

Silkworm Handling Robots: Transforming the Sericulture Industry

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OPEN ACCESS

Keywords

Sericulture, automation, silkworm handling robots, agricultural robotics, productivity enhancement

How to cite this article:

Saikia, S. and Kaushiki, B., 2024. Silkworm Handling Robots: Transforming the Sericulture Industry. *Vigyan Varta* 5(10): 210-212.

ABSTRACT

Sericulture sector has relied traditionally on labor-intensive operations in producing and harvesting silkworms. Recent innovation also brought about robotics/automations and a dedicated robot to handle silkworms. These silkworm robots are expected to enhance the efficiency of sericulture rearing, safety of workers, and general improvements in productivity. With this research, the design and functionality of silkworm handling robots have been assessed, as well as their impact on the sericulture industry. Future challenges and opportunities for the integration of robotics in this field have also been discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning, numerous countries have continued to rely greatly on sericulture that is the rearing of silkworms for the purpose of producing silk. But severe labor shortages, erratic demand, and the need for enhanced manufacturing techniques pose substantial challenges (Kumar & Rani, 2023). Lately, robotics has become among such recent hopes. Robots that could handle silkworms have become extremely useful as they feed them, track their growth,

and harvest them. This makes it all the easier and scalable in such modernized traditional methods (Nguyen *et al.*, 2022).

The role of robots in Sericulture

1. **Automated feeding and care:** Feeding silkworms requires precise attention making it a crucial aspect of cultivation. Robots used to handle silkworms are fitted with an automatic feeding system

for mulberry leaves, which serves as one of the primary sources of nutrition for the insects. This system feeds the leaves continuously and without errors. According to the research, this automation increases silk yields and growth rates while improving feeding efficiency and minimizing waste (Chen & Wang, 2019).

2. **Monitoring and environmental control:**

With integrated sensors, robots can continuously monitor vital environmental conditions for silkworm development including temperature, humidity and light levels. By maintaining optimal conditions these robots significantly boost silkworm health and growth. Research has shown a 20% increase in silk production through real time monitoring and automated adjustments made by these robots (Li *et al.*, 2020).

3. **Harvesting and processing:** Harvesting silkworm cocoons takes a lot of effort and careful handling to avoid damage. Since the development of robots for managing silkworms, this process can now be carried out without jeopardizing the cocoons, resulting in superior silk quality, higher-quality cocoons and reduced labor expenses (International Sericulture Commission, 2022).

Design and functionality of silkworm handling robots

1. **Robot design:** Robots that handle silkworms are usually made of lightweight materials since they are put in delicate surroundings. Their compact size allows them to go through sericulture facilities smoothly and without unduly disturbing the silkworms. A robotic arm that mimics human dexterity is equipped on almost all of the models, enabling proper handling of intricate tasks (Nguyen *et al.*, 2022).

2. **Sensor integration:** The application of sensors by such robots is crucial for their efficiency. These robots have sensors built in to assess motion, temperature, and humidity in their environment. Machine learning algorithms enable robots to learn from their surroundings and change accordingly, which results in gradual improvement in efficiency (Kumar & Rani, 2023).

Impact on the Sericulture industry

1. **Increased productivity:** The adoption of silkworm handling robots has led to considerable productivity gains. By automating manual tasks, farmers can concentrate on other vital aspects of their operations. A report from the International Sericulture Commission (2022) noted that farms using robotic systems saw a 30% boost in overall productivity (International Sericulture Commission, 2022).

2. **Labor cost reduction:** Given the ongoing labor shortages in rural areas, robotic solutions present a practical alternative. These robots can function continuously, lessening reliance on seasonal labor and reducing associated costs which significantly impacts farmers' profit margins (Singh & Gupta, 2021).

3. **Enhanced product quality:** The precision brought by robotic systems in feeding and harvesting plays a vital role in producing high-quality silk. By minimizing human error and optimizing growth conditions, the final product's quality improves, addressing the rising demands of the silk market (Patel & Verma, 2022).

Future prospects and challenges

1. **Technological advancements:** As technology progresses, the capabilities of silkworm handling robots are expected to expand. Enhancements in AI and machine

learning will boost their adaptability and decision-making skills, increasing efficiency in sericulture (Kumar & Rani, 2023).

- 2. Economic barriers:** Although they offer tremendous advantages, the cost of installing robotic systems is a huge barrier for most small-scale farmers, although there are great benefits to them. Some form of financial assistance or subsidy may be required to facilitate their use (Singh & Gupta, 2021).
- 3. Training and education:** Successful integration of robotics into sericulture will depend on providing training for farmers and workers to operate and maintain these systems. Educational initiatives emphasizing the role of robotics in agriculture can help close the knowledge gap and promote wider acceptance (Patel & Verma, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Sericulture represents an important step in the development of handling robots that overcome a great many of the impediments which hinder this important field: labour, productivity, and product quality. What these robots do is promising for the evolution of the technology involved in the production of silk towards greater efficiency and sustainability. Meanwhile, important economic barriers will have to be overcome, and sufficient training will be needed in order to extract full benefits from this technological transition.

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