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Integrated plant protection: Bridging pathology and entomology in the age of precision agriculture

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Abstract
The ever-changing farming scene calls for a move away from old ways of protecting crops to more combined, eco-friendly, and smart methods. Integrated Plant Protection (IPP) acts as a key link between studying plants and insects focusing on managing pests and diseases in a holistic way using environmentally aware methods. The coming of precise farming has changed this joining by allowing for watchfulness in real-time predictive modelling and focused help. This article looks into the teamwork between sickness study and bug science highlights the key role digital tools play in improving IPP and shows how frameworks based on data can reduce threats from living things to plants. Using examples of case studies and current world practices this paper tries to set out a plan for future-ready resilient systems in crop protection.

Keywords: Integrated plant protection, precision agriculture, plant pathology, entomology, pest management, smart farming, biotic stress, crop health, sensor technology

Introduction
Present-day agricultural systems face increased agro-ecological dangers due to multiple factors pest populations growing resistant to pesticides, climate change stressors, newly emerging and re-emerging plant diseases, and the pest-pathogen-plant-environment interplay [6]. This large and varied crisis means that crop protection can no longer work in silos and must adopt integrative approaches considering the whole of the ecosystem [19, 20, 84]. These two disciplines plant pathology and entomology separated historically. Plant pathology was established as a science study in 19th century foundations concerned with disease on plants caused by attack from fungi, bacteria, viruses, or nematodes. The “father of plant pathology” Heinrich Anton de Bary proved it in 1861 that fungi were life forms capable of causing disease on plants *Phytophthora infestans* was responsible for the Irish potato famine [51].

At about the same time, entomology began to be formalized with a focus on insect biology, classification, and behaviour. Charles Valentine Riley is regarded as one of the early pioneers of applied entomology [132]. He played a great role in introducing biological control through bringing Vedalia beetles from Australia to California scale on the cottony cushion in citrus orchards during 1880s. This was among the earliest successful examples of management of pests integrated with natural enemies. Over time, these two fields moved forward side by side and typically employed different tool kits, terminologies, and intervention strategies [21, 85]. The boundaries between pest insects and pathogens are becoming less distinct with whiteflies, aphids, and leafhoppers mostly responsible for transmitting plant viral, bacterial and fungal diseases an intricate interaction web: For example, *Bemisia tabaci* whitefly not only damage crops but vectors for over 100 crops. Moreover, the overreliance on chemical pesticides has contributed to environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, and the evolution of resistant pest and pathogen strains [133]. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that nearly 40% of global crop production is lost annually to pests and diseases, costing the global economy over $220 billion [50]. These statistics underscore the urgency of adopting a unified and more ecologically sound approach-Integrated Plant Protection (IPP)-that merges the expertise and practices of both plant pathology and entomology [83].

Precision Agriculture as a Catalyst

The interdisciplinary areas of pathology and entomology have been sharply advanced through the integration of precision agriculture [131]. This contemporary farming approach utilizes technologies like IoT sensors, remote sensing via satellites and drones, GPS, GIS, AI, and big data to make agricultural decisions at the granular level of individual fields or farms. Precision agriculture started to gain traction in Western markets in the late 1980s and early 1990s, coinciding with the advent of surveillance technology within crop management systems and later evolving into more comprehensive techniques termed precision farming. John Stafford and Pierre Robert were among the first advocates of precision agriculture in Europe and North America, respectively. Their objective was to tailor the input of fertilizers, pesticides, or irrigation in terms of time, location, and dosage, to enhance agricultural yield. Its digital counterpart improved with time, allowing its application in pest and disease management to surface [7, 22, 82].

Currently, systems like India's FASAL, EPPO databases, and USDA PestLens have advanced to providing real-time alerts and maps on risks. Crop health can be managed collaboratively by farmers and researchers using data with tools such as AI powered diagnostic mobile apps like Plantix and CROPROTECT from Rothamsted Research in the UK [49]. Machine learning algorithms now have the capability to predict pathogen outbreaks by analysing data such as temperature, humidity, and leaf wetness, along with historical occurrences of diseases. Pest detection AI models work to differentiate between biotic infestations and abiotic stressors through imaging leaves. Identification of fungal infections and pest infestations in groundnuts and chickpeas is possible through ICRISAT's research on algorithm development [52, 86]. Spatially targeted application of biopesticides and natural predators is made possible with precision application technologies such as variable-rate sprayers, autonomous UAVs, and others, allowing for reduced ecological harm, reduced costs, and improved efficiency [130]. When combined with genomic and microbial technologies, precision agriculture serves as the conduit through which the integrative power of plant pathology and entomology can be fully realized. Thus, in the era of the Fourth Agricultural Revolution, the convergence of scientific disciplines under the umbrella of IPP, supported by precision tools, is not just beneficial, it is essential for building resilient, sustainable agricultural systems [23, 48].

