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Meta-learning Prediction of Physical and Chemical Properties of Magnetized Water and Fertilizer Based on LSTM

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Abstract

Background: Due to the high cost of data collection and labeling for magnetization detection of medium, the sample size is limited, it is not suitable to use deep learning method to predict its change trend. The prediction of physical and chemical properties of magnetized water and fertilizer(PCPMWF) by meta-learning can help to explore the effects of magnetized water and fertilizer irrigation on crops. **Method:** In this article, we propose a meta-learning optimization model based on the meta-learner LSTM in the field of regression prediction of PCPMWF. In meta-learning, LSTM is used to replace MAML's gradient descent optimizer for regression tasks, enables the meta-learner to learn the update rules of the LSTM, and apply it to update the parameters of the model. The proposed method is compared with the experimental results of MAML and LSTM to verify the feasibility and correctness. **Results:** The average absolute percentage error of the meta-learning optimization model of meta-learner LSTM is reduced by 0.37% compared with the MAML model, and by 4.16% compared with the LSTM model.

Conclusions: In the case of few sample, the proposed model is superior to the

23 traditional LSTM model and the basic MAML model.

24 **Keywords:** Meta-learning; Regression prediction; Meta-learner LSTM; MAML

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1. Background

In modern agriculture, magnetic treatment of water and fertilizer irrigation has been the underlying physical technology to increase crop yields [1]. Some studies have confirmed that irrigation with magnetized water and fertilizer can enhance the ability of some crops to absorb nutrients [1-3], and also improve some specific goals [4-8]. In fact, the essence of magnetized water and fertilizer is that under the action of a magnetic field, its physical and chemical properties, such as surface tension coefficient, viscosity, conductivity, PH value, will change [9-11], this has an impact on the growth of crops. This article hopes that by predicting the physical and chemical properties of magnetized water and fertilizer (PCPMWF), it will further help to explore the impact of magnetized water and fertilizer irrigation on crops.

At present, with the development of smart agriculture, the application of deep learning in agriculture has been extensively studied [12,13]. For example, two deep learning architectures are used to identify and predict pests and diseases based on features such as texture and color [14,15], and methods such as DBN and CNN are used to distinguish different crops and weeds by identifying leaves, so as to optimize the implementation of herbicides [16-19]. Not only that, with the development of deep learning structures such as recurrent neural networks (RNN) and long short-term memory networks (LSTM), the forecasting and early warning of time series data has also developed rapidly [20,21]. It has application potential in the field of intelligent management of agricultural production.

Although deep learning has achieved advanced results and often has high accuracy, at the same time, the success of deep neural network models depend chiefly on a large number of samples and multiple iterations of training parameters [22- 24], leading to this is not applicable in some research fields. Especially, collecting large-scale data will bring a serious burden, because the collection of data often requires a lot of workforce and time cost [25], and when the number of samples with supervised information is too small, the training of deep learning models is prone to overfitting [22,26].

For this reason, one way is to use more complex networks and larger datasets [27,28]. However, the community, which is in the bottleneck of deep learning, has to stand on another new starting point to break through the difficulties. The solution of how to train a model with a small amount of data has attracted the attention of some scholars, and they have proposed a few-shot learning method. At this stage, few-shot learning methods are divided into three categories: data enhancement, metric learning, and meta-learning [26]. The successful application of few-shot learning in other fields has caused it to gain more and more attention in the agricultural field, including plant segmentation, pests and diseases identification, remote sensing, crop status assessment, etc. Notably, Li et al. used CNN feature extractor to train a few samples through triplet loss to distinguish different pest species [29]. Furthermore, Li et al. proposed a semi-supervised few-shot learning method for plant leaf disease identification, which verified its correctness and generalization [27]. Azam Karami et al. explored the application of few-shot learning in remote sensing technology for automatic plant

counting and positioning [30]. Wang et al. proposed a few-shot learning method based on the Siamese network to solve a leaf classification problem with a small sample size [31]. The above related studies are all in the case of unable to obtain enough samples, learning through a few samples to solve practical problems, reducing the number of samples and cost. In essence, few-shot learning mines the high-level semantic representation of things, that is, extract and disseminate prior knowledge from the task set, so that the trained model can be transferred, and the influence of the learned experience on the completion of new tasks is applied to a few samples.

