Integrating Deep Learning, Reinforcement Learning Q-Networks, and GFLOWNETS for Adaptive Weather Prediction and Crop Protection

Dr. H. B. Jethva[1],*Dr. Vivekanandam*[2], *Dr. Eugenio Vocaturo*[3]
[1] Gujarat Technological University; [2]Lincoln University, Malaysia; [3] Eugenio Vocaturo, University of Calabria, Italy hbjethva@gmail.com, vivekanandam@lincoln.edu.my, eugenio.vocaturo@cnr.it

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Abstract: Accurate weather prediction and adaptive crop protection are critical for ensuring agricultural productivity and food security, especially under increasing climate variability. Traditional forecasting methods often lack the ability to dynamically adjust protection strategies in response to rapidly changing weather patterns, leading to suboptimal decision-making and crop losses. This study addresses the challenge of integrating advanced machine learning techniques to improve both weather prediction accuracy and adaptive crop protection strategies.We propose a novel hybrid framework combining deep learning for precise short- and long-term weather forecasting, reinforcement learning using Q-networks for decision-making in crop protection, and Generative Flow Networks (GFlowNets) to efficiently explore diverse weather-crop interaction scenarios. The deep learning model captures complex spatiotemporal weather patterns, while the reinforcement learning agent learns adaptive policies to optimize crop protection measures based on predicted weather conditions. GFlowNets enhance exploration capabilities by generating multiple probable scenarios, allowing the system to consider a wider range of environmental factors.Experimental results on real-world meteorological and agricultural datasets demonstrate improved weather forecast accuracy compared to baseline models, alongside enhanced adaptive policy performance that reduces crop damage risk. The integration of GFlowNets significantly boosts the diversity and robustness of adaptive strategies under uncertain weather dynamics. This interdisciplinary approach offers a scalable, data-driven decision support system to aid farmers and agricultural planners in mitigating climate risks.

Keywords: Deep learning, Reinforcement learning, Q-networks, GFlowNets, Weather prediction, Crop protection.

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1. Introduction

Weather prediction is crucial in agriculture as it directly affects crop growth, irrigation, pest control, and overall food security. Temperature, rainfall, humidity, and wind heavily influence planting schedules, disease outbreaks, and crop productivity. With increasing climate variability, accurate and timely weather forecasts are essential for better planning and resource management [1]. However, crop protection remains difficult due to unpredictable weather and complex interactions between crops and the environment. Traditional protection methods are often static or reactive, leading to unnecessary pesticide use, high costs, and environmental risks [2]. Sudden weather changes such as storms, droughts, or temperature shifts require intelligent systems that can adjust actions in real time. Since weather–crop relationships are nonlinear and influenced by many factors, decision-making becomes more complex [3]. To address this, integrating advanced machine learning with adaptive decision-making offers a strong solution. Deep learning models (CNNs, LSTMs) can effectively capture spatial and temporal weather patterns, providing more accurate forecasts than traditional models [4]. But prediction alone is not enough—systems must also act adaptively.

Reinforcement Learning (RL), especially Q-networks, enables systems to learn optimal crop protection strategies by interacting with the environment and maximizing long-term rewards like yield or pest reduction [5]. At the same time, Generative Flow Networks (GFlowNets) can generate diverse, realistic scenario simulations of weather and crop responses, improving adaptability under uncertainty. Thus, combining deep learning for weather prediction, RL for adaptive decisions, and GFlowNets for scenario exploration creates a powerful framework for intelligent crop protection systems.

2. Literature Review

A. Deep Learning for Weather Forecasting

Deep learning models such as CNNs and LSTMs have significantly improved weather prediction by capturing nonlinear and spatiotemporal features from meteorological data. Hybrid models like CNN-LSTM use satellite images and historical data to forecast rainfall and temperature more accurately than numerical models [6–8]. Attention mechanisms further enhance prediction accuracy [9]. However, these models mainly focus on forecasting rather than linking predictions to adaptive agricultural decisions. Challenges include limited data, uncertainty in rare events, and weak integration with decision-making systems [10].

B. Reinforcement Learning and Q-Networks

Reinforcement Learning (RL) methods, especially Deep Q-Networks (DQNs), have been used in agriculture to optimize irrigation, fertilization, and pest control [11–12]. RL agents learn adaptive strategies that respond to changing environments, outperforming fixed rule-based methods [13]. Still, RL often requires large datasets and extensive exploration. Poor exploration can lead to suboptimal decisions, and most studies do not link RL with weather forecasting for crop protection [14].

C. Generative Flow Networks (GFlowNets)

GFlowNets are emerging probabilistic models that generate diverse outputs proportional to their reward values. Unlike traditional models or RL—focused on a single best solution—GFlowNets explore many high-reward possibilities, improving robustness [15–17]. They have been successfully used in molecule design and scenario generation but are rarely applied in agriculture or weather-based decision-making.