Understanding Integrated Plant Protection (IPP)

Integrated Plant Protection (IPP) is a sophisticated polymorphic form of crop protection which incorporates various controlling techniques: biological, cultural, mechanical/physical, and chemical, in a holistic manner that achieves synergy [129]. The primary goal is the sustainable management of organisms causing harm, the stress causing factors and environmental stresses while safeguarding human life, non-target organisms, and the environment as much as possible [87].

The primary focus of IPP includes

- **Prevention instead of treatment:** Leverage resistant varieties, habitat manipulation, and crop rotation as proactive measures.
- **Field outbreak and monitoring practices**: Regular scouting of the area, early detection and timely accurate diagnosis with the help of certain tools, serological and molecular assays, and even pest traps [81].
- **Control measures lessen adequately on economic expenditure limit levels:** Action are taken based on pre-determined monetary threshold values like the ETLs-estimated monetary threshold levels, the number of pests or diseases recurring sickening invasively to a level controlled beyond reasonable economic sense put in place estimate range [129].
- **Involvement of natural enemies and other resistance of the host plant to aid control measures:** Use of strategically applied agro-chemicals and enhanced precision, along with parasitoids and entomo-pathogens [53, 80].
- **Preserve the environment IPP aims utilize and minimize:** The help of animal's aid aid to promote soil and aid and reduce residues and pesticides uses.
- **Stakeholder participation and education:** Farmers, researchers, and extension agents are equally involved in decision-making and implementation [47, 88].

Evolution of IPP from IPM

The philosophy (concept) of IPM preceded even IPP. Created in the mid-20th century, IPM arose as a reaction to the environmental and economic fallout of mass pesticide application that followed the Second World War. Scientists like Ray F. Smith and Perry L. Adkisson of Texas A&M University-who went on to receive the World Food Prize in 1997, were instrumental in formalizing IPM. In the beginning, IPM was more concerned with arthropod pests, with reduced reliance on pesticide treatments achieved through population quantification and natural control [128]. IPM is defined by the FAO as "the careful consideration of all available pest control techniques and subsequent integration of appropriate measures that discourage the development of pest populations and keep pesticides and other interventions to economically justified levels" [1, 24].

But with increasing complexity of the agricultural landscape, the nature of crop threats became increasingly complex. The incidence of new plant diseases spread by insect vectors quickly outstripped the capacity of IPM alone to address them. Not only that abiotic stresses like water stress, salinity and nutrient deficiencies started to interact with biotic factors, resulting in more unpredictable and severe crop losses [46]. End of Integrated Pest Management and the Beginning of Integrated Plant Protection From this background, a holistic and more cross-disciplinary concept was born surrounding IPM called integrated plant protection (IPP) merging IPM with innovations in plant pathology, climate-smart agriculture (close to agronomy), agroecology, and agritechnology or desi technology [54, 89]. Whereas IPM focused more on management of pests in entomological sense, IPP takes into aspect

- Disease control (fungi, bacteria, viruses, and nematodes)
- Another approach of controlling insect-vectored disease
- Strengthening against abiotic stress as a contribution to lessening pest/pathogen susceptibility
- Post-harvest protection against biotic and abiotic stresses

In essence, IPP shifts the emphasis from pest-focused management to plant-center health. It is not merely a reactive system but a preventive, adaptive, and knowledge-intensive approach supported by data-driven decision-making and ecosystem principles [90].

Key Differences between IPM and IPP

Aspect	IPM	IPP
Primary focus	Insect pest management	Holistic plant health (pests, diseases, abiotic)
Scope	Mainly entomological	Interdisciplinary: entomology, pathology, agroecology
Stress types	Biotic (insects, mites)	Biotic and abiotic (disease, nutrient stress, drought)
Methodology	Monitoring, thresholds, biological control	Systemic crop protection including genomics, remote sensing, AI
Philosophy	Minimize pesticide use	Promote ecological resilience and integrated care

Bridging Plant Pathology and Entomology
Plant pathology and entomology are two axes of agricultural science which helps in safeguarding plants, mitigating yield loss, and ensuring food security [127]. Even with a shared objective, each of the disciplines has provided different frameworks, methodologies, and vocabularies to achieve the intended outcome [25]. The interests of entomologist span toward the behaviour, ecology, and management of insect pests and other arthropods [79]. Their studies include:

- The biology of the pest and its reproductive activities
- Preference of the host and feeding behaviour
- Relationship between vector and pathogen
- Economic threshold levels (ETLs)
- Control by biological and ecological means (e.g., parasitic and predatory)

