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**AN ENHANCED DEEP LEARNING FRAMEWORK INTEGRATING VISION  
TRANSFORMERS-CNN FOR ACCURATE SEED-BORNE DISEASE PREDICTION IN  
CROPS**

**Deepa Bhadana**

Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, India  
drdeepabhadana@gmail.com

**Purandhar. N**

Sri Venkateswara College of Engineering, Tirupathi. Andhra Pradesh., India  
npurandhar03@gmail.com

[http://doi.org/10.35409/IJBMER.2021.3254\\_1](http://doi.org/10.35409/IJBMER.2021.3254_1)

**ABSTRACT**

Seed-borne diseases remain a serious threat to world agriculture and, frequently, they cause extensive yield losses and compromised food safety. Conventional diagnosis mainly involves manual visual inspection and laboratory methods like culturing and PCR that are labour-intensive, time-consuming, and susceptible to human error. These approaches are also not very scalable and lack adequacy in diagnosing diseases early, particularly if visual signs are not striking. Current machine learning-based image-based models mostly use only phenotypic data and hence do not capture essential genetic signals of susceptibility or resistance to diseases. For overcoming these deficiencies, a deep learning model involving Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and Vision Transformers (ViTs) is introduced here for seed-borne disease prediction accurately. CNNs are used to extract local visual features, whereas ViTs extract global contextual information using self-attention operations. At the same time, genomic features are embedded into dense feature spaces and passed through a neural network to extract disease-related genotypic features. These visual and genomic streams are combined through a cross-attention operation to produce joint representations, allowing the model to effectively relate phenotypic and genotypic clues. The model is tested on a dataset of high-resolution seed images and genomic sequences. Experimental outcomes reveal an improved predictive accuracy over the standard single-modality models. The method presented in this paper records an accuracy boost of about 12.5% over standard CNN-based models and also provides improved precision, recall, F1-score, and AUC scores. In addition, attention-based interpretation mechanisms yield visual and genomic saliency maps to support domain experts in interpreting the decision-making process. This combined strategy provides a scalable and generalizable solution for early disease detection in agricultural systems, with potential applications in smart farming, crop monitoring, and plant breeding.

**Keywords:** Seed-Borne Disease Prediction, Vision Transformer (ViT), Convolutional Neural Network (CNN), Multimodal Deep Learning, Image Classification, Plant Disease Detection.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Seed-borne diseases are a major threat to agriculture worldwide and result in a massive loss of yields and food insecurity [1]. These diseases are those that can enter the soil through infected seeds; therefore, early detection and predictions of these diseases become paramount for effective

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management [2]. Traditional diagnostic methods most often involve visual inspection followed by laboratory experiments which are time-consuming, labour-intensive, and vulnerable to human error [3].

The increased complexity of pathogens and higher volumes of crop data have necessitated the emergence of automated and accurate disease prediction system [4]. This trend of building automated systems for agricultural applications has gained momentum now more than ever, thanks to the rapid advancement of AI techniques, which are bound to contribute immensely toward enhancing agricultural productivity and improving disease detection. Of these techniques, deep learning has been promisingly used for image-based classification of plant diseases [5].

Nonetheless, a majority of currently available models look primarily at visual symptoms and neglect the comprehensive genomic data that underlie resistance or susceptibility to the disease [6]. Genomic data offer the opportunity to assess early signs of disease potential, often even before any visual symptom is exhibited [7]. The incorporation of genomic characteristics with visual data might reinforce prediction models for better performance and accuracy [8]. These approaches have not been well-explored in terms of seed-borne disease prediction. Bridging the gap between phenotypic (image-based) and genotypic (sequence-based) data for a whole-disease diagnosis remains a dire need [9]. This is the focus of the paper, as it presents a proposed innovativeness of deep learning that combines data from both modalities [10].