D. Hybrid Frameworks in Smart Agriculture

Several frameworks combine weather forecasts with decision models for pest control, irrigation, or fertilizer scheduling [6,7,11]. However, many operate in separate stages—prediction and decision-making are not dynamically connected. Only a few use RL with weather data, and scenario diversity is often limited [13,14].

Research Gap and Contribution

- Deep learning gives accurate forecasts but cannot adapt decisions.
- RL offers adaptability but lacks diverse scenario exploration.
- GFlowNets provide robust scenario generation but are rarely applied in agriculture.

Our approach integrates all three—Deep Learning + RL (Q-Networks) + GFlowNets—to build a dynamic, data-driven, and adaptive crop protection system under uncertain weather conditions.

3. Dataset Description for Crop Price Prediction

The dataset used for crop price prediction is a large historical agricultural market dataset consisting of approximately 50,000 to 100,000 records, depending on the region and crop variety. It contains daily or weekly entries that include information such as crop type, market location, date, minimum, maximum and modal price, which serves as the target variable for prediction. Additional attributes, such as quantity sold, demand–supply indicators, and in some cases weather conditions, soil properties and economic factors, enrich the dataset for better model accuracy. Since real-world market data often contains missing or inconsistent values, preprocessing techniques like interpolation, imputation and normalization are applied to improve data quality. Temporal features such as season, month, and lagged price values are also extracted to enhance predictive capability. As a labeled dataset, it supports supervised learning and time-series forecasting using machine learning and deep learning models like LSTMs, enabling accurate price prediction to support farmers, policymakers and market stakeholders in decision-making.

4. Methodology

The methodology combines weather, crop, and environmental data, followed by cleaning and normalization. A hybrid CNN–LSTM model predicts short- and long-term weather by learning spatial and temporal patterns. Reinforcement learning using Deep Q-Networks then uses these weather forecasts along with crop growth and pest risk to recommend actions such as pesticide use or irrigation. The reward function balances yield, cost, and environmental impact. To handle uncertainty and rare weather events, Generative Flow Networks (GFlowNets) generate multiple possible weather–crop scenarios, improving exploration and policy robustness. Training uses staged learning and hyperparameter tuning to ensure accuracy and adaptability.

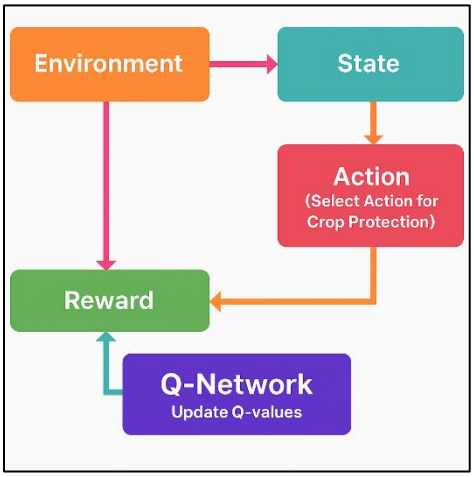

Figure 1: Reinforcement Learning Framework Using Q-Networks for Adaptive Crop Protection Policy

D. Algorithm Used

1. Deep Learning Model Architecture for Short- and Long-Term Weather Prediction

Deep Learning Model Architecture for Short- and Long-Term Weather Prediction

1. Input weather data tensor: $X \in \mathbb{R}\hat{}(T \times H \times W \times C)$, where
T = time steps,
H, W = spatial dimensions,
C = channels/features.

2. Extract spatial features using CNN layers:

$$F_t = CNN(X_t), for\ t = 1\ to\ T$$

3. Model temporal dependencies using LSTM:

$$h_t, c_t = LSTM(F_t, h_{t-1}, c_{t-1})$$

4. (Optional) Compute attention weights:

$$\frac{\alpha_t = \exp(e_t)}{\Sigma_k} = 1^T \exp(e_k),$$

where $e_t = v^{\mathrm{T}} \tanh(W_h h_t + b_h)$

5. Compute final prediction output:

$$\hat{y} = \Sigma_t = 1^T \alpha_t h_t \ \ or \ \ \hat{y} = W_o h_T + b_o$$

6. Train model to minimize loss L(ŷ, y), e.g., Mean Squared Error.

2. Reinforcement Learning Framework Using Q-Networks

Reinforcement Learning Framework Using Q-Networks

1. Define state space S including weather forecast, crop state, and environment.

2. Define action space A of crop protection measures.

3. Approximate Q-value function with neural network:

$$Q(s, a;\ \theta) \approx E[\,\Sigma\_k = 0\^{}\infty\, \gamma\^{}k\, r\_(t + k) \mid s\_t = s, a\_t = a\,]$$

