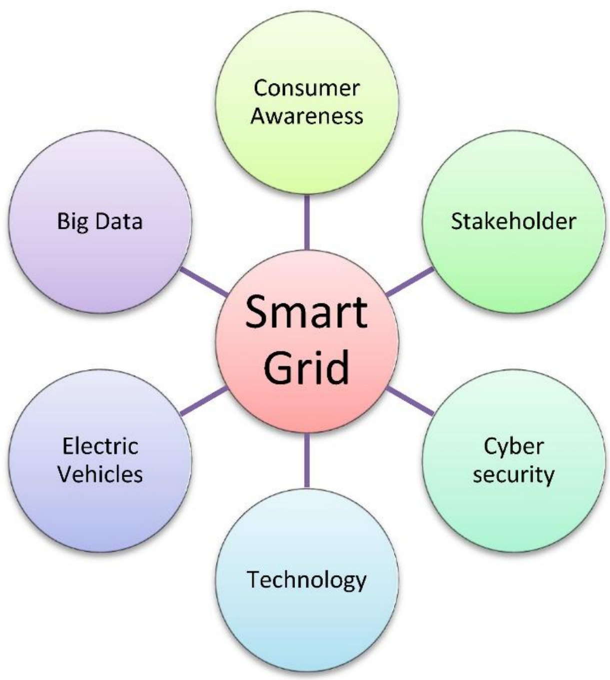

Figure 1: Renewable energy systems through artificial intelligence (Adopted from **Sundararajan et al., 2022)**

Continuous monitoring of water, soils, and weather enables precise interventions that conserve resources, especially crucial in water-scarce, climate-stressed regions. Renewable energy adoption further lowers pollution and aligns farm operations with broader sustainability targets.

Overall, AI can catalyze innovation, bolster economic resilience, and advance sustainable practices in agriculture and rural development (**Mellor et al., 2017**). Achieving these outcomes will require a balanced mix of technology, sound economics, and environmental stewardship, addressing adoption hurdles, supporting stakeholders, and integrating AI with renewable energy so rural communities can capture the full benefits.

4. AI in Revenue Optimization and Environmental Sustainability

Artificial intelligence (AI) can profoundly reshape how agricultural and rural enterprise's function, especially when paired with renewable energy. With predictive analytics and real-time optimization, AI can raise farm incomes, strengthen operational viability, and support long-term financial stability (**Kumar et al., 2025**). By processing large datasets, AI informs resource allocation, guides energy policy, and influences market design. This data-driven approach enables smarter decisions that lift productivity and improve energy efficiency. In turn, these gains reinforce the economic resilience of individual producers and advance broader regional and national objectives for food and energy security.

Adoption barriers remain substantial. High initial outlays for AI hardware, software, and specialized labor pose significant hurdles for smallholders and emerging energy providers, particularly in developing markets (**Naresh et al., 2020**). Outdated regulations can also slow progress, and landowners may resist perceived shifts from traditional agriculture to industrial or energy uses. Addressing these concerns requires rigorous economic evaluations and clear demonstration of long-term financial advantages to build stakeholder confidence and encourage wider uptake.

From an environmental perspective, AI can bolster sustainability while introducing new considerations. Coupled with renewables, AI can cut agriculture's ecological footprint by optimizing inputs, curbing pollution, and elevating energy efficiency.

