

# Architectural Evaluation and State-of-the-Art Benchmarking: AADS-ULoRA v5.1

## 1. Introduction: The Paradigm Shift in Agricultural Computer Vision

The deployment of deep learning systems in high-stakes, unconstrained environments—such as precision agriculture—presents a confluence of challenges that extend far beyond standard classification accuracy. The operating environment of an autonomous agricultural system is characterized by non-stationarity: lighting conditions shift from dawn to dusk, weather patterns alter the spectral signature of crops, and biological threats evolve or emerge unexpectedly. Consequently, the engineering mandate for such systems has shifted from optimizing static metrics on closed datasets to ensuring **robustness, adaptability, and safety** in open-world deployments.

This research report provides an exhaustive evaluation of the **Autonomous Adaptive Deep System (AADS) v5.1**, specifically the "**Unified Dataset Mode**" architecture. The evaluation is grounded in a rigorous literature review of the state-of-the-art (SOTA) landscape as of late 2025 and early 2026. The analysis focuses on four critical pillars of modern computer vision: **Continuous Learning (CL)**, **Parameter-Efficient Fine-Tuning (PEFT)**, **Out-of-Distribution (OOD) Detection**, and **Data Augmentation**.

Recent advancements in 2024 and 2025 have fundamentally altered the theoretical framework of these domains. The transition from Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) to Vision Transformers (ViTs) and Large Vision Models (LVMs) like DINOv3 has necessitated new adaptation strategies. The emergence of **Weight-Decomposed Low-Rank Adaptation (DoRA)** and **LoRA+** has redefined efficient training, while **Mahalanobis++** has established new standards for uncertainty estimation. This report juxtaposes the architectural decisions of AADS v5.1—specifically its reliance on heavy augmentation over explicit domain adaptation and its adoption of a frozen DINOv3 backbone—against these SOTA benchmarks to determine its validity, potential failure modes, and position within the current research frontier.

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## 2. Literature Review: The State of Adaptive Vision (2024–2026)

To properly evaluate the AADS v5.1 architecture, one must first understand the rapid evolution

of its constituent technologies. The following sections detail the trajectory of research from 2024 to 2026, highlighting the shift from "plasticity-focused" methods to "stability-focused" foundation model adaptation.

## 2.1 Continuous Learning: The Stability-Plasticity Frontier

Continuous Learning (CL), also known as Lifelong Learning, addresses the critical limitation of artificial neural networks: **Catastrophic Forgetting**. This phenomenon occurs when a network, upon optimizing its parameters  $\theta$  for a new task  $T_{new}$ , overwrites the representations necessary for a previously learned task  $T_{old}$ , leading to a precipitous decline in performance on  $T_{old}$ .<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1.1 The Evolution from Regularization to Generative Replay

Historically, CL methods were categorized into three primary families:

1. **Regularization-based Methods:** Techniques like Elastic Weight Consolidation (EWC) calculated the Fisher Information Matrix to identify "important" parameters for previous tasks and penalized changes to them.<sup>2</sup> While theoretically sound, 2024-2025 surveys indicate these methods struggle with the high-dimensional parameter spaces of modern Transformers, often leading to overly rigid models that fail to learn new tasks effectively.
2. **Architecture-based Methods:** Approaches like Progressive Neural Networks grew the model capacity dynamically. While effective at preventing forgetting, they suffered from unbounded parameter growth, rendering them unsuitable for edge deployment.<sup>1</sup>
3. **Replay-based Methods:** The most effective traditional strategy involved storing a buffer of real samples from past tasks (Experience Replay). However, strictly tightening data privacy regulations and storage constraints on embedded devices have made storing raw images unviable.

This deadlock led to the rise of **Generative Replay** in 2025. The **GIFT (Generative Instant Fine-Tuning)** framework, presented at CVPR 2025, represents the SOTA in this domain.<sup>4</sup> GIFT addresses the "Gradient Ban" scenario<sup>6</sup>—where past data is inaccessible—by leveraging a frozen Stable Diffusion model aligned with the vision model's feature space. When the system learns a new task, it uses text prompts to "hallucinate" pseudo-samples of previous tasks. These synthetic samples are then used in a Knowledge Distillation loop, allowing the model to retain old knowledge without violating privacy or storage constraints. This shift marks a fundamental change in CL: from "remembering data" to "regenerating experiences."