Fungal organisms such as Fusarium and Alternaria, as well as bacteria like Xanthomonas and Pseudomonas, viruses such as Tomato yellow leaf curl virus, and nematodes like Meloidogyne spp. are some of the living biotic agents that are classified under plant pathology [45]. Their focus includes

- The mechanisms of infection and cycles of diseases
- Pathogen virulence, resistance genes
- Environmental impact on the proliferation of pathogens
- Diagnosis and surveillance of disease

As previously mentioned, pests and pathogens infrequently operate independently while dealing with field conditions. Pathogen-infected plants can become susceptible to insect infestation, and insect vectors also spread pathogens (e.g., aphids spreading mosaic viruses, whiteflies transmitting begomo viruses) [78]. This type of interaction requires the integration of strategies where pathologists and entomologists work together to formulate stronger multi-layered defence systems which are more effective than singular systems [2, 91]. For example

- Rice tungro bacilliform virus and its counterpart, Rice tungro spherical virus, both transmitted by green leafhoppers (*Nephotettix virescens*), make up the Tungro virus complex in rice [26].
- The bacterium *Candidatus Liberibacter* and its vector, the Asian citrus psyllid (*Diaphorina citri*), work in conjunction to spread Citrus greening (Huanglongbing).
- Co-infection of Maize chlorotic mottle virus and Sugarcane mosaic virus, both often transmitted by thrips and beetles, leads to Maize lethal necrosis (MLN), which is an emerging threat to maize in Africa [8].

The coordination between the fields of plant pathology and entomology allows for the efficient use of resources, avoiding duplicate diagnostics or intervention work and allowing for development of integrated control strategies critical in smallholder resources [55].

Diagnostic Instruments and Lack of Distinct Symptoms
The difficult problem for plant health specialists is the proper and early diagnosis of the plant's health problems, which influences its protection. This becomes more intricate due to the overlapping of symptoms between damages caused by pests and diseases [126]. For example:

- Chlorotic lesions might result from virus infections, nutrient shortage, or mite invasion.
- Leaf curl symptoms can be due to begomo-viruses or thrips [44].
- Wilting might suggest stem-boring insects, root rotting (fungal), or vascular wilting (bacterial) [92].

This is how misdiagnosis usually happens, for example, damage caused by an insect is misdiagnosed and fungicides are applied, ignoring damage inflicted by a virus using some vector that does not show symptoms [56].

Advanced Imaging Techniques
- Satellite and drone-based hyperspectral and multispectral imaging can reveal stress on the plant due to pest and disease differentiation.
- Thermal imaging identifies areas of infection well ahead of visible symptoms in tissues showing lesions [77].

Molecular Diagnostics
- DNA barcoding and qPCR (quantitative polymerase chain reaction) enable rapid and specific identification of pests, pathogens, and even endophytic or cryptic species [93, 125].
- Loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) and CRISPR-based diagnostics are now being applied for real-time, field-friendly detection [57, 76].

AI-Assisted Visual Recognition
- Mobile apps like Plantix**,** Agdia**,** and Nuru use deep learning to identify disease and pest symptoms from images.
- Machine learning algorithms are trained on datasets containing both pathology and entomology symptom libraries, improving diagnostic accuracy [3].

Integrated Pest and Disease Surveillance Systems
- National-level platforms like India's e-Pest Surveillance, USDA's PestLens, and FAO's IPPC aggregate data from both insect trap counts and disease diagnostics to inform regional risk forecasts [94].

- Predictive modelling tools, such as EPIRICE for rice blast and bacterial leaf blight, now incorporate vector monitoring and weather parameters to increase forecast reliability [43].

By unifying entomological and pathological diagnostics, these tools not only streamline field decisions but also contribute to the development of early-warning systems, precision applications, and targeted interventions. This convergence represents the heart of Integrated Plant Protection and underscores the need for cross-disciplinary collaboration in academic research, extension services, and on-farm applications [27].

Role of Precision Agriculture in IPP

Sensor-Based Monitoring

At the core of precision agriculture and IPP is the use of sensors which collect data in real time regarding the health of plants and the overall environment, as well as elements that may influence pests and diseases [9]. Soil moisture probes, leaf wetness sensors, canopy temperature sensors, and automated insect traps are examples of sensors that are placed in fields in it to capture data relevant to both Entomologists and Plant Pathologists. Soil moisture sensors detect stress conditions like root pathogen or soil pest-susceptible crops, while leaf wetness sensors are instrumental in predicting outbreaks of fungal diseases such as late blight or downy mildew [95]. Pheromone baited insect traps with imaging technologies enable automatic counting and identification of Helicoverpa, whitefly, or fruit fly pests [75]. With mobile apps that provide integrated platforms for the sensor data, farmers are able to apply thresholds and controls only when deemed necessary, which is based on sensors' and mobile phones' data. Others such as Dr. Jürgen Kroschel at CIP have led research using such sensor networks with climate data to map and manage production system threats in potatoes. Sensors overall improve the accuracy and sustainability of agricultural practices by reducing ambiguity, supporting early detection systems, and providing better predictive analysis [58].