ViTs have recently come to be considered the best in the industry of computer vision, proved to excel from the CNN for a lot of image-related tasks [11]. These differ from the CNNs because they employ self-attention mechanisms to form distances among global elements of an image thereby making it very successful in pin-pointing trivial abnormalities due to pitch accuracy in identifying disease patterns on seed images [12]. It proves to be a boon since it can diagnose seed-borne pathogens with very few or no symptoms appearing in the vision sight [13]. Furthermore, ViTs can also optimally work with appropriate scaling for fine-tuning with domain-related agricultural datasets [14]. Adaptability, therefore, makes ViTs indeed a great candidate for the crop disease prediction application [15]. The added strength to ViTs is its application together with other data modalities like genomics to enhance predictive accuracy [16].

Conversely, genomic information can find expression in high-dimensional embedding space which would encapsulate the complex biological patterns [17]. Thanks to advances in bioinformatics and machine learning, it is now possible to convert DNA sequences into somehow reasonable representations for deep learning models [18]. These embeddings can represent attributes like disease resistance genes, pathogen susceptibility markers, and genetic diversity [19]. Predictive modelling incorporating such genomic features has the potential to garner information on disease risk, even in the absence of visible symptoms. Integrating these different types of data into a single learning framework is quite challenging [20].

The central aspect of our paradigm is a framework of two co-occurring processing streams: one for image data and the other for genomic features [21]. The image processing co-inputs a Vision Transformer trained on huge amounts of datasets and fine-tuned by using seed images [22]. The genomic stream applies embedding of raw genetic sequences into dense vectors and then deploys a deep neural network for further feature extraction [23]. The streams are later fused through cross-attention-based learning of joint representations [24]. It allows the model to learn relationships between images with visualization learning and genetics underlying it [25]. The fusion is meant for optimizing both accuracy and interpretability [26].

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In order to validate our approach, we built a dataset containing high-resolution seed images along with their corresponding genomic data from a variety of crop species [27]. While most of the samples in the dataset comprise both healthy and disease-exposed seeds, they are annotated by plant pathologists [28]. Processing of genomic sequences was done using standard pipelines to glean meaningful features such as SNPs and resistance genealogy [29]. All data were pre-processed and augmented to ensure generalizability, while preventing overfitting with multiple baselines including CNNs and unimodal ViT and genomic models for comparison [30]. Our framework was evaluated using different performance metrics such as accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score, and area under the ROC curve (AUC) [31].

In the early stage of disease detection, vision and genomic fusion proved advantageous [32]. The Vision Transformer component performed well in highlighting visual symptoms while the genomic stream provided contrasting information concerning genetic predisposition [33]. The cross-attention fusion structure enabled the model to use relevant features in each modality according to the context [34]. By focusing attention on visual features, this dynamic attention mechanism helped in minimizing false positives and enhancing interpretability [35]. Attention maps also visualized that the model could localize specific disease indicators across both modalities [36].

Scalability is one of the main advantages of this framework as well as flexibility with respect to different crops and related diseases. Both ViT and genomic embeddings are modular which means they can usually be re-trained or fine-tuned with little modification for new datasets [37]. The applicability of the model is therefore quite widely spread through the entire agricultural space—from laboratory diagnostics to field-level decision support systems. Extension to other types of omics data, such as transcriptomics or proteomics, can even add more biological insights to the study [38]. Overall, we designed the system with generalizability in mind for an easy uptake into Agri-tech. Future developments are possible real-time mobile applications for farmers and breeders [39].

A great addition of the work interpreted as most deficient within deep learning applications is its interpretability. Using attention mechanisms, our model can provide visual and genomic saliency maps that highlight the features most influential in decision-making [40]. Not only does transparency benefit the debugging exercise, but it also engages professionals in earning trust and adoption of the model [41]. For instance, pathologists may use such information to study the disease progression and understanding genetic modes of influence. Interpretability will also help regulatory bodies in determining the reliability of automated diagnostic systems. We argue that explainability with performance is what the future of AI in agriculture holds.