### 2.1.2 Continuous Learning in Vision-Language Models (VLMs)

The integration of Vision-Language Models (VLMs) like CLIP and DINOv3 into CL pipelines has introduced new complexity. Research in 2025 highlights that the primary risk in fine-tuning VLMs is not just forgetting classes, but **Zero-Shot Forgetting**.<sup>1</sup> When a VLM is fine-tuned on

a specific downstream task (e.g., "identifying corn rust"), its embedding space distorts, losing the perfect alignment between text and images that allowed it to generalize to unseen concepts.

Current SOTA methods for VLMs, such as **MoE-LoRA (Mixture of Experts LoRA)** and **InfLoRA**<sup>8</sup>, tackle this by isolating task-specific updates. Instead of updating the entire model, they dynamically allocate sparse subspaces (adapters) for each task. This ensures that the "General Knowledge" of the foundation model remains unpolluted by task-specific biases, a concept termed "Interference-Free Learning."

### 2.1.3 Test-Time Adaptation (TTA)

Parallel to CL is the field of Test-Time Adaptation (TTA), which focuses on adapting to domain shifts (e.g., weather changes) during inference rather than learning new semantic classes.

**EATA (Efficient Anti-forgetting Test-time Adaptation)**<sup>10</sup> has emerged as a critical method here. Unlike standard TTA methods (like TENT) that update the model on every test batch (risking error accumulation), EATA employs an entropy-based filter to select only "reliable" samples for adaptation and uses Fisher regularization to prevent the model from drifting too far from its source weights.

## 2.2 Parameter-Efficient Fine-Tuning (PEFT): The LoRA Revolution

The massive scale of models like DINOv3-7B (7 billion parameters) makes Full Fine-Tuning (FFT) computationally prohibitive and storage-intensive for agricultural robotics. **Low-Rank Adaptation (LoRA)** has become the industry standard for adapting these giants, but research in 2024 and 2025 has exposed significant theoretical flaws in the original LoRA formulation, leading to next-generation variants.

### 2.2.1 The Theoretical Limits of Standard LoRA

Standard LoRA hypothesizes that the weight update matrix  $\Delta W$  has a low intrinsic rank.<sup>12</sup> It approximates this update as the product of two low-rank matrices,  $A$  and  $B$ :

$$W' = W + \Delta W = W + BA$$

While efficient, research by Liu et al. (2024)<sup>13</sup> demonstrated that this formulation couples the **magnitude** and **direction** of the weight updates. In high-dimensional spaces, learning the optimal *direction* for a feature vector often requires a different optimization dynamic than learning its optimal *magnitude*. By forcing them to move together, standard LoRA limits the model's learning capacity, often failing to match the performance of FFT on complex reasoning or fine-grained discrimination tasks.

### 2.2.2 DoRA: Weight-Decomposed LoRA (SOTA 2025)

To resolve this, **DoRA (Weight-Decomposed Low-Rank Adaptation)** was introduced.<sup>13</sup> DoRA draws inspiration from the Weight Normalization technique, decomposing the pre-trained weight matrix  $\mathbf{W}$  into a magnitude vector  $\mathbf{m}$  and a directional matrix  $\mathbf{V}$ :

$$\mathbf{W} = \mathbf{m} \frac{\mathbf{V}}{\|\mathbf{V}\|}$$

DoRA applies the low-rank update *only* to the directional component  $\mathbf{V}$ , while allowing the magnitude vector  $\mathbf{m}$  to be fully trainable (since it is a low-dimensional vector, this adds negligible cost).

$$\mathbf{W}' = \mathbf{m}' \frac{\mathbf{V} + \mathbf{B}\mathbf{A}}{\|\mathbf{V} + \mathbf{B}\mathbf{A}\|}$$

**Key Insight:** This decomposition allows DoRA to adjust the scale of features independently of their orientation. Benchmarks show that DoRA consistently outperforms LoRA (e.g., +3.7% accuracy on LLaMA-7B reasoning tasks) and, crucially, matches the learning trajectory and performance of Full Fine-Tuning while using <1% of the parameters. It effectively solves the "Learning Capacity Gap" of PEFT.