Starting from the research direction of this article, we are more inclined to use few-shot learning methods. Mainly for the "large-scale dataset" problem, there are two difficulties in this research: First of all, because the research on PCPMWF in the agricultural field is not comprehensive, there is no data related to magnetized water and the physical and chemical parameters of water and fertilizers in the public dataset, which requires us to collect data through experiments. What's more, the magnetization experiment and the measurement steps of the parameters are very cumbersome, the calculation process is complicated, and the parameters of the water and fertilizer solution are in a flowing state during irrigation are difficult to determine, which makes data collection time-consuming and laborious. Altogether, collecting large-scale datasets is difficult and costly. The few-shot learning method brings important value and significance to this research, and has broad development potential in the agricultural field.

In this paper, we propose a meta-learning optimization model using LSTM as the meta-learner to apply to the field of parameter prediction field of PCPMWF. This method replaces the traditional gradient descent optimizer of MAML with a long and short-term memory network in meta-learning to process regression tasks. The research direction of machine learning in the prediction of PCPMWF is relatively new. We have collected samples in the water and fertilizer magnetization experiment, and need to use the meta-learning MAML and deep learning LSTM comparison experiment on the dataset to ensure the feasibility of learning with few samples. Further improve the meta-learning method, and also through experimental comparison to verify the superiority of the optimization model based on the LSTM meta-learner. Finally, we summarized and compared the pros and cons of LSTM, MAML and optimization models, and proposed a better method for the prediction of PCPMWF, which will provide some references for further research in this direction in the future.

The contributions of this work are three-fold:

(1) We collected samples of PCPMWF through experiments for research in the field of agricultural irrigation magnetized water and fertilizer.

(2) We propose a meta-learning optimization model using LSTM as the meta-learner to predict PCPMWF.

(3) We compare the proposed method with the experimental results of MAML and LSTM to verify the feasibility and correctness of the method in the field of parameter prediction of PCPMWF.

2. Materials

The goal task is to predict the changing trend of PCPMWF under the condition of irrigation as the intensity of the magnetic field increases. The magnetic field strength increases regularly from 0mT to 450mT with an arithmetic difference of 50mT, then each physical and chemical property parameter is a series of time series data indexed by the magnetic field strength.

As mentioned above, since the water and fertilizer solution is in a flowing state during irrigation, its physical and chemical properties are difficult to determine, and the parameters of the magnetized static water and fertilizer solution are relatively easy to collect. The datasets we collect are divided into "dynamic" and "static" categories. The specific data are collected by the water and fertilizer in the flowing or static state of the magnetization device, including surface tension coefficient σ (N/m) , viscosity η (mPa · S) , conductivity EC (μ S/cm) and PH value four physical and chemical properties parameters. To this end, we set up a magnetizer test bench. After the water and fertilizer solution is magnetized, the final required data is obtained through precision instrument measurement and complex calculations.

The total number of dynamic magnetized water and fertilizer data collected in this study is 64, and the total number of static magnetized water and fertilizer data is 424 (hereinafter referred to as "dynamic data" and "static data"). The data details are shown in Tab. 1.

Tab. 1. Statistics of missing values of dynamic magnetized water and fertilizer data

Physical and Chemical Properties Parameters	σ	η	EC	PH value
Dynamic Data/Piece	16	16	16	16
Static Data/Piece	106	106	106	106

The dataset is divided into the training set and the test set, and they are divided into support set and query set. The two datasets are disjoint. In the research of this article considering cross-domain factors, the support set is the static magnetized water and fertilizer dataset. , The query set is a very small amount of dynamic magnetized water and fertilizer dataset. Different from the classification task (N-way K-shot classification problem), in the regression task, each task is no longer a batch of the classification task, but all the data is sent to the network, and a forward calculation and reverse calculation are completed.