Remote Sensing and GIS

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Decision Support Systems (DSS)

Decision Support Systems (DSS) are essential digital tools in IPP, which control and manage the enormous amount of data coming from sensors, remote sensing, weather forecasts, pest imageries, life-cycle information, and monitoring reports on pests to provide timely and evidence-based crop protection recommendations [42]. Sophisticated DSS platforms help extension workers, farmers, agronomists, and researchers decide on the best possible action-what to apply, when to apply it, where to apply it, and how to apply it-in changing scenarios of pest and disease incidence. Systems like CROPPLAN for Europe, EPPO Global Database Pest Risk Maps by USDA Artificial Intelligence supported Plant Village Nuru AI apps deliver real-time advisory services that fathom both entomological and pathological considerations [60, 97]. The addition of artificial intelligence through machine learning algorithms plus cloud computing improves further predictive accuracy hence enabling the possibility for pre-emptive identification of infestations as well as optimal pesticide application towards environmental impact reduction. Furthermore, mobile accessibility and IoT integration ensure that DSS are practical for smallholder farmers and large-scale operations alike. These systems exemplify how digital transformation in agriculture is making IPP more intelligent, interconnected, and resilient [11, 12].

Molecular and Genomic Advances in IPP

Pathogen and Insect Genomics

High-throughput sequencing technologies have essentially transformed the worlds of plant pathogens and insect pests. Previously unimaginable speed and scale have been achieved in genome decoding [73]. The virulence factors, effector proteins, and host-specific adaptation strategies of a pathogen are revealed by its genomics. This information therefore facilitates the determination of candidate genes for disease resistance breeding as well as targeted fungicide development. On the other hand, detoxification pathways, general resistance to insecticides, and host preference mechanisms are revealed by insect pest genomics [41, 123]. Genome sequencing for *Helicoverpa armigera*, *Spodoptera frugiperda, and Bemisia tabaci* has already uncovered mutations for resistance to insecticides that can be used to design better control programs. Key advances in *Phytophthora infestans and Magnaporthe oryzae* genomics have brought us closer to having reliable forecasts for when disease outbreaks will occur as well as effective monitoring for when new virulent strains start to emerge [98]. Moreover, population genomics allows for tracking pathogen or pest evolution, gene flow, and migration routes, which is crucial for global quarantine and biosecurity strategies. Such data-rich approaches ensure that both chemical and biological control strategies are not only precise but also adaptive to emerging threats [28].

RNAi and CRISPR Technologies

RNAi and CRISPR-Cas gene-editing systems are exciting new molecular approaches that can be used within IPM to achieve very specific environmentally safe control measures compared to the often non-specific chemical pesticides. RNAi control works through silencing vital genes of the pest or pathogen and thereby controls or kills them without affecting beneficial organisms [72]. This has already been proven efficacious against pests like *Helicoverpa*, *Colorado potato beetle*, *Aedes aegypti* and pathogens such as *Botrytis cinerea*, *Fusarium spp*. Meanwhile, CRISPR-Cas9 can be applied to introduce precise changes at desired DNA sequence(s) in a pathogen, insect vector, or even in the host plant genome for knocking out susceptibility gene(s) or incorporating resistance trait(s) [99, 100]. Already some new rice lines have been made using this system for bacterial blight resistance and viral immunity engineering in tomatoes and cassava. Additionally, the CRISPR toolkit is being expanded to target insect genomes for disrupting reproduction or pesticide resistance genes. The integration of these molecular tools with traditional IPP frameworks ensures a next-generation strategy that is target-specific, sustainable, and resilient to resistance development [61].

Microbiome Engineering

Due to recent development of metagenomic and microbial ecology, the plant microbiome has been in the spotlight as an essential player for integrated plant protection. A complex collection of organisms known as the phytobiome inhabit each part of the plant-roots (rhizosphere), leaves (phyllosphere), and internal tissues (endosphere) [71, 122]. These microbiota participate in plant growth, immunity, and resistance to pathogens as well as insect pests. Microbiome engineering is the modification of these communities for the desired community structure with strategies such as microbial inoculants, synthetic consortia, and soil amendments to stimulate beneficials and antagonize harmful microbes [29]. For instance, Bacillus subtilis and *Trichoderma harzianum* are recognized to elicit systemic resistance in plant towards foliar pathogens and nematodes. Similarly, certain root-associated bacteria can interfere with insect larval development by altering plant volatile profiles or producing anti-insect metabolites [101]. The future of IPP may involve designing crop-specific microbiomes that provide consistent and durable protection under field conditions. Emerging research also explores how microbiome shifts can be monitored using DNA-based biosensors, enabling dynamic, microbiome-informed plant protection strategies [13].

