CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This work bridges the crucial lab-to-field deployment gap by creating an uncertainty-aware domain adaptation framework for automated plant disease detection. Reliable agricultural AI deployment with uncertainty quantification for useful decision-making is made possible by the model's 67.8% accuracy on real-world PlantDoc images and calibrated confidence estimates, which are obtained using ResNet50 with evidential deep learning.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the basis of global food security, which supports approximately 2.5 billion livelihoods worldwide and makes a significant contribution to the economy of developing countries (FAO, 2021). Yet, plant diseases persist as a threat to productivity. Pathological studies show that 20% to 40% loss in yield across major food crops (Sarvary et al., 2019). The traditional detection methods in plant disease mainly depend on visual inspection by agricultural experts. This procedure is limited by subjective interpretation, geographic accessibility issues, and a lack of qualified personnel in rural agricultural areas.

The fusion of computer vision and deep learning technologies presented a transformative opportunity in the agricultural research field. Human-like performance has been achieved by Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), in controlled image classification conditions during visual pattern recognition tasks (Krizhevsky et al., 2012). These technologies provided quick, scalable and affordable solutions for disease detection in the agricultural context. This could open up access to expert-level diagnostics for resource-limited regions.

Despite a huge volume of research and advancements in laboratory-based plant disease classification models, there is still a crucial deployment gap. When applied to real-world field conditions with variable light intensity, complex landscapes, and a variety of other environmental factors, the models trained in controlled lab settings show significant performance degradation (Wu et al., 2023). This domain shift presents one of the biggest obstacles to the widespread use of AI in agriculture.

The study aims to bridge the gap between lab-trained models and field deployment. The main objective here is to design, implement and evaluate a deep learning model for automated cross-domain plant disease classification that quantifies prediction uncertainty. Adaptation strategies to improve model stability and provide actionable results for agricultural decision-making are also explored.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the decade, deep learning techniques for plant disease detection have witnessed a remarkable evolution. A thorough analysis showed how these methods have become crucial in agricultural yield protection by improving feature extraction techniques and avoiding the drawbacks of artificial selection of disease spot features (Karthik et al. 2021). Similarly, Bhargava et al. (2021) highlighted that pathogens pose serious challenges and result in financial losses worldwide, making automatic disease detection essential for crop quality and quantity monitoring.

Balafas et al. (2023), using the PlantDoc dataset, conducted a test of 5 object detection algorithms and 18 classification algorithms. Their findings show that DL models, especially ResNet50 and MobileNetV2, were more optimised. This comparative study highlights the effectiveness of DL models while considering the computational costs.

Various architectural approaches studied have special benefits for particular applications. For dual-crop disease detection in cotton and tomato, lightweight 2D CNN architecture proposed by Peyal et al. (2023) achieved 97.36% accuracy. Their model proved that both performance and architectural simplicity can be achieved. Their implementation in “Plant Disease Classifier” Android application demonstrates practical deployment considerations as well.

Recently, ensemble methods have become an alternative to lightweight approaches. PlantDet, proposed by Shovon et al. (2023), is an effective multi-model ensemble, combining the InceptionRestNetV2, EfficientNetV2L and Xception architectures. The model achieved 98.53% accuracy in rice and betel leaf diseases by including techniques such as Global Average Pooling, Dropout mechanisms, PReLU activation functions, etc. However, the study acknowledged the model's complexity and overfitting problems.

With their TLMViT model, Tabbakh and Barpanda (2023) presented a noble hybrid approach, combining Vision Transformers and transfer learning. Their methodology consisted of data collection (PlantVillage and wheat datasets), image augmentation, initial feature extraction using pre-trained models and Deep feature extraction through Vision Transformers. The model outperformed conventional techniques by achieving a 98.81% accuracy. They tackled the fundamental limitation of CNNs in capturing long-range dependencies by integrating self-attention in Vision Transformers.