3. Methods

3.1. MAML algorithm

Few-shot regression is to learn generalization through very few or fewer training samples, and the robust regressor can maintain high accuracy and scalability to predict new data. As the most extensive meta-learning algorithm, MAML's basic idea is to find an optimal initial parameter, which can quickly learn new regression tasks with fewer gradient steps than deep learning.

In this work, the overall solution of MAML is shown in Fig. 3. The structure covers inner and outer loops. The inner loop is used for update, that is, calculate the loss and update the gradient in each task, and find the optimal parameter θ_i' of each task.

The outer loop is used for backpropagation, that is, in each new task, the randomly initialized model parameter θ_i is updated by calculating the gradient relative to θ obtained in the inner loop.

Specifically, firstly, the weight $\theta = \theta_0$ needs to be initialized, then gradient descent is used in each task to update θ_i for this specific task, and then the original parameter θ_i is updated relative to θ , which realizes the use of gradient descent to minimize the loss training regression. The network gets the optimal weight. This reflects the obvious difference between meta-learning and deep learning. Deep learning is to update the same parameter θ according to different batches of tasks, and the result of training will get a global (or for each task) optimal solution, but this may not be the optimal solution for a certain task. Meta-learning is different, it does not update the parameter θ for each task, but updates the parameter θ through the θ_i of each task. In this way, the possible performance of θ on each task is not the best, but it can be guaranteed that the parameter θ is the most "sensitive". In other words, it is very sensitive to new tasks, and small changes in parameters can make a big change in loss. Therefore, a small amount of data can be used to complete the training of new tasks [32,33].

Fig. 1. MAML solution

According to the foregoing, the extracted data points are divided into support set and query set, the support set is used to find the optimal parameter θ'_i in the inner loop, and the query set is used to find the optimal parameter θ in the outer loop.

For regression tasks, the method uses mean square error (MSE) as the loss function:

$$\mathcal{L}_{T_i}(f_{\theta}) = \sum_{x_j, y_j \sim T_i} \|f_{\theta}(x_i) - y_i\|_2^2 \quad (1)$$

The pseudo-code of the few samples regression problem is shown in Tab. 2.

Tab. 2. Algorithm for updating model parameters

Algorithm 1 Meta-Learning Regression Model

Input: MAML with parameters θ , Base-Learner with step size hyperparameter α , Meta-Learner with step size hyperparameter β .

$\theta_0 \leftarrow$ random initialization #Randomly initialize model parameters

while not done **do**

$D_{train}, D_{test} \leftarrow$ random dataset

for all T_i **do**

$X_j, Y_j \leftarrow$ random batch from *support set*

```

 $\mathcal{L} \leftarrow \mathcal{L}_{T_i}(f_{\theta})$  #Get loss using Equation (2)

 $\mathcal{G} \leftarrow \nabla_{\theta} \mathcal{L}_{T_i}(f_{\theta})$  #Evaluate gradient with respect to parameters  $\theta$ 

 $\theta'_i \leftarrow \theta - \alpha \nabla_{\theta} \mathcal{L}_{T_i}(f_{\theta})$  #Update Meta-Learner parameters

end for
X, Y  $\leftarrow$  random batch from quest set
Update  $\theta \leftarrow \theta - \beta \nabla_{\theta} \sum_{T_i \sim P(T)} \mathcal{L}_{T_i}(f_{\theta'_i})$  #Update Base-Learner parameters
end while

```

176 3.2. Meta-learner LSTM

177 As known, LSTM, as a special RNN, solves the problem of gradient disappearance
178 and gradient explosion of ordinary RNN in the long sequence data training process. In
179 this work, we propose to use LSTM as a meta-learner to optimize meta-learning to
180 perform regression tasks, replace the traditional gradient descent method with a long
181 and short-term memory network as an optimizer, and store these updated sequences in
182 LSTM, called meta-learner LSTM. Therefore, the role of LSTM in the optimization
183 model is particularly important.