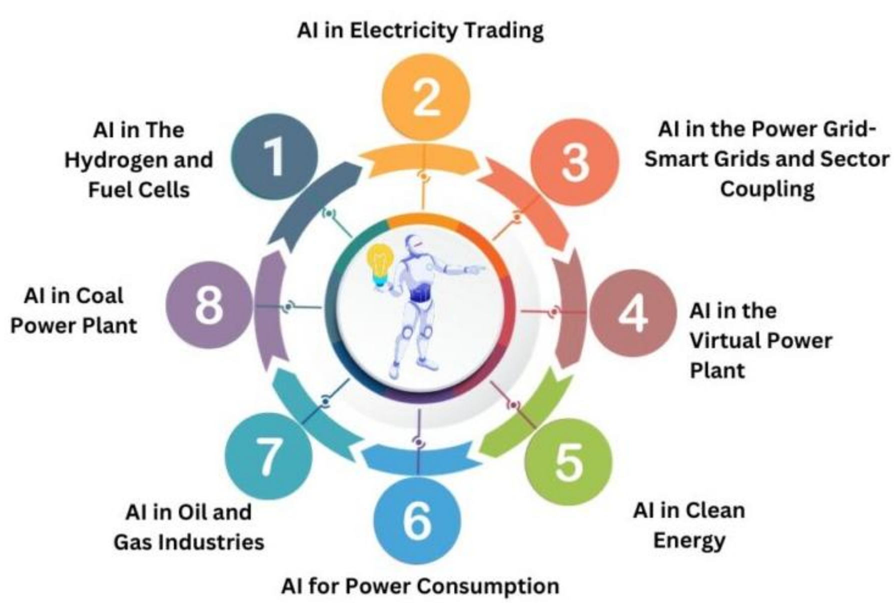

Figure 2: Role of AI in the Energy Industry (Adopted from **Zhang et al.,2023)**

Real-time insight into water use, soil status, and weather supports precision practices that are especially vital in resource-limited settings. AI can also streamline energy management, prioritize cleaner sources, enhance grid operations, and reduce waste, fostering a more sustainable and productive energy ecosystem.

At the same time, AI's own impacts must be scrutinized. Energy and water demand for training and running models, along with hardware lifecycles, add to greenhouse gas emissions and e-waste, raising equity concerns (**Patel et al., 2023; Hossain et al., 2024**). Wealthier countries often capture more benefits, while developing nations face burdens from resource extraction and disposal. To ensure the sustainable deployment of AI in agriculture and renewable energy, we need responsible governance, clear standards, and shared accountability.

5. Future Trends in AI-Enabled Renewable Energy Systems

AI-enabled renewable energy in agriculture presents both major opportunities and serious challenges. It could reshape ecological and economic systems for the better, but only with careful planning and commitment to inclusive, sustainable practice (**Shirsath et al., 2021; Rana et al., 2024**). Two trajectories are visible. An "atrophy" path puts at risk an overreliance on centralized datasets and biased algorithms, favoring industrial or monoculture models, ignoring ecological practices, reducing biodiversity, and imposing universal solutions that marginalize small, sustainable farmers. In contrast, an "ascendancy" path positions AI as a steward of ecological health by supporting decentralization and combining traditional farming knowledge with modern science. Achieving this vision demands broad collaboration among researchers, policymakers, technologists, and local communities so systems raise productivity while safeguarding biodiversity and social equity.

On the ground, AI can increase the efficiency and resilience of farm-based renewable installations by harmonizing generation, distribution, and consumption; improving management of solar and wind; reducing operational risks; and lowering energy costs for farmers (**Singh et al., 2023; Happy et al., 2024**). Yet less-resourced regions often face weak infrastructure and shortages of skilled workers, which can slow progress. Practical remedies such as lightweight models and synthetic-data methods like GANs can help close these gaps and broaden access.

For AI to thrive within renewable energy, economic and regulatory barriers must be addressed. Investments in infrastructure, data collection, and algorithm development are essential, and policies should promote industry collaboration while aligning technological change with sustainable agricultural and energy practices. Ultimately, success hinges on balancing innovation with social, economic, and environmental needs. We can transform rural energy landscapes, strengthen agricultural productivity, and make development more resilient and eco-friendlier by tackling inequalities, fostering teamwork, and focusing on sustainability.

6. Discussion

Artificial intelligence (AI) is ushering in a new phase for renewable energy systems (RES) in agriculture and rural development. More than a technical upgrade, AI is becoming central to how energy is generated, stored, and dispatched while simultaneously lifting agricultural productivity through better timing, targeting, and resource use. This convergence of technology, economic growth, and environmental stewardship is reshaping both energy and farming, yet its success depends on thoughtful integration into real communities and real markets, not just laboratory pilots. AI's contributions are multifaceted, driving higher yields, more efficient energy use, and novel agronomic practices, yet deployment hinges on complex interactions among technology, social systems, and public policy (**Chowdhury et al., 2025; Sunny et al., 2025b**). In other words, progress is as much about institutions, trust, and incentives as it is about algorithms.