A significant issue seen is finding a standardised data set that has practical relevance. The majority of past research used the PlantVillage dataset images, which were captured under controlled conditions with plain backgrounds. For their paper, Saleem et al. (2022) created the

NZDLPlantDisease-v1 dataset with field photos of five horticultural crops in New Zealand. Their optimized Region-based Fully Convolutional Network (RFCN) achieved 93.80% mean average precision (mAP), which is 19.33% improvement over baseline models. Notably, their methodology addressed the leaf-only buyers, a commonality in most studies.

When adapted to specific agricultural context, crop-specific models have shown exceptional outcomes. A custom CNN created by Vishnoi et al. (2023) for Apple plant disease detection achieved 98% accuracy and identified diseases like scab, black rot, and cedar rust. To overcome computational complexity and overfitting, they used data augmentation techniques, such as shift, shear, scaling, zoom, and flipping, to increase the size of training set.

The conflict between computational efficiency and model accuracy has emerged as a recurring topic in the review. While deep learning has transformative potential but its practical implementation is limited by high computational requirements (Akbar et al.,2024). During their review of greenhouse agriculture applications, they identified constraint as the main limitation.

Despite these advances, domain adaptation is increasingly being recognised as a challenge. Hughes and Salathé (2015) found that, due to distributional shifts in image characteristics, models trained on lab images perform poorly on filled-capture data. Wu et al. (2023) found that accuracy drops over 40% when transferring from PlantVillage to PlantDoc. Their Multi-Scale Uncertainty Network (MSUN) achieved 56.06% accuracy on PlantDoc. This was further explored by Salman et al. (2025) using adversarial domain adaptation techniques to achieve transfer accuracy of 68%. However, it was pointed out that managing environmental variability remains an obstacle.

While domain adaptation strategies improve cross-domain performance, current methods provide limited mechanisms for quantifying uncertainty. This is a crucial research gap. Trustworthy forecasts are essential for decision-making in agricultural applications. Though recent studies in deep learning (Sensoy et al., 2018) and uncertainty-aware domain adaptation (Liu et al., 2025) show promising directions, the application to agricultural domain adaptation is still largely unexplored. The study tries to bridge the particular gap by combining domain adaptation and uncertainty quantification for plant disease classification.

CHAPTER 3: PROBLEM STATEMENT

With domain adaptation and uncertainty quantification, the study addresses the problem of cross-domain plant disease classification as a supervised multi-class image classification task. The study defined two domains: a source domain (D_S) representing lab-controlled conditions (PlantVillage) and a target domain (D_T) that represents actual field conditions (PlantDoc).

The source domain consists of labelled training data :

$D_S = \{(x_i^S ,\ y_i^S)\}_{i=1}^{N_S}$, where $x_i^S \in R^{H\,x\,W\,x\,3}$ represents an RGB leaf image and $y_i^S \in$ {1, 2,…, C} denotes the corresponding disease class label from C possible categories.

The target domain consists of unlabeled and semi-labelled data:

$D_T = \{(x_j^T)\}_{j=1}^{N_T}$, where from field conditions with distributional characteristics $p_T(x,\ y) \neq P_S(x, y)$.

Primary objective is to develop a function $f: R^{H\,x\,W\,x\,3} \rightarrow [0,\ 1]^C$ that maps the input images with probability distribution on disease classes, optimizing performance on target domain D_T with predominant training on source domain D_S. The second objective is to augment the classification function with uncertainty measure $\mu: R^{H\,x\,W\,x\,3} \rightarrow R^+$. This quantifies the epistemic uncertainty that allows for risk, efficient decision making and selective prediction.

The evaluation criteria include Area Under the Risk-Coverage Curve, Expected Calibration Error and classification accuracy on the target domain’s “test” data. The formulation set the study apart from conventional supervised classification methods by emphasising the domain shift challenge and introducing uncertainty quantification as an important component for real-world deployment.

CHAPTER 4: DATASET PREPARATION

4.1 Dataset Selection and Characteristics

The study uses two complementary data sets, which address source and target domain requirements.