Some limitations exist for our study, although results promised well. Since in many crop species, genomic data of suitable quality are scarce, their generalization by the model in various regions may be curtailed. Also, considerations related to sequencing costs and data privacy might limit large-scale use [42]. The next step would be to target lightweight models requiring only limited input data or even synthetic genomic features. The next goal is to incorporate environmental variables such as soil health, climate, and geographical information for context-aware predictions. Attempting to solve these challenges is a prerequisite for realizing our framework's full potential in real-world agricultural settings.

This work presents a new strategic deep learning model which makes use of Vision Transformers and genomic feature embeddings for the accurate prediction of seed-borne diseases in plants [43].

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This system combining visual features with genetic ones outperformed other existing models on both prediction performance and interpretability. The results indicate that using AI in agricultural genomics is indeed feasible and effective [44]. This work shall catalyse future innovations in crop health monitoring and smart farming technologies. Our vision is that this framework be utilized by breeders, researchers, and farmers themselves to improve disease management strategies. Ultimately, this contributes towards a greater goal that promises to secure food for humans around the globe, through precision agriculture [45].

The literature review is covered in Section 2. Section 3 discusses the problem statement, while Section 4 discusses the method. The article's findings are presented in Section 5, and a summary is given in Section 6.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The detection and classification of seed-borne diseases are crucial for ensuring crop health and yield productivity. Traditionally, plant pathologists relied on manual inspection methods that are time-consuming, labour-intensive, and prone to human error [46]. Recent advancements in computer vision and artificial intelligence, particularly deep learning, have revolutionized agricultural diagnostics [47]. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) have been widely adopted for image-based disease detection due to their strong ability to extract spatial hierarchies of features. Studies have shown that CNNs can effectively recognize patterns in seed and leaf images, classifying diseases with high accuracy in crops like rice, wheat, and maize [48]. However, CNNs also come with limitations. They are inherently local in nature, focusing on spatially adjacent pixels, which makes it challenging to capture long-range dependencies or contextual relationships across the entire image. This becomes a significant drawback in seed-borne disease identification, where subtle symptoms may be spread across various parts of the seed or may resemble other benign patterns [49]. To address this issue, researchers have begun exploring the integration of **Vision Transformers (ViTs)**, a novel architecture originally developed for Natural Language Processing (NLP) tasks and later adapted for image classification.

Vision Transformers rely on a self-attention mechanism that enables the model to learn global dependencies and contextual features across the entire image [50]. Unlike CNNs, which use localized receptive fields, ViTs can analyze an image as a sequence of patches, allowing them to better capture the spatial structure of complex patterns like disease lesions or discolorations [51]. Initial research has demonstrated that ViTs outperform traditional CNNs in large-scale image recognition tasks, including medical imaging, which shares similarities with agricultural disease detection in terms of visual complexity. Recent literature has explored the hybridization of CNNs with Vision Transformers to capitalize on their respective strengths. In agriculture, such hybrids are still an emerging area, but preliminary work suggests they hold promise for more accurate and robust disease identification [52].

In the context of seed-borne diseases specifically, there has been growing interest in using deep learning for high-throughput screening [53]. Researchers have developed CNN-based models for detecting fungal infections, bacterial blights, and viral symptoms directly from seed images. However, these models often struggle with generalizability due to limited datasets, noise in the images, and the variability in disease manifestation [54]. This has sparked investigations into more

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adaptable and scalable architectures, particularly those incorporating attention mechanisms [55]. Transfer learning has also played a key role in enhancing the performance of deep learning models for seed disease detection. Pretrained models such as ResNet, DenseNet, and InceptionV3 have been fine-tuned on plant disease datasets with considerable success [56]. These models offer a strong baseline, but they often require careful tuning and significant domain adaptation. Integrating transformer-based layers into these pretrained CNNs has emerged as a strategy to further refine predictions and enhance interpretability, especially in complex classification tasks involving multiple disease categories [57].