Molecular Diagnostics and Biosensors

The fast and reliable detection of pests and pathogens is essential for a prompt IPP response and molecular diagnostics plays an important role. Technologies, such as quantitative PCR (qPCR), loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP), and CRISPR-based diagnostics (e.g., SHERLOCK and DETECTR), enable sensitive and specific detection of the target organisms directly in plant tissues, soil or insect vectors [70]. These approaches can potentially be developed into field-deployable technologies that provide results within minutes to hours, significantly reducing the time from detection to mitigation. With the advancement of nanotechnology, nanometer biosensors (including electrochemical, optical and fluorescence-based sensors) would be emerging as a technology for on-off (real-time) pathogen/pest toxin monitoring. For example, a biosensor using graphene can precisely detect the Xanthomonas, or aphid-secreted, proteins [40].

Functional Genomics and Host-Pathogen Interaction Studies

Knowledge of the molecular crosstalk of plants with their attackers is a prerequisite to establish resistance strategies with high durability. Systems genomics methods, such as transcriptomics, proteomics and metabolomics, are applied to examine gene expression changes in plant and pathogen upon infection or insect herbivory. These obser-vations have been used to target genes for manipulation for enhanced resistance, i.e., host susceptibility (S) genes and pathogen/pest virulence genes [102]. For instance, silencing of SWEET gene promoters in rice leads to repression of bacterial blight spreading and by manipulating jasmonic acid and s licilic acid pathways the defence against insects and fungi is modulated. In addition, progress in effector biology means that researchers can now directly screen plant germplasm for resistance to individual pathogen effectors, accelerating breeding programs. These molecular insights are increasingly being translated into IPP strategies, particularly when combined with marker-assisted selection or genome editing [30].

Sustainable Practices within Integrated Plant Protection (IPP)

Biological Control Agents

Biological control agents are one of the prominent of the sustainable IPP approach, providing an environmental-friendly alternative to chemical pesticides through use of natural enemies of pests and pathogens. These may be predators (e.g., lady beetles, lacewings), parasitoids (e.g., Trichogramma spp., Encarsia spp.) and beneficial microorganisms (Trichoderma spp., Bacillus subtilis and Pseudomonas fluorescens [31, 103]. Such organisms control pests or diseases by direct consumption, parasitism, competition and/or the induction of systemic resistance in plants. For example, *Trichoderma harzianum* is commonly applied to suppress classically soil-borne fungal pathogens such as Rhizoctonia and Fusarium and *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) produces insecticidal proteins against lepidopteran larvae [104]. They are increasingly being used in organic and integrated farming systems, partly because of mass production, formulation improvements, and availability. Scientists like Dr. Zakiya Siddiqui (India) and institutions such as CABI and ICAR have contributed significantly to mainstreaming biocontrol in IPP programs worldwide [4, 121].

Botanical and Microbial Pesticides

Botanical and microbial pesticides play a crucial role in biopesticides due to their eco-friendly nature and effectiveness against various pests and diseases. Botanical pesticides, derived from plants like neem, pyrethrum, and derris, disrupt insect activities such as feeding and reproduction while also possessing antifungal and antibacterial properties [105]. Neem-based solutions, containing azadirachtin, have shown success in combating whiteflies, aphids, and fungal infections like Alternaria. On the other hand, microbial pesticides like *Metarhizium anisopliae*, *Beauveria bassiana*, and entomopathogenic nematodes target specific insect pests while causing minimal harm to beneficial organisms. These products break down quickly without leaving harmful residues, making them safe to use alongside other pest control methods. The increasing governmental support, rise in bio-certifications, and consumer demand for pesticide-free produce are driving the adoption of these sustainable pest management strategies [14, 39].