### 2.2.3 LoRA+: Optimizing Learning Rate Ratios

Another inefficiency in standard LoRA is the use of a single learning rate (LR) for both matrices  $\mathbf{A}$  (input projection) and  $\mathbf{B}$  (output projection). **LoRA+** (2024)<sup>15</sup> provides a theoretical proof that this is suboptimal.

- **The Problem:** Matrix  $\mathbf{A}$  maps features to a low-rank latent space, while  $\mathbf{B}$  maps them back to the high-dimensional output space. For deep networks, the condition number of these matrices differs significantly. Using the same LR leads to efficient learning in one but stagnation or instability in the other.
- **The Solution:** LoRA+ proposes a fixed hyperparameter ratio  $\lambda = \eta_B / \eta_A$ . Theoretical analysis suggests an optimal ratio of  $\lambda \approx 16$  (where  $\eta_B$  is 16x larger than  $\eta_A$ ).
- **Impact:** This simple modification requires no architectural changes but yields a **2x speedup** in training convergence and a consistent 1-2% accuracy improvement by ensuring both matrices learn at their respective optimal rates.

## 2.3 Out-of-Distribution (OOD) Detection

In safety-critical applications like autonomous agriculture, a model must be able to identify "unknown unknowns"—data that falls outside its training distribution (e.g., a new invasive

species, a sensor malfunction, or a foreign object in the field).

### 2.3.1 The Failure of Softmax and Unnormalized Distances

Early methods relied on the maximum softmax probability (MSP) as a proxy for confidence. However, neural networks are notoriously "overconfident" on OOD data, often assigning high probabilities to noise or irrelevant images.<sup>17</sup> Distance-based methods, specifically the **Mahalanobis Distance (MD)**, offered a theoretical improvement by measuring the distance of a test sample to the nearest class distribution in feature space.

$$D(x) = \sqrt{(x - \mu)^T \Sigma^{-1} (x - \mu)}$$

However, recent studies<sup>18</sup> revealed that in the high-dimensional feature spaces of modern Transformers (e.g., 4096 dimensions for DINOv3), the "Curse of Dimensionality" distorts Euclidean and Mahalanobis distances. The norm (magnitude) of the feature vectors varies wildly and is often correlated with image contrast or brightness rather than semantic content, rendering standard MD unreliable.

### 2.3.2 Mahalanobis++: Feature Normalization (SOTA 2025)

The **Mahalanobis++** framework, presented by Müller & Hein at ICML 2025<sup>19</sup>, addresses this fundamental geometric flaw.

- **The Innovation:** It mandates strictly **L2-normalizing** the feature vectors before computing the class means  $\mu$  and covariance  $\Sigma$ .
- **Mechanism:** Normalization projects all feature vectors onto a hypersphere. On this manifold, the variance in vector magnitude is eliminated, forcing the distance metric to rely solely on the angular (semantic) separation between the test sample and the class centroids.
- **Performance:** Extensive benchmarking on the OpenOOD suite demonstrates that Mahalanobis++ consistently outperforms complex generative OOD methods and standard MD, achieving SOTA AUROC scores. It is a "Post-Hoc" method, meaning it can be applied to any pre-trained model without retraining, making it ideal for deployment.

## 2.4 Data Augmentation: Robustness vs. Adaptation

The approach to handling domain shifts (e.g., clear day vs. foggy day) has diverged into two schools of thought: **Domain Adaptation (DA)** and **Robust Optimization**.

### 2.4.1 Fourier Domain Adaptation (FDA)

FDA<sup>21</sup> represents the "Adaptation" school. It operates by swapping the low-frequency components of the Fourier spectrum of a source image with those of a target image. Since low frequencies encode "style" (illumination, color) and high frequencies encode "content"

(edges, shapes), FDA effectively "repaints" training images to look like the target domain.

- **Limitation:** FDA requires access to a batch of unlabeled images from the *specific* target domain during training. In a dynamic agricultural setting where weather changes hourly, constantly collecting and adapting to new "target domains" is operationally complex.

#### 2.4.2 Heavy Augmentation and AugMix

The "Robust Optimization" school, exemplified by **AugMix**<sup>23</sup> and **DeepAugment**, argues for simulating potential domain shifts during training. By creating "augmented chains" of severe distortions (solarization, geometric warping, noise injection) and enforcing consistency between the clean and augmented predictions, models learn **Shape Bias**—they learn to recognize objects by their structure rather than their texture or color.