Source Domain (PlantVillage Dataset): This is the main training data, which consists of 54,303 photos of 14 plant species in 38 disease classes. Standard leaf positioning, even lighting, and plain backgrounds are present throughout the dataset. It uses the standard image resolution of 256 * 256*256 pixels with consistent RGB colour representation. The dataset can be accessed at

Target Domain (PlantDoc Dataset): This dataset contains 2598 pictures of 13 plant species in actual field settings. In contrast to PlantVillage, this dataset has pictures with complicated backgrounds that depict natural outdoor settings. The dataset can be accessed at

4.2 Preprocessing Pipeline

Consistency in data and model compatibility is ensured with a systematic pre-processing pipeline. All the images are. Resized to 224*224*3 dimensions. This matches the input requirement of ResNet50 architecture, maintaining the aspect ratio through padding. To ensure compatibility with transfer learning from ImageNet pre-trained weights, pixel values are normalised using mean $\mu = [0.485, 0.456, 0.406]$ and standard deviation $\sigma = [0.229, 0.224, 0.225]$ across RGB channels, respectively.

To ensure a balanced class distribution, the source domain is divided into training (70%), validation (15%) and testing (50%) subsets. The target data set is similarly divided into training (60%), validation (20%) and testing (20%). Further, the training data undergoes a data augmentation step to improve model generalisation and reduce overfitting. The step included random horizontal and vertical flips (probability 0.5), random rotation ($\pm 20^\circ$), brightness adjustment ($\pm$20%), contrast (0.8 -1.2 range), Gaussian blur (kernel size 3-5) and random crop-and-resize operations, maintaining 90-hundred% of the original image.

Resolving the class count disparity between PlantVillage (38 classes) and PlantDoc(28 classes) was a basic pre-processing challenge. Since the model's 28-class output layer cannot handle labels larger than 27, direct training would result in an index-out-of-bounds error. A modulo-Best label remapping strategy was used to address this while maintaining the data integrity of the source dataset. This mapped PlantVillage's 38 classes into valid range [0, 27].

CHAPTER 5: MODEL ARCHITECTURE

5.1 Base Architecture Selection

For domain adaptation, the study used an architecture based on RestNet50 combined with uncertainty quantification techniques. Some strategic factors were considered when choosing the model. One of the factors was residual connections in the model, successfully addressing vanishing gradient issues in deep networks. Second factor was that extensive pre-training on ImageNet yields reliable low-level feature extraction. Additionally, the architecture achieved an ideal balance between capacity and computational efficiency. The final reason to choose the architecture was because broad adoption in agricultural computer vision research.

50 convolution layers arranged into five stages constituted the basic architecture. A global average pooling layer at the end created 2048-dimensional vectors. To enable custom components for uncertainty-aware domain adaptation, the classification layer was removed and replaced with pre-trained ImageNet weights for this implementation.

5.2 Domain Adaptation Architecture

Three components that implement the Domain-Adversarial Neural Network (DANN) with uncertainty quantification were incorporated into the architecture.

Feature Extractor (G_f): Complete ResNet50, except the final classification layer was used as feature extractor to produce domain domain-independent representation. The balance between domain adaptation requirements and transfer learning efficiency was done using a selective freezing strategy. The initial convolutional blocks were frozen to have low-level feature extraction, while the final residual block was still trainable to adapt domain characteristics. This used global average pooling to produce 2048-dimensional feature vectors.

Evidential Classifier (G_y): This step was done for uncertainty quantification by a task-specific classification head. To prevent overfeeding, the architecture consisted of

1. Dense layer with 512 units processing the 2048-dimensional feature vector, incorporating batch normalisation and ReLU activation (~ 1M parameters).
2. Dropout regularisation with rate 0.5.
3. A final dense layer with N units corresponding to number of disease classes (14,336 parameters for 28 classes).

This layer produced proof that stimulated a Dirichlet distribution in contrast to traditional softmax outputs. This allowed for principled epistemic uncertainty quantification.