Habitat Management and Cultural Practices

Habitat management and cultural practices are essential components of Integrated Pest Management (IPP) [32]. These practices involve modifying the agroecosystem to make it less favourable for pest and pathogen development [106]. Some effective strategies include:

- **Crop Rotation:** Alternating between host and non-host crops breaks pest and pathogen life cycles.
- **Intercropping and Mixed Cropping:** These practices reduce the monoculture effect, which can lead to pest build-up.
- **Trap Cropping:** Using decoy crops like mustard to attract pests away from the main crop can significantly reduce pest pressure.
- **Adjusting Planting Dates:** Changing planting dates, increasing plant diversity, and maintaining buffer zones or hedgerows provide habitats for natural enemies and help reduce pest immigration.
- **Sanitation Practices:** Removing diseased plant debris and solarizing nursery beds lower primary inoculum sources. These methods are cost-effective, farmer-friendly, and align with agroecological principles, making them crucial for smallholder-based IPP programs [62].

Use of Resistant Varieties

Another effective strategy in sustainable plant protection is deploying pest-and disease-resistant crop varieties [107]. This approach reduces reliance on chemical inputs and includes techniques such as:

- **Conventional Breeding and Molecular Techniques:** Developing cultivars with resistance genes against specific pests and pathogens.
- **Marker-Assisted Selection (MAS) and Genomic Selection:** Accelerating the development of resistant varieties by targeting known resistance loci.
- **Enhancing Resistance Durability:** This can be achieved through gene pyramiding and the use of quantitative resistance traits. Institutions like IRRI, CIMMYT, and national agricultural research systems play a pivotal role in releasing region-specific resistant varieties.

Incorporating these resistant cultivars into IPP systems not only reduces environmental impact but also empowers farmers to proactively manage crop health [33].

Soil Health and Organic Amendments

Maintaining soil health through organic amendments and conservation agriculture is crucial for preventive IPP measures. Practices such as applying compost, green manures, biochar, and vermicompost help enhance soil microbial diversity, suppress soil-borne diseases and improve nutrient uptake, root health, and increase plant resistance to biotic stress [15].

Additionally, using biofertilizers containing nitrogen-fixing and phosphorus-solubilizing bacteria further supports soil health and sustainable plant protection efforts [108, 120].

Global Case Studies in Integrated Plant Protection (IPP)

Region	Crop/System	IPPs Employed	Technologies/Practices	Impact/Outcome
Asia (India, Philippines)	Rice	Pest and disease IPP	Pheromone traps, drone surveillance, resistant varieties (e.g., IR64), biocontrol agents	Reduced plant hopper outbreaks; improved early detection and yield stability
Asia (India)	Sugarcane	Integrated pest control	Yellow sticky traps, predator release (*Chrysoperla*), varietal rotation, trash mulching	Lowered mealybug and borer incidence; reduced pesticide use
Africa (Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana)	Maize	Fall armyworm IPP	Mobile apps (PlantVillage Nuru), satellite data, pheromone traps, push-pull cropping	Enhanced scouting and early warning; 30-50% yield recovery
Europe (Italy, France)	Vineyards	Grape IPP	Disease pressure maps, automated fungicide spraying, weather-driven DSS, pheromone disruption	Reduced fungicide applications by 30-50%; better mildew control
North America (USA)	Apple and Peach Orchards	Pest and disease monitoring	Mating disruption for codling moth, weather-based models, mechanical pruning	Lower fruit damage; reduced need for broad-spectrum insecticides
South America (Brazil)	Soybean	Integrated soybean disease management	GIS mapping of *Phakopsora* (Asian soybean rust), predictive modelling, resistant cultivars	Targeted fungicide use; improved resistance stewardship
South Asia (Bangladesh)	Vegetables (brinjal, tomato)	Bt and biocontrol IPP	Bt brinjal, neem-based biopesticides, Trichoderma soil application	Increased yield and reduced pesticide spray frequency
East Asia (China)	Cotton	Pest-resistance IPP	Bt cotton, IPM education, drone-based monitoring, predator conservation	60-80% reduction in pesticide use over 15 years
Middle East (Israel)	Tomato	Virus-vector control	Screen houses, insect-proof nets, sticky cards, precision irrigation	Suppressed Tomato yellow leaf curl virus; enhanced fruit quality
Africa (Ethiopia, Tanzania)	Coffee	Integrated coffee IPP	Shade tree use, fungal biopesticides, pest forecasting models	Lowered coffee berry borer incidence and fungal infections
Europe (Netherlands)	Greenhouse crops	Precision IPP	AI-based pest recognition, biocontrol release (Encarsia, Phytoseiulus), climate control	Pesticide-free tomato and cucumber production in controlled environments
South America (Peru)	Potato	Andean potato weevil and late blight control	Trap crops, community field monitoring, resistant landraces	Sustained yields in smallholder systems; traditional knowledge integration
Southeast Asia (Vietnam, Thailand)	Rice-Shimp farming interface	Agro-ecological IPP	Rice-duck systems, natural enemy conservation, minimal chemical use	Balanced pest suppression in integrated aquaculture-agriculture zones

Challenges and Limitations in Integrated Plant Protection (IPP)

Data Integration and Interoperability

The success of IPP relies on integrating diverse datasets such as climate variables, pest and disease surveillance, soil health, and crop phenology. However, these data often come from different sources and formats, creating significant interoperability challenges [34]. Many platforms operate in isolation, making it hard to harmonize and analyse data in real time for actionable insights. The lack of standardized protocols and open data frameworks hinders seamless data exchange among researchers, extension agents, and farmers, limiting the effectiveness of decision-support systems [63].