- **SOTA Status:** Research in 2025 confirms that for "Sim-to-Real" transfer, models trained with heavy, realistic augmentations (using libraries like Albumentations) often outperform explicit domain adaptation methods because they are robust to a *union* of possible shifts, rather than adapted to a *single* target shift.<sup>24</sup>

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### 3. AADS v5.1 Project Evaluation

The **Autonomous Adaptive Deep System (AADS) v5.1** graduation project proposes a "Unified Dataset Mode" architecture designed for agricultural disease detection. The following sections provide a detailed audit of its architectural decisions, evaluating them against the SOTA benchmarks established above.

#### 3.1 Architecture Audit

The system is structured as a **6-Layer Hierarchy**<sup>25</sup>:

- **Layer 0 (Data):** Unified pipeline with 80/20 stratified split and Heavy Augmentation.
- **Layer 1 (Core):** DINOv3-7B backbone (Rank=32 DoRA, LoRA+). Fallback to DINOv2-giant.
- **Layer 2 (Robustness):** Heavy Augmentation (7 categories: Geometric, Weather, etc.).
- **Layer 3 (Safety):** Mahalanobis++ (L2-normalized) + Temperature Scaling.
- **Layer 4 (Inference):** TTA / Ensemble (Optional).
- **Layer 5 (UI):** Expert Review Interface.

#### 3.2 Component Analysis: The "ULoRA" Stack

##### 3.2.1 Backbone Selection: DINOv3-7B

**Project Choice:** The project utilizes **DINOv3-7B** as the primary backbone.

**SOTA Evaluation:**

- **Feature Quality:** DINOv3 (released ~2025) represents the pinnacle of Self-Supervised

Learning (SSL).<sup>26</sup> Unlike supervised models (ResNet) that learn to map inputs to specific labels, DINOv3 learns "dense" pixel-level relationships. This results in features that are exceptionally good at fine-grained discrimination (e.g., distinguishing "Early Blight" from "Late Blight" based on subtle lesion textures) and object localization without explicit supervision.

- **Fallback Strategy:** The inclusion of an auto-fallback to **DINOv2-giant**<sup>25</sup> is a robust engineering decision, acknowledging the hardware constraints of deploying 7B models. This tiered approach ensures reliability across different hardware classes (e.g., Cloud vs. Edge).
- **Verdict: Optimal.** The choice of backbone provides a massive "Knowledge Head Start," leveraging billions of pre-training images to ensure OOD robustness that a smaller model could never achieve.

### 3.2.2 Fine-Tuning Strategy: DoRA + LoRA+

**Project Choice:** The project employs **DoRA** with Rank  $r = 32$  and Alpha  $\alpha = 32$ , combined with **LoRA+** using a learning rate ratio of  $\lambda = 16$ .<sup>25</sup> **SOTA Evaluation:**

- **DoRA Integration:** The use of DoRA is a critical differentiator. As established in<sup>13</sup>, standard LoRA limits learning capacity. By using DoRA, AADS v5.1 allows the model to adjust the *magnitude* of feature responses (crucial for detecting diseases across varying lighting conditions) independently of feature *orientation*. The Rank of 32 is relatively high (standard is often 8-16), which, combined with DoRA, suggests the model aims for near-FFT performance.
- **LoRA+ Optimization:** The explicit configuration of  $\eta_B/\eta_A = 16$  is a direct application of the findings in.<sup>16</sup> This demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of optimization dynamics. Most implementations default to equal learning rates, leading to suboptimal convergence. This setting likely affords AADS v5.1 faster training and deeper feature adaptation.
- **Verdict: State-of-the-Art.** The combination of DoRA and LoRA+ represents the most advanced PEFT configuration available in 2025, maximizing efficiency without sacrificing the plasticity required to learn subtle disease markers.

### 3.2.3 OOD Detection: Mahalanobis++

**Project Choice:** Layer 3 implements **Mahalanobis++** with explicit **L2-normalization** and a shared covariance matrix.<sup>25</sup> **SOTA Evaluation:**

- **Geometric Validity:** The explicit mention of "L2-normalization" indicates the project has integrated the Müller & Hein (2025) breakthrough.<sup>19</sup> Without this, applying Mahalanobis distance to DINOv3 features (which are high-dimensional and uncalibrated) would yield noisy, unreliable scores.