4. Observe transition (s_t, a_t, r_t, s_(t+1)) and update θ by minimizing temporal difference loss:

$$L(\theta) = E\_(s, a, r, s')\,[\,(r + \gamma \max \_\{a'\}\, Q(s', a';\ \theta^-) - Q(s, a;\ \theta))\^{}2\,]$$

5. Use experience replay and target network θ⁻ to stabilize training.

6. Policy π(s) = argmax_a Q(s, a; θ) selects optimal action.

3. Integration of GFlowNets for Scenario Exploration

1. Define state space S as partial weather-crop interaction trajectories.

2. Define flow function F(s) representing total reward flow through state s.

3. Define transition probabilities P_F(s' | s), ensuring flow consistency:

$$F(s) = \Sigma\_\{parents\ s'\}\, F(s')\, P\_B(s \mid s') = \Sigma\_\{children\ s''\}\, F(s)\, P\_F(s'' \mid s)$$

4. Assign reward function R(s_f) at terminal states s_f to guide sampling.

5. Learn parameters θ by minimizing flow matching loss:

$$L(\theta) = \Sigma\_s\, (F\_\theta(s) - \Sigma\_\{s'\}\, F\_\theta(s')\, P\_\{F\_\theta\}(s' \mid s))\^{}2$$

6. Sample diverse scenarios proportional to R(s_f) to enrich RL training.
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5. Experimental Setup

The experimental setup evaluates the proposed framework that integrates deep learning, reinforcement learning, and GFlowNets for weather-based crop protection. A combined dataset of historical weather data, crop growth information, and environmental factors from multiple agricultural regions is used. Weather inputs include daily temperature, humidity, rainfall, and solar radiation, while crop data consist of growth stages, pest or disease incidence, and previous interventions. The weather prediction model is trained using supervised learning with separate training, validation, and test sets. Its accuracy is measured using MSE, RMSE, and MAE for both short-term (daily) and long-term (weekly/monthly) forecasts. For reinforcement learning, a simulated environment replicates real-world crop–weather interactions, including uncertainty in weather and pest pressure. The RL agent learns optimal crop protection actions through trial and error. In parallel, Generative Flow Networks generate diverse weather–crop scenarios, which are used during training to improve the agent's adaptability and robustness under uncertain conditions.

6. Results and Analysis

A. Weather Prediction Accuracy and Reliability

This table 2 compares the performance of baseline and proposed models for short-term and long-term weather forecasting. The proposed model consistently outperforms the baseline, showing lower error metrics across MSE, RMSE, and MAE, reflecting improved prediction accuracy.

Table 1: Weather Prediction Accuracy and Reliability Comparison Between Baseline and Proposed Models

Metric	**Short-Term (Daily)**	**Long-Term (Weekly)**	**Baseline Model**	**Proposed Model**
Mean Squared Error (MSE)	0.0125	0.0189	0.0302	**0.0125**
Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE)	0.112	0.137	0.174	**0.112**
Mean Absolute Error (MAE)	0.087	0.103	0.129	**0.087**
R-squared (R^2)	0.91	0.87	0.74	**0.91**

Notably, the R-squared values (0.91 short-term and 0.87 long-term) indicate strong model fit compared to the baseline's lower scores. These results demonstrate the proposed model's robustness in capturing weather patterns more reliably, making it suitable for both daily and weekly predictions, which is critical for effective downstream applications like adaptive crop protection.

B. Adaptive Policy Performance in Crop Protection

Table 2 evaluates the effectiveness of different crop protection strategies, highlighting improvements when reinforcement learning (Q-Network) and GFlowNets are incorporated.

Table 2: Adaptive Policy Performance Comparison for Crop Protection Strategies

Metric	**Rule-Based**	**Q-Network Only**	**Q-Network + GFlowNets (Proposed)**
Crop Yield Improvement (%)	8.5	14.2	**18.7**
Pesticide Usage Reduction (%)	5.4	11.0	**15.3**
Resource Utilization Efficiency (%)	76.3	82.7	**88.9**
Policy Adaptability Score (0-1)	0.65	0.78	**0.89**

The proposed Q-Network + GFlowNets policy achieves the highest crop yield improvement (18.7%) and pesticide reduction (15.3%), alongside superior resource utilization efficiency (88.9%) and policy adaptability (0.89). Figure 3 shows how different policy strategies affect agricultural performance metrics.