184 There are only simple neurons in the cyclic neural network, and LSTM blocks are
185 used to replace neurons in LSTM to train long-term dependent information. The LSTM
186 block is shown in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2. Internal structure of LSTM block

First, the cell state C_{t-1} of the previous layer is multiplied by the forgetting vector f_t point by point (denoted as $\odot$). If it is multiplied by a value close to 0, then in the new cell state, this information needs to be discarded. Then add this value to the output value $i_t \odot \tilde{C}_t$ of the input gate point by point, and update the new information found by the neural network to the current cell state C_t . Finally, the updated cell state is obtained.

So far, the cell state update equation is derived, expressed as Eq. (2):

$$C_t = f_t \odot C_{t-1} + i_t \odot \tilde{C}_t \quad (2)$$

However, in meta-learner LSTM, the LSTM block is a neural network structure as a recurrent layer. Using the LSTM block alone cannot build a complete optimizer. It is necessary to build the LSTM network and the dense layer, and place the dense layer as the last one. Non-linear changes process the previously extracted features and sort out

the weights in the LSTM network [34]. At the same time, cooperate with the dropout layer to avoid the over-fitting phenomenon due to the excessive number of hidden layer nodes [35,36]. The model structure is shown in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3. LSTM model structure

3.3. Meta-learning optimization model

It can be seen from the above that the essence of MAML is to use gradient descent to learn the optimal initial parameter values. This paper proposes an optimization model that hopes that the meta-learner optimizes itself through gradient descent. After clever replacement, it becomes the use of LSTM's state update formula to update the model parameters. Therefore, the purpose of Meta-Learner is to learn the update rules of LSTM and apply them to the parameters of the update model, so as to better "learning to learn".

3.3.1 Overall framework

If we call meta-learner LSTM an optimizer, then Base-learner is called an

optimization object. The overall framework of the meta-learning optimization model is shown in Fig. 4, which shows that the cyclical framework of the optimization model consists of four parts.

Fig. 4. The overall framework of the meta-learning optimization model

In step 1, use LSTM to find the optimal parameters and send them to the model to update the model parameters.

In step 2, the model then uses the new parameters of step 1 to calculate the loss.

In step 3, when the step 2 achieves the goal optimization, the loss is backpropagated to the LSTM.

In step 4, calculate the gradient based on the loss of step 3 to optimize the LSTM itself, and further update the model parameters.

We can see that although the optimization model uses LSTM instead of the gradient descent method to find the optimal parameters, the gradient descent method

needs to be used to optimize the LSTM, so the gradient descent method is still an indispensable part. In other words, the optimization model learning uses meta-learner LSTM to perform gradient descent, and meta-learner LSTM is optimized by gradient descent. From this point of view, the gradient descent method can be regarded as an update sequence from the output layer to the input layer. The LSTM cell update equation (expressed as Eq. (2)) corresponds to the update equation of the gradient descent, expressed as Eq. (3).

$$\theta_t = \theta_{t-1} - \alpha_t \nabla_{\theta_{t-1}} \mathcal{L}_t \quad (3)$$

When $f_t = 1$,

$$C_{t-1} = \theta_{t-1} \quad (4)$$

$$i_t = \alpha_t \quad (5)$$

$$\tilde{C}_t = \nabla_{\theta_{t-1}} \mathcal{L}_t \quad (6)$$

Analyze the specific role of the LSTM block in the meta-learning optimization scenario with reference to Fig. 1. The role of forget gate (f_t) in the optimization model is particularly important. When the loss is large and the gradient is close to zero, the cell state is selectively forgotten, and it is decided to discard the parameter value θ_{t-1} and loss $\mathcal{L}_t$ that cause a large loss from the cell state, and its gradient $\mathcal{L}_t$, thereby shrinking the model parameters. Input gate (i_t) determines the rest of the new information to enter the cell state, so it can determine the value of the updated model. It is used to adjust the learning rate α_t , which can prevent the network model from diverging and quickly learn. The final output gate (O_t) selectively outputs updated information θ_t based on the current cell state.

