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Purdue research team wants to harness AI to secure corn crops from pathogenic threats

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Rusty Halvorson
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(Photo: Purdue University)

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — A research team at Purdue University's colleges of Agriculture and Engineering aims to ensure the security of the nation's corn crops by using artificial intelligence as an early warning system.

The team is using cutting-edge technological advances and research infrastructure to pursue the project with a nine-month, $450,000 contract from the United States Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

Called SignAI, the Purdue project is part of a larger Ag x BTO effort of the DARPA Biological Technologies Office to defend U.S. agriculture against naturally occurring and human-made threats. In a recent forecast, the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicated that 2026 corn exports alone could reach $17.6 billion. Further, food and agriculture support more than 34 million U.S. jobs, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The Purdue project will build on work that is already being done. The U.S. National Science Foundation Engineering Research Center for the Internet of Things for Precision Agriculture (IoT4Ag) was launched in 2020. IoT4Ag is a collaboration among Purdue; the University of Pennsylvania; the University of California, Merced; the University of Florida; and Arizona State University.

A bio-inspired generative AI modeling system will serve as the core of the project. Building on newly developed sensors and existing datasets, the system will process critical data and discern patterns to predict potential pathogenic threats to corn crops.

The researchers will simulate the data flow from these sensors into an algorithm that is under development.

Source: Purdue University Ag Communications

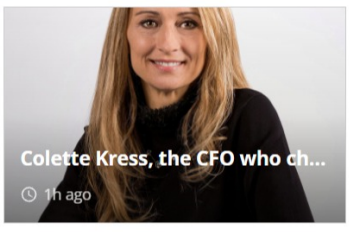
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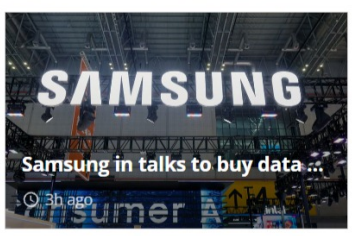
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