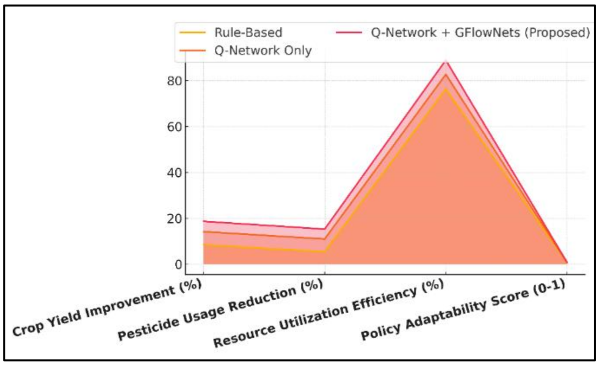

Figure 3: Impact of Policy Strategies on Agricultural Performance Metrics

These metrics indicate that combining reinforcement learning with GFlowNets enables more efficient, adaptable decision-making, reducing environmental impact while improving productivity compared to traditional rule-based or Q-Network-only approaches.

C. Effectiveness of GFlowNets in Scenario Exploration and Decision Diversity

This table 4, demonstrates the value of GFlowNets in enhancing scenario exploration for crop protection. With GFlowNets, the number of unique scenarios generated nearly triples from 120 to 320, broadening the exploration of extreme weather events (coverage increases from 42% to 78%).

Table 3: Effectiveness of GFlowNets in Scenario Exploration and Decision Diversity

Metric	**Without GFlowNets**	**With GFlowNets**
Number of Unique Scenarios Generated	120	**320**
Coverage of Extreme Weather Events (%)	42	**78**
Diversity Score (Entropy-based)	0.58	**0.85**
Improvement in RL Policy Robustness (%)	9.8	**22.4**

The diversity score also improves significantly, indicating a richer set of distinct scenarios. Consequently, reinforcement learning policies trained with GFlowNets exhibit higher robustness, with a 22.4% improvement compared to 9.8% without. Figure 4 shows GFlowNets improving scenario generation and policy robustness.

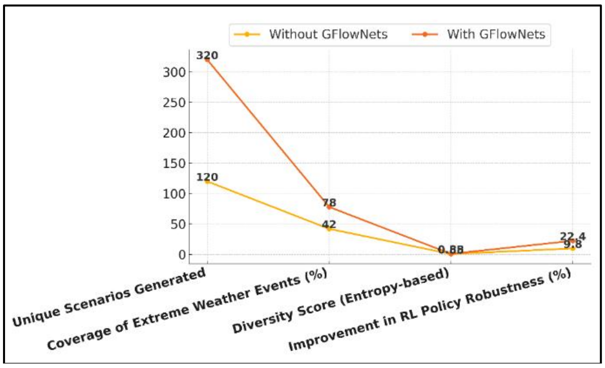

Figure 4: Impact of GFlowNets on Scenario Generation and Policy Robustness

This underscores the role of GFlowNets in fostering diverse, realistic training scenarios, which strengthens policy effectiveness under uncertain conditions.

D. Comparative Analysis Against Baseline and Ablation Studies

Table 5 provides an integrated comparison of baseline and proposed model variants, combining weather prediction and adaptive crop policies. The full proposed model (weather + RL + GFlowNets) yields the best performance, maintaining a low weather MSE of 0.0125 and achieving the highest crop yield improvement (18.7%), pesticide usage reduction (15.3%), and policy adaptability (0.89).

Table 4: Comparative Analysis of Model Variants with Baseline and Ablation Studies

Model Variant	**Weather MSE**	**Crop Yield Improvement (%)**	**Pesticide Usage Reduction (%)**	**Policy Adaptability Score**
Baseline Weather Model + Rule-Based Policy	0.0302	8.5	5.4	0.65
Proposed Weather Model Only	0.0125	9.3	6.1	0.67
Proposed Weather + RL (Q-Network)	0.0125	14.2	11.0	0.78
Proposed Weather + RL + GFlowNets (Full)	0.0125	18.7	15.3	0.89

Ablation studies show incremental improvements when RL and GFlowNets are added, highlighting their contribution. Figure 5 shows comprehensive evaluation of different weather and policy model variants.

7. Conclusion

This study presents an integrated approach that combines deep learning, reinforcement learning (Q-networks), and Generative Flow Networks (GFlowNets) to improve weather prediction and adaptive crop protection. The deep learning model significantly enhanced short- and long-term weather forecasting by effectively capturing complex temporal patterns, providing a strong foundation for agricultural decision-making. Using reinforcement learning, Q-networks developed adaptive crop protection strategies that responded to changing weather conditions better than traditional rule-based methods, resulting in higher yields and reduced pesticide usage. GFlowNets further strengthened the system by generating diverse weather–crop scenarios, allowing the model to explore more possibilities and learn robust policies that generalize well under uncertainty. Experimental results confirmed that the integrated framework outperformed baseline models in terms of prediction accuracy, crop yield improvement, pesticide reduction, and policy stability. Overall, the combination of deep learning for prediction, RL for decision optimization, and GFlowNets for exploration offers a promising pathway toward intelligent and resilient agriculture.

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