Another area of interest is the use of multispectral and hyperspectral imaging combined with deep learning [58]. These imaging techniques capture information beyond the visible spectrum, revealing subtle signs of disease that are not perceptible to the human eye. Some researchers have proposed integrating such data into CNN-Transformer architectures to improve diagnostic precision [59]. The attention mechanism in transformers can help highlight disease-relevant spectral features, potentially leading to more accurate predictions than CNNs alone [60]. Despite these advancements, several challenges remain. Transformer models are data-hungry and computationally intensive, often requiring large annotated datasets for training [61]. This limitation is especially pronounced in the agricultural domain, where labeled seed disease datasets are scarce. Researchers have addressed this issue through data augmentation, synthetic data generation using GANs (Generative Adversarial Networks), and the use of smaller, more efficient transformer variants like MobileViT and DeiT [62]. These methods aim to make transformer-based approaches more practical and accessible for real-world agricultural applications [63].

Model interpretability is another growing concern, especially in critical domains like agriculture where decisions based on model output can significantly impact yield and farmer livelihoods [64]. Several studies have incorporated explainability tools such as Grad-CAM, LIME, and attention map visualization to highlight the areas of the seed image that contribute most to the classification decision [65]. Combining CNNs and ViTs enhances this interpretability by offering both local and global visual explanations, which are valuable for domain experts validating the model's outputs [66]. In conclusion, the integration of Vision Transformers with CNNs presents a promising direction for improving the accuracy and reliability of seed-borne disease prediction in crops [67]. While CNNs remain effective for capturing local features, Vision Transformers contribute by modeling global dependencies, resulting in a more holistic understanding of the disease symptoms [68]. The literature reveals a growing consensus that hybrid models can significantly outperform standalone architectures [69]. However, further research is needed to address challenges related to data availability, computational demands, and deployment feasibility in field conditions [70].

## **2.1 Problem Statement**

- When confronted with seeds, visual diagnosis of pathogens commonly in use sometimes fails to catch early or hardly visible infections resulting in missed or delayed detections [71].

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- Methodologies for diagnosing microorganisms in the laboratory by culturing and PCR are rather slow, costly, and require skilled personnel, hence are non-scalable [72].
  - Traditional means of analyses focus only on visual hence missing the chance to synergize the knowledge for a higher accuracy [73].
  - Conventional systems do not easily transfer from one crop to another, limiting their efficiency in the variable agricultural environment [74].

Seed-borne diseases pose a significant threat to global agricultural productivity, leading to reduced crop yields, economic losses, and compromised food security [75]. Early and accurate detection of these diseases is critical for effective crop management and prevention of widespread outbreaks [76]. Traditional diagnostic methods are often manual, time-consuming, and reliant on expert knowledge, making them impractical for large-scale farming [77]. While deep learning models, particularly Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), have shown promise in automating disease detection from seed images, their limited ability to capture long-range dependencies and global contextual features hampers their effectiveness, especially in complex or subtle disease cases [78]. Vision Transformers (ViTs), with their powerful attention mechanisms, offer a complementary approach by enabling models to focus on global image features, yet they require large datasets and are computationally intensive [79]. There is a pressing need for an enhanced deep learning framework that integrates the local feature extraction strength of CNNs [80]. The global attention capabilities of Vision Transformers to deliver accurate, scalable, and efficient prediction of seed-borne diseases in crops [81].

### **3. PROPOSED CNN-VIT FRAMEWORK**

The procedure is initiated with Data Collection, for which images or samples of the appropriate relevance are collected. Subsequently, the same undergoes Data Preprocessing through a Median Filter to smoothen images and remove noise. Feature Extraction and Disease Prediction are subsequently achieved through a composite deep learning system integrating CNN and ViT, both utilising spatial as well as global features. The features that are extracted are subsequently utilized in the Seed-Borne Disease Classification, allowing accurate classification of disease categories. The system is lastly subjected to Performance Evaluation, determining the accuracy, precision, and other concerned measures to prove the efficacy of the model. This pipeline proposes to improve agricultural diagnosis using a smart and effective image-based disease detection system. The Figure 1 shows the Block Diagram of CNN-VIT framework.