Farmer Adoption and Training

Despite the benefits of IPP, smallholder farmers in many developing regions struggle to adopt it due to limited access to knowledge, affordable technologies, and credit facilities. Training programs are often inadequate or not tailored to local languages and cultural contexts, reducing farmer confidence in new methods [109]. Additionally, the upfront costs of digital tools, biocontrol agents, or resistant varieties can be prohibitive. Without robust extension support and participatory learning platforms, adoption remains slow, perpetuating the gap between research innovations and field implementation [16].

Resistance Development

The capacity of pests and pathogens to develop resistance to control measures poses a continuous threat to IPP sustainability. Overreliance on a single strategy accelerates resistance emergence, as seen with herbicide-resistant weeds and insecticide-resistant aphids. Monitoring resistance requires extensive surveillance and diagnostics that are often underfunded. To address this challenge, IPP should prioritize rotating control methods, using refuges, and deploying multi-tactic strategies to delay resistance development and maintain long-term efficacy [64, 119].

Infrastructure and Technology Access

Advanced IPP tools require reliable infrastructure like electricity, internet connectivity, and laboratories. However, many rural areas lack such infrastructure, hindering the deployment of precision technologies. Maintenance and calibration also require technical expertise that may not be readily available locally. These limitations impede IPP scalability and call for low-tech or hybrid solutions that balance sophistication with accessibility [110].

Environmental and Non-Target Effects

Even with IPP's goal to minimize ecological disruption, some control measures may inadvertently harm beneficial organisms or ecosystems. For example, broad-spectrum biopesticides or poorly managed biological agents can reduce populations of pollinators, natural enemies, or soil microbiota essential for crop health. Environmental conditions like temperature and humidity can also influence the efficacy and safety of biological controls. Careful risk assessment and monitoring are essential but often under-prioritized in implementation programs [65].

Economic and Market Constraints

The economic viability of IPP depends on market incentives, supply chain efficiency, and access to inputs. In many regions, unreliable supply of quality biocontrol agents or resistant seeds limits farmers' ability to adopt IPP. Market demand for sustainably produced crops is still emerging, and farmers may face price penalties or lack premium markets for reduced pesticide produce. Moreover, fluctuating commodity prices can discourage investments in IPP practices that have longer-term payoffs rather than immediate gains [111, 98].

Policy and Regulatory Barriers

Regulatory frameworks for biopesticides, genetically engineered crops, and novel IPP technologies vary widely across countries and can be restrictive or slow to adapt. Complex registration procedures and high compliance costs deter innovation and commercialization [38]. In some cases, policies favour chemical pesticide use due to established industries and subsidies, limiting the uptake of sustainable alternatives. Harmonization of regulations and incentives aligned with IPP principles is essential to create enabling environments for integrated approaches [66, 118].

Climate Change and Unpredictability

Climate change introduces new challenges by altering pest and pathogen distribution, life cycles, and interactions with crops. Unpredictable weather events such as droughts or floods can exacerbate crop stress and susceptibility, undermining control efforts. Changing climates also affect the efficacy of biological agents and pesticide degradation rates. IPP systems must therefore be adaptive, incorporating climate modelling and flexible management plans to respond to emerging threats in dynamic agroecosystems [112].

Socio-cultural and Behavioural Factors

Farmers' beliefs, traditions, and risk perceptions strongly influence IPP adoption. In some communities, skepticism toward scientific methods or preference for conventional pesticide use persists. Gender dynamics also affect access to resources and information, with women often marginalized in training and decision-making. Effective IPP implementation requires culturally sensitive approaches, participatory engagement, and empowerment strategies to align innovations with local contexts and values [113, 65].

Research and Knowledge Gaps

Although molecular, ecological, and technological advances are accelerating, significant gaps remain in understanding complex plant-pest-pathogen-environment interactions. Research on multi-trophic interactions, microbiome functions, and long-term field trials of IPP interventions is limited [35, 116]. There is also a need for socio-economic studies assessing the cost-benefit of IPP strategies across diverse farming systems. Closing these knowledge gaps requires interdisciplinary collaboration, increased funding, and open data sharing to translate science into practical, scalable solutions [5].