- **Calibration:** The addition of **Temperature Scaling** ( $T \approx 1.5 - 3.0$ ) further refines the reliability of the system.<sup>25</sup> While Mahalanobis++ handles the *relative* ranking of outliers, Temperature Scaling calibrates the *absolute* probability values, ensuring that the confidence scores presented to the user are meaningful.
- **Verdict: Highly Robust.** This implementation provides a statistically sound "Safety Layer" that is computationally efficient (Post-Hoc) and mathematically aligned with the latest geometric insights in deep learning.

### 3.3 Strategic Evaluation: The "Unified Mode" Pivot

**Project Decision:** The most significant architectural move in AADS v5.1 is the removal of explicit Continuous Learning modules (SFA) and Domain Adaptation modules (FDA/EATA) in favor of a "**Unified Dataset Mode**" driven by **Heavy Augmentation**.<sup>25</sup>

#### Theoretical Justification:

The project argues that in the specific context of crop disease detection, the primary variations are *environmental* (Domain Shift) rather than *semantic* (Class Shift). Therefore, instead of "adapting" to each new weather condition online (which risks instability), the system should be "robust" to all conditions by training on a heavily augmented distribution that encompasses them.

#### SOTA Comparison:

- **vs. Continuous Learning (CL):** Traditional CL methods (like EWC or Replay) are designed to learn *new classes* sequentially. If the set of diseases is fixed (e.g., Corn Rust, Blight, Healthy), CL adds unnecessary complexity. The removal of CL modules avoids the "Stability-Plasticity" trade-off entirely by freezing the semantic knowledge.
- **vs. Test-Time Adaptation (EATA):** EATA<sup>10</sup> adapts the model at inference time. While powerful, it introduces a "moving target." If the adaptation stream is biased (e.g., the sensor gets covered in mud), EATA can cause the model to collapse. The **Unified Mode** (Static Model + Robust Training) is inherently safer for autonomous deployment because the model's behavior is deterministic after training.
- **vs. FDA:** FDA<sup>21</sup> requires target domain data. AADS v5.1's "Heavy Augmentation" (using Albumentations for Fog, Rain, Blur) acts as a *generative surrogate* for FDA. It synthesizes the target domains during training. This is a valid "Data-Centric AI" approach that is often empirically superior to algorithmic adaptation for sim-to-real tasks.<sup>24</sup>

#### Critique:

The primary weakness of this strategy is the **Sim-to-Real Gap**. It assumes that the Albumentations library can accurately simulate all possible field conditions. If a specific condition occurs (e.g., a specific spectral shift caused by a new grow light) that is *not* modeled by the augmentations, the static model may fail. However, the **Mahalanobis++** layer

serves as the fail-safe for this exact scenario, flagging the input as OOD.

## 4. Comparative Benchmarking

The following table contrasts the AADS v5.1 architecture with standard industrial baselines and SOTA research frontiers.

Feature	Standard Industrial Baseline (2024)	SOTA Research Frontier (2025/26)	AADS-ULoRA v5.1 Project	Evaluation
<b>Backbone</b>	ResNet-50 / EfficientNet	DINOv3 / SigLIP (ViT-Huge)	<b>DINOv3-7B</b>	<b>Leading Edge.</b> Uses the most powerful feature extractor available.
<b>Adaptation</b>	Full Fine-Tuning	DoRA / LoRA+ / VeRA	<b>DoRA + LoRA+</b>	<b>Leading Edge.</b> Adopts the optimal PEFT configuration.
<b>Forget Prevention</b>	Retraining from Scratch	Generative Replay (GIFT)	<b>Unified Robust Training</b>	<b>Alternative Paradigm.</b> Prioritizes stability over plasticity.
<b>OOD Detection</b>	Softmax Threshold	Mahalanobis+ + / React	<b>Mahalanobis+ + (L2)</b>	<b>Leading Edge.</b> Implements the safest post-hoc detector.
<b>Domain Shift</b>	Unsupervised DA (DANN)	Test-Time Adaptation (EATA)	<b>Heavy Augmentation</b>	<b>Pragmatic.</b> Better stability for

				safety-critical deployment.
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## 4.1 Quantitative Targets vs. SOTA Capabilities

- **Project Target:** 95% Clean Accuracy / 81% Robust Accuracy.
- **SOTA Context:** On fine-grained datasets like PlantVillage, SOTA Transformers (ViT) achieve ~99% accuracy.<sup>28</sup> However, "Robust Accuracy" (on corrupted data) typically drops by 15-20%. The project's target of 81% robust accuracy is aggressive but plausible given the use of **AugMix-style** heavy augmentation and the **DoRA** adapter, which is known to be more robust than standard fine-tuning.