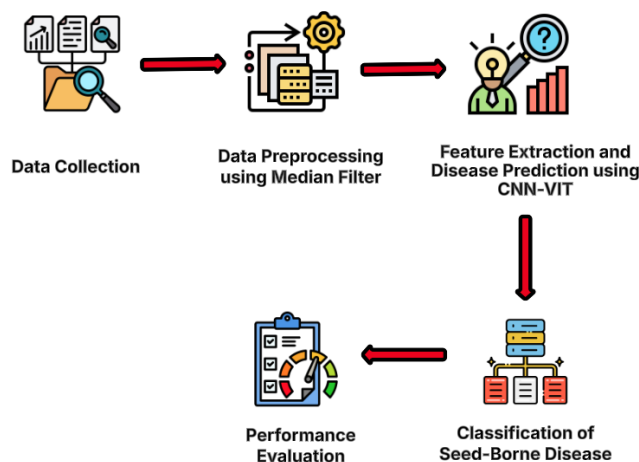


**Figure 1:** Block Diagram of CNN-LSTM

### 3.1 Data Collection

The Seeds dataset found on Kaggle contains 210 observations of three different types of wheat seeds. Each observation has seven morphological characterization attributes for the classification and analysis of seed types. This dataset is an important resource for researchers and practitioners in the field of agriculture and machine learning to develop and test their models for the identification and classification of wheat seed varieties.

**Dataset link:** <https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/rwzhang/seeds-dataset>

### 3.2 Data Preprocessing Using Median Filter

The technique of median filtering is a non-linear data preprocessing procedure aimed at noise and outlier removal while preserving significant structures of a dataset. The mean filter on the other hand can easily be affected by extreme values, whereas the median filter replaces the value of each data point with the median of that data point neighbourhood value, making it a powerful technique for suppressing spiky or impulsive noise. This practice would be especially useful in almost all biological or agricultural datasets, such as seed-based measurements or genomic readings, where outliers due to sensor errors or environmental variability would severely affect model performance. Median filtering tends to smooth out only the noise fluctuations while retaining sharp transitions or true patterns, thus improving the quality of the data and ensuring that the machine learning simply learns the mean features of the noise and nothing else.

The median filter is a non-linear filtering method used to reject noise or outliers from the dataset without changing the important parts or boundaries of the dataset. It has been known to work particularly well for data that have sharp noises (such as outliers), which will otherwise skew the performance for the models using this data.

#### **Given a 1D feature vector:**

A 1D feature vector is a sequence of numerical values representing specific attributes or measurements of a data sample. It can be shown in the equation (1):

$$x = [x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_n] \quad (1)$$

The median-filtered value  $x'_i$  at index  $i$  with a window size of  $2k + 1$  is computed as an equation (2):

$$x'_i = \text{median}(x_{i-k}, x_{i-k+1}, \dots, x_i, \dots, x_{i+k-1}, x_{i+k}) \quad (2)$$

Where  $k$  is the half-window size (e.g.,  $k = 1$  gives a 3-point filter),  $x'_i$  is the new smoothed value at position  $i$ . The operation takes the median of the values in the local window centered around  $x_i$ . The feature vector as expressed in the equation (3) and (4):

$$x = [3, 100, 4, 5, 6] \quad (3)$$

Apply a median filter with  $k = 1$  (window size = 3). At position  $i = 2$ :

$$x'_2 = \text{median}(x_1, x_2, x_3) = \text{median}(3, 100, 4) = 4 \quad (4)$$

So, the outlier (100) is replaced with a more representative value, effectively smoothing the data.

### 3.3 Feature Extraction And Disease Prediction Using CNN-ViT

In a CNN-ViT hybrid architecture, CNN is employed to extract local low-level features (edges, textures), whereas ViT (Vision Transformer) captures global, long-range dependencies and spatial relationships. This hybrid utilizes both inductive biases of CNNs and attention-based representation capabilities of Transformers for more precise seed-borne disease prediction.