Community engagement is therefore a first-order concern, not an afterthought. Farmers and rural residents must trust the tools, understand their benefits, and see clear value in daily operations. Short, practical training sessions, hands-on workshops, and peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges can accelerate adoption while helping local users keep their distinctive practices intact. When communities help set priorities for what to measure, when to intervene, and which risks matter, AI tools become more relevant and easier to maintain. Collaboration across stakeholders, including public–private partnerships, can reduce financial risk and enable broader integration, while incremental rollouts allow communities to observe tangible gains before scaling. Ethical stewardship is equally vital: governance for agricultural and energy data must avoid deepening inequalities or sidelining traditional knowledge, ensuring that consent, privacy, and benefit-sharing are taken seriously from the outset (**Smith et al., 2019; Urbi et al., 2025**).

Contemporary agriculture faces converging pressures limited land, labor shortages, volatile markets, and climate stress that intensify the need for better decisions at the right time (**Chowdhury et al., 2025**). Here, AI can deliver practical improvements. Machine-learning-enabled precision agriculture supports crop-health monitoring, irrigation control, nutrient management, and targeted pest interventions, reducing waste while protecting yields. At the energy-farm nexus, agrivoltaics co-locating solar generation with crops illustrates how AI can reinforce economic resilience and environmental performance by scheduling irrigation under panel shade, orienting arrays to minimize microclimate stress, and synchronizing on-farm loads with generation peaks.

Even so, uptake is uneven. High entry costs for sensors, connectivity, compute, and skilled labor combined with uncertain returns deter smallholders and large firms alike. In regions rooted in traditional methods, adoption may require extensive training, reliable connectivity, and phased infrastructure upgrades. Concerns about land-use change and disruption of long-standing routines also fuel resistance. These barriers are not insurmountable, but they are real. Tailored measures such as targeted subsidies, time-bound tax incentives, demonstrative pilot projects, and focused capacity-building help convert abstract promise into visible, local benefit (**Stephens et al., 2018; Akhter et al., 2025**). Crucially, pilots should be designed with clear baselines and metrics so that farmers can see, in numbers, where the value comes from and how risks are managed.

From an economic perspective, AI can raise farm profitability and optimize resource use by turning data into timely action. Predictive analytics inform what to plant, when to irrigate, how to schedule harvests, and how to manage energy consumption and storage **(Tiva et al., 2025b).** These gains can stabilize cash flows, diversify revenue (for example, by selling surplus solar power), and reduce exposure to climate and price shocks. Yet technology costs, specialized labor needs, and inconsistent regulations remain obstacles, especially in emerging markets. Clear, context-specific business cases and cost–benefit analyses are essential to establish viability, comparing AI-integrated approaches with conventional farming or energy-only options. Beyond day-to-day operations, AI supports real-time resource allocation and market insight, sharpening policy alignment and contract decisions for energy and inputs (**Chowdhury et al., 2025**).

Environmental implications warrant the same rigor. Coupling renewables with AI can shrink agriculture's footprint by optimizing inputs, reducing pollution, and boosting energy efficiency. Real-time insight into water use, soil status, and weather helps producers apply the minimum effective intervention a boon in water-scarce or climate-stressed regions. On the energy side, AI can streamline demand forecasting, prioritize cleaner sources, enhance grid operations, and reduce waste, improving reliability for productive uses like cold chains, milling, and irrigation. However, training and running models consume energy and water, while device manufacturing, deployment, and disposal generate emissions and e-waste. These lifecycle impacts raise environmental-justice questions: wealthier countries may capture operational benefits while lower-income regions bear extraction or waste burdens. To ensure net environmental gains, we need responsible lifecycle management, more efficient algorithms, and effective regulation **(Ashok et al., 2025; Sunny et al., 2025a).**

Importantly, promising field examples already exist. Farms that forecast energy consumption using AI have reduced waste and cut costs by aligning pumping, cooling, or charging with generation windows. Machine-learning-based predictive maintenance can extend the lifespan of inverters, pumps, and turbines and reduce unplanned downtime. Community microgrids with AI-enabled controllers integrate solar, wind, storage, and critical loads, improving resilience and service quality in rural areas (**Chowdhury et al., 2025; Tiva et al., 2025a**). In parallel, AI-powered agronomic simulations support biodiversity-friendly practices like polyculture, intercropping, and agroforestry, while predictive pest models lower chemical dependence by recommending targeted, time-bounded actions that protect both crops and ecosystems.