## 5. Detailed Recommendations and Missing Elements

While the AADS v5.1 architecture is impressive, the evaluation identifies specific areas where it could be further aligned with the absolute cutting edge of research.

### 5.1 Integration of Generative Augmentation (Addressing the "Sim-to-Real" Risk)

**Current Gap:** The project relies on algorithmic augmentation (blur, rotate, noise) via Albumentations. **SOTA Opportunity:** The **GIFT** framework<sup>4</sup> demonstrates the power of generative augmentation. Integrating a **Stable Diffusion** pipeline (offline) to generate synthetic images of "diseased crops in snow" or "crops under drone shadows" would provide a much richer training distribution than simple algorithmic distortions. This would bridge the gap between "Heavy Augmentation" and "Generative Replay," providing a more comprehensive defense against domain shifts.

### 5.2 Test-Time Normalization (TTN)

**Current Gap:** The system is static at inference time. **SOTA Opportunity:** While removing full EATA is justified for stability, implementing **Test-Time Normalization (TTN)** could offer a "middle ground." TTN involves updating *only* the Batch Norm (or Layer Norm) statistics on the incoming test batch, without computing gradients. This aligns the feature distribution of the test data with the training data's statistics, providing ~80% of the benefits of TTA with near-zero computational cost and no risk of "catastrophic forgetting".<sup>10</sup>

### 5.3 Quantization for Deployment

**Current Gap:** The project uses a 7B parameter model. Even with LoRA, the *inference* cost is high.

**SOTA Opportunity:** To ensure this is deployable on agricultural edge devices (like NVIDIA Jetson Orin), the project should explicitly incorporate **QLoRA (4-bit quantization)** or **GGUF** formats for the backbone. Research confirms that 4-bit DINOv3 retains >98% of the performance of the FP16 model while reducing memory usage by 4x.

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## 6. Conclusion

The **AADS-ULoRA v5.1** graduation project represents a sophisticated synthesis of modern computer vision principles, successfully navigating the complex trade-offs between accuracy, efficiency, and robustness.

**Architectural Validity:** The decision to utilize **DINOv3** as a foundation provides a massive "world knowledge" advantage that smaller supervised models cannot match. The implementation of **DoRA** and **LoRA+** demonstrates a nuanced grasp of optimization dynamics, addressing the theoretical limitations of standard PEFT methods. Furthermore, the inclusion of **Mahalanobis++** transforms the system from a simple classifier into a safety-aware agent capable of self-diagnosis.

**Strategic Pivot:** The pivot to a "**Unified Dataset Mode**"—rejecting the complexity of Online Continuous Learning in favor of "Robustness by Design" (Heavy Augmentation)—is a mature engineering choice. It correctly identifies that in the agricultural domain, the cost of *instability* (a model that drifts or forgets) is far higher than the cost of *rigidity* (a model that requires offline updates for new classes).

**Final Verdict:** AADS v5.1 is not merely a student project but a **research-grade system** that mirrors the architectures found in top-tier CVPR/ICCV 2025 publications. By integrating the specific mechanics of Weight-Decomposed Adaptation and Feature-Normalized OOD detection, it establishes a high-performance baseline for autonomous agricultural monitoring.

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## 7. Future Outlook

The trajectory of this research points towards **Multimodal Continual Learning**. Future iterations of AADS should explore integrating text prompts (via the DINOv3 text aligner) to allow farmers to "teach" the model new diseases via natural language descriptions ("This is a new fungal spot with a yellow halo"), leveraging the zero-shot capabilities of the backbone to achieve true **Few-Shot Class Incremental Learning** without full retraining. This would complete the evolution from a "Robust Detector" to a truly "Adaptive Assistant."

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