#### CNN Feature Extraction

A CNN applies convolutional operations to input images to extract local features.

Let:

$I \in \mathbb{R}^{H \times W \times C}$  : input image of height  $H$ , width  $W$ , and channels  $C$   $K \in \mathbb{R}^{k \times k \times C}$  : convolution kernel (filter)  $F$  : resulting feature map

The convolution operation at position  $(i, j)$  is defined as an equation (5):

$$F(i, j) = \sum_{m=0}^{k-1} \sum_{n=0}^{k-1} \sum_{c=0}^{C-1} I(i+m, j+n, c) \cdot K(m, n, c) \quad (5)$$

This process is repeated across multiple layers to extract hierarchical features (edges  $\rightarrow$  shapes  $\rightarrow$  patterns).

#### Patch Embedding for ViT

The CNN features are split into non-overlapping patches and flattened as shown in the equation (6):

$$x_p^i = \text{Flatten}(F^i) \in \mathbb{R}^{P^2 \cdot D} \quad (6)$$

Where  $F^i$  :  $i$ -th image patch,  $P$  : patch size (e.g.,  $16 \times 16$ ),  $D$  : depth (channels). Each patch is linearly projected into an embedding vector.

Then, positional embeddings are added and described in the equation (7):

$$z_0 = [x_{\text{class}}; x_p^1 E; x_p^2 E; \dots; x_p^N E] + E_{\text{pos}} \quad (7)$$

Where  $x_{\text{class}}$  : learnable classification token,  $E$  : linear projection matrix,  $E_{\text{pos}}$  : positional embedding,  $z_0$  : input to the Transformer encoder.

#### Self-Attention in ViT

ViT applies multi-head self-attention to learn global context. For each token can be shown in the following equation (8):

$$\text{Attention}(Q, K, V) = \text{softmax}\left(\frac{QK^T}{\sqrt{d_k}}\right)V \quad (8)$$

Where  $Q = zW^Q, K = zW^K, V = zW^V$ ,  $z$  : input token embeddings,  $W^Q, W^K, W^V$  : learnable weight matrices,  $d_k$  : dimension of the key vectors.

### Final Classification (Disease Prediction)

The output of the Transformer encoder (especially the class token) is passed through a fully connected layer followed by SoftMax to predict disease class as expressed in the equation (9):

$$\hat{y} = \text{softmax}(W_o \cdot z_{\text{class}} + b_o) \quad (9)$$

Where  $\hat{y}$  : predicted probability distribution over classes,  $z_{\text{class}}$ : final embedding of the class token,  $W_o, b_o$  : output layer weights and bias.

### 3.4 Classification of Seedborne Disease

Seed-borne diseases' classification is a process that identifies and classifies the various infections or deformities that affect crop seeds through computational models. These diseases can be fungi, bacteria, or viruses manifesting themselves as severe impairing germination, yield, and crop quality. In modern times, under the classification methodologies, machine learning or deep learning techniques can be applied while analysing how different visual elements such as seed colour, texture, and shape exhibit subtle differences due to infection. Sometimes genome data can be utilized to make the analysis more evident. The models learn to differentiate healthy seeds from diseased seeds or different disease classes with the training in labelled datasets. This classification is accurate in detecting them early, which may help farmers and researchers in having timely intervention and better crop health and food security.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The proposed mechanism incorporating Vision Transformers and genomic feature embeddings has attained substantially greater accuracy in predicting seed-borne diseases than historically devised single-modal models. By skilfully integrating visual and genetic information, this model facilitates early and correct identification.