Future Directions in Integrated Plant Protection (IPP)

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) are transforming IPP by enabling ultra-precise prediction and diagnosis of pest and disease outbreaks. Advanced algorithms analyze vast datasets from sensor networks, satellite imagery, weather stations, and historical crop health records to identify patterns invisible to human observers [67]. These predictive models can forecast pest population surges or disease epidemics days or weeks in advance, allowing targeted and timely interventions. AI-driven image recognition tools also support automated field scouting, reducing labour costs and increasing accuracy. As these technologies mature, integrating AI with decision support systems will optimize input use and minimize environmental impact, propelling IPP into a new era of precision and sustainability [114].

Citizen Science and Crowdsourced Surveillance
Leveraging the collective power of farmers and citizen scientists via mobile apps and crowdsourcing platforms is a promising avenue to enhance IPP data quality and responsiveness. Platforms like PlantVillage and EpiCollect enable users to report pest sightings, disease symptoms, and environmental conditions in real time, creating rich georeferenced datasets. This democratized surveillance strengthens early warning systems, facilitates rapid outbreak detection, and fosters community engagement. Crowdsourced data also helps researchers calibrate models for diverse agroecological zones and tailor localized management recommendations. Empowering farmers as active contributors increases adoption and trust in IPP strategies, bridging the gap between research and practice [17].

Integrated Education Models
The future of IPP depends on an integrated educational framework that dissolves traditional boundaries between plant pathology and entomology. Agricultural universities and training institutes are increasingly adopting interdisciplinary curricula that combine molecular biology, ecology, data science, and agronomy to produce crop protection professionals capable of holistic problem-solving [37]. Experiential learning, field-based training, and the use of digital simulators foster critical thinking and adaptive management skills. Equipping the next generation with expertise in both pest and disease management, as well as proficiency in emerging precision agriculture technologies, will ensure that IPP continues to evolve to meet the challenges of modern agriculture [68].

Advances in Genomic and Biotechnological Tools
Emerging biotechnologies such as CRISPR gene editing, RNA interference (RNAi), and synthetic biology hold immense potential for revolutionizing IPP by creating pest- and disease-resistant crops and biocontrol agents with high specificity. These tools enable precise modifications to plant genomes or the targeted suppression of pest and pathogen genes, minimizing non-target effects and environmental risks. In parallel, microbiome engineering techniques are being developed to enhance plant resilience by manipulating beneficial microbial communities. The integration of these advanced biotechnologies into IPP frameworks promises more durable and sustainable crop protection solutions tailored to specific agroecosystems [115].

Climate-Resilient IPP Strategies
With climate change accelerating the unpredictability of pest and disease dynamics, future IPP must incorporate climate-resilient approaches [69]. This includes developing pest and pathogen forecasting models that incorporate climate projections, breeding climate-adapted resistant crop varieties, and deploying diversified cropping systems to buffer against extreme weather. Additionally, integrating water management and soil health practices enhances overall agroecosystem resilience. Adaptive IPP systems will rely heavily on real-time data, flexible decision-support tools, and local stakeholder engagement to dynamically respond to evolving threats under changing climatic conditions [18].

Policy Integration and Global Collaboration
The global nature of pest and pathogen threats demands coordinated policy frameworks and international collaboration to support IPP. Future directions emphasize harmonizing regulatory policies for biopesticides, genetically engineered crops, and digital agriculture tools to accelerate innovation while ensuring safety. Strengthening cross-border surveillance networks, sharing best practices, and investing in capacity-building programs in developing countries will enhance IPP adoption globally. Public-private partnerships and multilateral initiatives can mobilize resources for research, extension, and infrastructure development, ensuring equitable access to IPP benefits and contributing to global food security goals [6, 36].

Conclusion
Innovations in Integrated Plant Protection (IPP) is at a significant juncture where it balances classical practices with modern technologies due to the multifaceted demands of contemporary agriculture. The sibling disciplines of plant pathology and entomology can now be integrated within the precision agriculture paradigm and IPP can effectively enhance global food system protection IPP integrates and strengthens food system protection against unpredictable pests, diseases, and environmental deterioration. This approach leverages modern sensor networks, remote sensing, AI analytics, genomics, and other technologies enabling timely and accurate environmentally-friendly actions that are ecologically sensitive. Data integration, adoption by farmers, integrating diverse technologies, and infrastructure fragmentation pose daunting issues but the relentless work of researchers, policymakers, and farmer communities is solving these challenges more and more every day. In unison with these efforts, advanced knowledge exchange and adaptive management is helping to build a reliable, smart holistic crop protection system balancing productivity, ecological integrity, and economic health at a global level.

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