4. Results

In this section, the meta-learning optimization model based on meta-learner LSTM is used to conduct comparative experiments with LSTM and MAML model predictions, and the experimental result data of Mean Absolute Error (MAE) and Mean Absolute Percentage Error (MAPE) are obtained, fitting of the true value, predicted value and iteration of the loss function. The experimental hardware and software environments are the NVIDIA GeForce RTX 2080 with 32 GB memory and the libraries of Python (version 3.7.11), Pytorch (version 1.9.0), Numpy (version 1.21.2), and Pandas (version 1.3.2).

In order to ensure a large comparison, the model parameters and datasets will be adjusted to be consistent. The specific parameters are shown in Tab. 3.

Tab. 3. Model-specific parameters and explanation

Model Parameters	Explanation	LSTM Model	MAML Model	Optimization Model
num_epochs	Number of iterations	20	20	20
update_lr	Learning rate	0.005	0.005	0.005
dropout	Random inactivation rate	0.5	null	0.5
hidden_size	LSTM hidden layer size	256	null	256
num_layers	Number of LSTM layers	2	null	2

It should be noted that the number of iterations is unified to 20. The learning rate of the optimization model is divided into two types: inner loop and outer loop, both of which are 0.005. For the MAML model, there is no LSTM part, so the remaining three parameter values are null, and for the optimization model, these three parameter values refer to its meta-learner LSTM parameters.

We have collected a total of 64 dynamic magnetized water and fertilizer data, and a total of 424 static magnetized water and fertilizer data. Considering that LSTM cannot be trained with cross-domain data, this group of experiments uniformly used single-domain "static data" to train three models, and selected 100 of the "surface tension coefficient" as the total dataset. The distribution of the dataset is shown in Tab. 4.

Tab. 4. Specific distribution of dataset

Models	Total dataset	Training Set		Test Set	
LSTM Model	100	90		10	
MAML Model and Optimization Model	100	Support Set	Quest set	Support Set	Quest set
		40	10	10	5

Since the LSTM model is different from the meta-learning model, the dataset only needs to be divided into the training set and the test set according to 0.9:0.1, and the MAML model and optimization model is used as the meta-learning model. Specifically, after the dataset is divided into training set and test set according to 0.8:0.2, further random samples will be drawn from it to be used as support set and query set. Therefore, we set to select 40 support sets and 10 query sets in the 80 training sets, and select 10 support sets and 5 query sets in the 20 test sets.

4.1. Results of model prediction

Under the above experimental conditions, use MAE and MAPE to describe the prediction results of the model expressed as Eq. (7) and Eq. (8). Among them, y_i represents the true value, and $\hat{y}_i$ represents the predicted value of the model. When the predicted value is completely consistent with the true value, MAE is equal to 0, that is, a

perfect model; the greater the error, the greater the value. Similarly, a MAPE of 0% indicates a perfect model, and a MAPE greater than 100% indicates an inferior model.

$$MAE = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n |\hat{y}_i - y_i| \quad (7)$$

$$MAPE = \frac{100\%}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \left| \frac{\hat{y}_i - y_i}{y_i} \right| \quad (8)$$

Based on the model parameters that have been set above and the dataset training model, the specific experimental data obtained are shown in Tab. 5. We can see that in the case of very few samples, the final MAE and MAPE obtained by the LSTM model are 0.22% and 4.69%, respectively, which are significantly higher than the experimental results of the meta-learning model. The optimization model is the optimization model of MAML Model. Although the prediction effect is similar, it can be concluded that the MAE and MAPE of the optimization model are slightly lower than that of the MAML model. Its prediction effect is the best among the three models.

Tab. 5. Comparison of MAE and MAPE of prediction results

Models	MAE	MAPE
LSTM Model	0.22%	4.69%
MAML Model	0.05%	0.90%
Optimization Model	0.02%	0.53%

The model predicts the last 4 sets of data from the first 6 sets of data, that is, through training the physical and chemical property parameters when the magnetization is 0-250mT to predict the properties of the physical and chemical parameters when the magnetization is 300-450mT. The fitting effect of the true value and the predicted value is intuitively reflected in Fig. 6. The test set randomly selects 10 sample data of the surface tension coefficient of the seventh group (that is, in the case of 300mT

magnetization) in the dataset. The red line represents the actual value of the surface tension coefficient, and the blue line represents the predicted value of the surface tension coefficient. Since PCPMWF are not clear yet, it can be seen from the real value that the surface tension coefficient is quite random and is an unstable sequence. Hence the fitting effect of the LSTM model is not very good, while the fitting curve of the optimization model is relatively more suitable.

