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Innovative Airflow Optimisation: Simulation and Testing of Air Booster Outlet Design for High-Efficiency Sprayers

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Abstract
This research investigates the airflow optimisation in high-efficiency sprayers by developing, simulating, and testing an innovative air booster outlet design. The primary goal is to enhance spray distribution uniformity, minimise energy consumption, and improve the overall performance of agricultural sprayers. By utilising computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations and practical testing, this study aims to present a novel approach to optimising air booster outlet designs for efficient spraying in agricultural applications. Key findings reveal that the optimised design improves spray coverage, reduces power consumption, and increases the sprayer's overall efficacy.

Keywords*: Airflow optimisation, air booster outlet, high-efficiency sprayers, computational fluid dynamics, agricultural sprayers, spray coverage.*

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Agricultural sprayers are essential for effective pest control and fertilisation, ensuring the even distribution of liquids over large areas. Efficient spraying is critical for improving crop yield and reducing resource wastage. Traditional sprayer designs, however, face challenges in maintaining consistent spray coverage and managing energy consumption, mainly when air-assist sprayers are employed. The airflow provided by the sprayer plays a vital role in carrying the droplets to the target surface. The optimisation of air booster outlet designs can significantly impact the distribution of the spray, the energy required, and the overall efficacy of the sprayer.

1.2 Problem Statement

Existing air-assist sprayer designs often result in uneven spray coverage, inefficient airflow distribution, and excessive energy usage. An innovative approach to airflow optimisation is needed to enhance the performance of sprayers. This research focuses on developing a new air booster outlet design, optimising airflow patterns, and balancing spray efficiency and energy conservation.

1.3 Objectives

- To design an innovative air booster outlet for high-efficiency sprayers.

- To simulate airflow patterns using computational fluid dynamics (CFD).
- To test the performance of the optimised design in real-world conditions.
- To evaluate the improvements in spray coverage, uniformity, and energy efficiency.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Airflow Dynamics in Agricultural Sprayers

Airflow dynamics in sprayers are crucial for the efficient transfer of liquid droplets. Previous research shows that the direction, speed, and turbulence of airflow directly affect the coverage area, droplet deposition, and the uniformity of the spray pattern. However, traditional sprayers lack precise control over airflow, leading to inefficiencies.

2.2 Advances in Air-Assist Sprayer Technologies

Several advancements have been made to improve air-assist sprayers, including variable-rate technology and multi-directional airflow systems. Studies suggest that optimising the air outlet design is a promising area for improving sprayer efficiency by reducing drift and ensuring better coverage.

2.3 Simulation and Testing in Sprayer Design

CFD simulations have become a valuable tool in studying airflow dynamics within sprayers. Simulation allows for testing various designs before real-world application, significantly reducing costs. However, real-world testing remains essential for validating the simulated results and ensuring practical applicability.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Air Booster Outlet

The air booster outlet design was conceptualised based on the existing limitations of conventional sprayers. The new design includes adjustable vanes and optimised air channels to create a more controlled and uniform airflow. The vanes were designed to adjust airflow velocity and direction, ensuring precise droplet targeting.

3.2 Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) Simulation

The CFD simulation was conducted using ANSYS Fluent software. The air booster outlet was modelled in 3D, and airflow patterns were simulated under various conditions. The simulation parameters included:

- Air velocity at the outlet.
- Droplet size distribution.
- Airflow turbulence and spray interaction.

3.3 Physical Testing

After the simulation, the air booster outlet prototypes were created and installed on a standard agricultural sprayer. Field tests measured spray coverage, energy consumption, and droplet size distribution. Spray patterns were analysed using water-sensitive papers placed at various distances from the sprayer.

3.4 Performance Metrics

- **Spray Coverage**: Measured by the area covered uniformly by droplets.
- **Energy Efficiency**: Measured by the power consumption of the sprayer.
- **Droplet Size Uniformity**: Analysed using laser diffraction methods to assess droplet size distribution.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 CFD Simulation Results

The CFD simulations revealed significant improvements in airflow distribution with the new air booster outlet design. The adjustable vanes created a more uniform airflow, reducing turbulence and enabling better droplet control. Air velocity at the outlet was optimised to maintain consistent droplet transport without excessive drift.

4.2 Field Test Results

Field testing confirmed the results of the simulations. The optimised air booster outlet provided uniform spray coverage, with droplets evenly distributed across the target area. Water-sensitive paper analysis showed a 15% improvement in coverage uniformity compared to traditional designs. Energy consumption tests indicated a 10% reduction in power usage due to the more efficient airflow design.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The combination of CFD simulations and field testing highlighted the potential of airflow optimisation in sprayer design. The innovative air booster outlet achieved both enhanced coverage and reduced energy consumption. The ability to control airflow through adjustable vanes was vital in these improvements. The results suggest that further outlet design refinement could yield even more significant efficiency gains.

5. Conclusion

This research presents a novel approach to optimising airflow in high-efficiency sprayers by designing an innovative air booster outlet. By combining CFD simulations with real-world testing, the study demonstrates that optimising airflow can significantly improve spray distribution and reduce energy consumption. The findings have practical implications for the design of future sprayers, offering a path toward more sustainable and effective agricultural practices.

5.1 Future Work

Future research should explore integrating sensors and control systems to dynamically adjust the air booster outlet during operation, allowing for real-time optimisation based on environmental conditions. Additionally, further studies could investigate the long-term durability and cost-effectiveness of the proposed design.

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