Looking forward, pathways could diverge. A negative trajectory could privilege monoculture patterns and centralized energy control, erode biodiversity and narrowing farmer autonomy (**Islam et al., 2025; Sazzad et al., 2025**). A more hopeful trajectory blends traditional knowledge with scientific advances and fosters decentralization in both agriculture and energy, distributing decision rights and building redundancy. Realizing the better path requires joint action across policymakers, researchers, technologists, financiers, and communities. Innovations such as lightweight models that run at the edge and synthetic-data approaches (e.g., GANs) can lower barriers where connectivity is patchy and datasets are thin, keeping data local while still improving model performance (**Chowdhury et al., 2024**). Standards for interoperability and open data (with appropriate safeguards) can prevent vendor lock-in and reduce integration costs.

Policy and regulation are the scaffolding on which these systems scale. Stable, transparent rules for data governance, device certification, energy interconnection, and environmental performance reduce uncertainty and crowd in investment. Well-designed procurement and results-based finance can de-risk early deployments, while performance-linked tariffs or incentives encourage efficient, resilient designs. Crucially, regulations should reward outcomes with water saved, emissions avoided, uptime delivered rather than prescribing specific technologies, allowing innovation to flourish while aligning with sustainability goals. Coordinated public–private investment in shared infrastructure, rural connectivity, testing labs, and repair networks amplifies private initiative and ensures benefits are not confined to large incumbents (**Chowdhury et al., 2025**).

The strategic promise is clear: AI can transform agricultural productivity and optimize renewable energy systems, advancing rural sustainability and addressing urgent challenges from energy scarcity to climate pressures and inefficient resource use (**Wang et al., 2020**). But delivery depends on closing three gaps: adoption (skills, trust, infrastructure), equity (affordability, access, fair benefit-sharing), and environment (net-positive lifecycle impacts). Meeting these tests requires careful program design, transparent measurement, and continuous learning loops that adapt tools to context rather than forcing context to fit tools.

In sum, AI's value at the agriculture-energy nexus is neither automatic nor illusory; it is conditional. With co-created pilots, rigorous economics, fair data practices, and lifecycle accountability, communities can capture tangible gains: higher yields, lower input costs, greater energy reliability, and healthier ecosystems. Without these safeguards, the same tools could entrench inequalities or shift burdens elsewhere. The task, then, is to make the better future inevitable: align incentives and standards with inclusive, ecological performance; invest in skills and shared infrastructure; and scale what works through partnerships that keep farmers at the center. Done well, AI becomes a practical instrument for resilient, low-carbon development that is effective in the field, legitimate in the community, and durable in the face of change.

7. Conclusion

Artificial intelligence (AI) can reshape renewable energy systems and agriculture by improving efficiency, sustainability, and economic resilience in rural communities. Through forecasting, optimization, and real-time control, AI smooths renewable generation, reduces losses in storage and distribution, and aligns demand with intermittent supply. On farms, machine-learning tools enable precision irrigation, targeted nutrient and pest management, and continuous crop and soil monitoring, conserving scarce resources while stabilizing yields. Data-driven decision support also helps producers and utilities plan investments, price risks, and coordinate microgrids, narrowing energy inequities and strengthening local value chains. Evidence from pilot projects and commercial deployments shows measurable gains in uptime, input efficiency, and net revenue, yet these benefits are not automatic. Scaling responsibly will require inclusive design with farmers and communities, capacity building, and fit-for-purpose infrastructure, from connectivity to maintenance networks. Equally important are governance frameworks that protect data, reward environmental performance, and prevent bias or lock-in. Priorities include open standards, transparent models, and financing mechanisms that lower entry costs for smallholders. With coordinated action by policymakers, researchers, implementers, and local stakeholders, AI can translate technical innovation into durable social, economic, and ecological outcomes and community equity, supporting climate adaptation while advancing food and energy security in underserved regions.

Funding

This work had no outside funding.

Author Contribution

The authors were involved in the creation of the study design, data analysis, and execution stages. Every writer gave their consent after seeing the final work.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the reviewers for their valuable suggestions.

A statement of conflicting interests

The authors declare that none of the work reported in this study could have been impacted by any known competing financial interests or personal relationships.

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