(a) LSTM model

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(b) MAML model

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(c) Meta-learning optimization model based on meta-learner LSTM

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Fig. 6. Fitting curve of true value and predicted value

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5. Discussion

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For this study, we explored the improvement of the training effect of the few-sample regression by optimizing meta-learning, hoping to provide two references for the community. One of them is the difficulty of sample collection and high cost in the field of agricultural irrigation magnetized water and fertilizer. We are committed to solving the limitations of a few samples for prediction, and we have made efforts to optimize the performance of the model. Another point is that the field of few-shot learning in agriculture is not perfect at this stage, and the classification task of sample recognition is mainly, such as the classification of plant leaf diseases. The application of the meta-learning optimization model in the regression task is the follow-up few-shot regression training. Research has a certain paving effect.

We propose a meta-learner LSTM optimized meta-learning optimization model to be applied to the regression prediction of a few samples of PCPMWF. The experimental results compared the LSTM model, MAML model, and Meta-learner LSTM meta-learning optimization model from three aspects: the evaluation criteria of MAE and MAPE, the fitting effect of the true value and the predicted value, and the iterative trend of the loss function. It turns out that no matter from which aspect, the meta-learner LSTM optimization model performs relatively well. Specifically, in the case of few samples, for the MAE evaluation criteria, the meta-learner LSTM optimization model decreased by 0.03% compared with the MAML model, and decreased by 0.2% compared with the LSTM model. For the MAPE evaluation criteria, the meta-learner LSTM optimization model decreased by 0.37% compared to the MAML model, and decreased by 4.16% compared to the LSTM model. In terms of the fitting effect of the true value and the predicted value, it is obvious that the prediction value fit of the meta-learner LSTM optimization model is better than the other two models.

At the same time, during the training process, we found that although the proposed model performed well in the prediction effect, the calculation speed decreased significantly. Therefore, in the follow-up, we hope to further conduct multi-factor experimental analysis in terms of parameter adjustment and model structure deployment to improve the promotion performance and prediction efficiency of the few-shot regression prediction model.

The disadvantage of this article is that it uses a self-built dataset and does not fully

analyze the subjectivity of experimental measurement. In the future, we will consider using data enhancement and other methods to conduct full verification and comparative analysis more objectively, so as to explore the fact that there are fewer samples. Should we expand the number of samples to fit the model, or should we continue to improve the model to better train a small number of samples. At the same time, this article only selects two models for comparison in the machine learning algorithm, and will further consider adding analysis and verification of related models in the future.

6. Conclusion

The application of predicting the properties of magnetized water and fertilizer based on a few samples is of great significance to the field of regression of learning with a few samples. This article focuses on forecasting and analyzing the trend of magnetized irrigation water and fertilizer combined with the method of few-shot learning to provide a reference value for the agricultural field and machine learning research. In this work, we proposed the meta-learning optimization model of meta-Learner LSTM. Meta-Learner LSTM and the gradient descent method complement each other. After multiple updates, it can quickly improve the learning efficiency of the model, which is more accurate than traditional MAML. Its superiority is manifested in theory and experiment. We verify the correctness and robustness of the proposed model through comparative experiments. In the case of using the same dataset, the average absolute percentage error of the meta-learning optimization model of the proposed meta-Learner LSTM is reduced by 0.37% compared with the MAML model, and by 4.16% compared

with the LSTM model.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials

The datasets used in this study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Authors' contributions

JN: Conceptualization; Writing - original draft. NYW: Methodology; Software. JBL: Writing - review. KW: Visualization. HKW: editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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