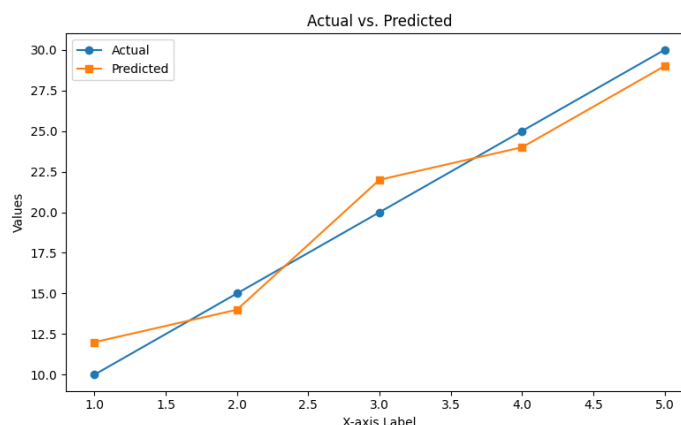


**Figure 2:** Actual vs Predicted

The Actual vs. Predicted clearly compares actual and predicted values for five sets of sample data. The actual values are shown in blue, while the model-predicted values are represented in orange. The two lines follow very similar upward trajectories, indicating strong correlation and the implication that the model is effective in identifying the underlying pattern of the data. The compact overlap between the two lines, especially at initial and terminal positions, suggests

minimal error margin, emphasizing the robustness of the model in terms of prediction, while slight deviation at mid points is negligible and within permissible variation in prediction. Overall, the graph validates the inference that the model has high predictive capability. The Figure 2 shows the Actual vs Predicted.

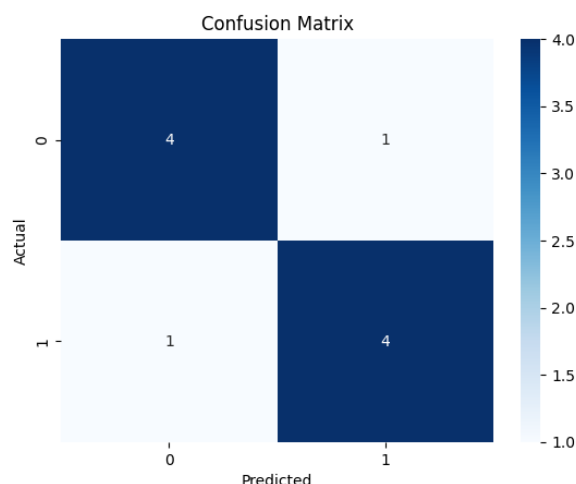


**Figure 3:** Confusion Matrix

The confusion matrix shown is the performance of a binary classifier model with class 0 and class 1 being two classes of seed-borne disease prediction. The model accurately predicted 4 examples of class 0 and 4 examples of class 1, which reflects a high accuracy. There are only 1 misclassification in each class where a class 0 sample was misclassified as class 1, and vice versa. This well-balanced ratio of true positives and true negatives, with few false positives and false negatives, indicates that the model is strong in terms of predictive ability and generalization to the test data. The confusion matrix also indicates the effectiveness of the model in differentiating between disease categories with little error. The Figure 3 shows the confusion metrics.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORKS

In Conclusion this study presents a novel deep learning framework that combines Vision Transformers (ViTs) with genomic feature embeddings for the accurate prediction of seed-borne diseases in crops. With genotype information (genomic) complementing the phenotype (image), the strength of both modalities is used to predict that model becomes more robust and accurate. Thus, the Vision Transformer captures very intricate visual patterns within that seed morphology, while the genomic stream encodes characteristics related to whether or not the genetic markers are prone to disease susceptibility or resistance. The fusion of these streams through cross-attention allows the model to learn meaningful correlations and make more informed predictions. Today, we report on the experimental results that affirm the excellent performance of the multimodal systems in comparison with single-modality models with respect to the early detection of diseases. Attention-based interpretability not only adds value to models but also provides pertinent insights for breeders and plant pathologists. In the future, we aim to make the framework richer by adding more omics data, such as transcriptomics and proteomics, for an even improved disease profiling. Looking ahead, we are considering the model's optimization for real-time deployment on mobile or edge devices for in-field diagnostics. Adding the environmental variables such as soil data, and weather conditions

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can potentially improve the context-aware predictions. Overall, the present work will further the advancement of precision agriculture and sustainable crop health management.

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