Domain Discriminator (G_d): The discriminator is made up of 3 fully connected layers.

1. Dense layer: 2048 — 512 units with batch normalisation, ReLU activation, and dropout (rate 0.5) ~ 1M parameters.
2. Dense layer: 512 — 256 units with batch normalisation, ReLU activation, and dropout ~ 131k parameters.
3. Output layer: 256 — 1 unit with sigmoid activation for binary domain classification ~ 257 parameters.

When the architecture was implemented and the gradient reversal mechanism made sure that the feature extractor is trained to produce features which are domain independent, while the discriminator learnt to classify domains (Ganin and Lempitsky, 2015).

These two components, along with a frozen ResNet50 backbone, made up the entire architecture with roughly 2.25 million trainable parameters.

5.3 Evidential Deep Learning Integration

The evidential classification layer provided theoretical ground for uncertainty quantification by defining a Dirichlet distribution over class probabilities. This is in contrast to standard softmax classification, which generates point probability estimates (Sensoy et al., 2018). For input x, the network output logits z_k for each class k ϵ {1,2,...,C}, which were transformed into non-negative values by softplus activation function:

$$e_k = log(1 + exp(z_k))$$

These values were then used to compute Dirichlet distribution parameters:

$$\alpha_k = e_k + 1$$

The strength of Dirichlet distribution was defined as

$$S = \Sigma_{k=1}^{C} \alpha_k$$

From these parameters, the predicted class probabilities were derived using

$$\widehat{p_k} = \frac{\alpha_k}{S}$$

Lastly, epistemic uncertainty was calculated by

$$u = \frac{C}{S}$$

CHAPTER 6: IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Development Environment

Python 3.12 was used in the Google Colab environment. PyTorch 2.0.1with torchvision 0.15.2 was the primary DL framework, which was chosen for its dynamic computational graph. Numpy for numerical operations, scikit-learn for evaluation metrics, Matplotlib and Seaborn for visualisation and Pillow for image processing were used.

6.2 Code Structure and Implementation Logic

Data Loading Pipeline: Image loading, pre-processing, labelling, remapping, and augmentation were handled by special PyTorch Dataset classes. DataLoader objects with multi-worker pre-fetching allowed for effective batch processing with a size of 32 for source domain and 16 for target domain.

```
📋 PlantDoc classes found: 28
✓ Using 28 classes from PlantDoc
   Sample classes: Apple_Scab_Leaf, Apple_leaf, Apple_rust_leaf, Bell_pepper_leaf, Bell_pepper_leaf_spot...

📁 Creating datasets with label remapping...

PlantVillage (Source Domain - Labels Remapped):
  train: 43444 images, 38 classes
         Label range: [0, 27] (valid: [0, 27])
  val: 5422 images, 38 classes
         Label range: [0, 27] (valid: [0, 27])
  test: 5439 images, 38 classes
         Label range: [0, 27] (valid: [0, 27])

PlantDoc (Target Domain):
  train: 2670 images, 28 classes
         Label range: [0, 27]
  val: 126 images, 27 classes
         Label range: [0, 26]
  test: 126 images, 27 classes
         Label range: [0, 26]

======================================================================
DATASET SUMMARY
======================================================================

📊 Number of classes: 28

Source Domain (PlantVillage - Labels Remapped to [0, 27]):
   Train: 43,444 images | 38 classes
   Val:    5,422 images | 38 classes
   Test:   5,439 images | 38 classes

Target Domain (PlantDoc - Labels [0, 27]):
   Train:  2,670 images | 28 classes
   Val:      126 images | 27 classes
   Test:     126 images | 27 classes
======================================================================

✓ Number of classes: 28
✓ First 5 classes: ['Apple_Scab_Leaf', 'Apple_leaf', 'Apple_rust_leaf', 'Bell_pepper_leaf', 'Bell_pepper_leaf_spot']
```

Figure 1: Dataset Summary and Label remapping

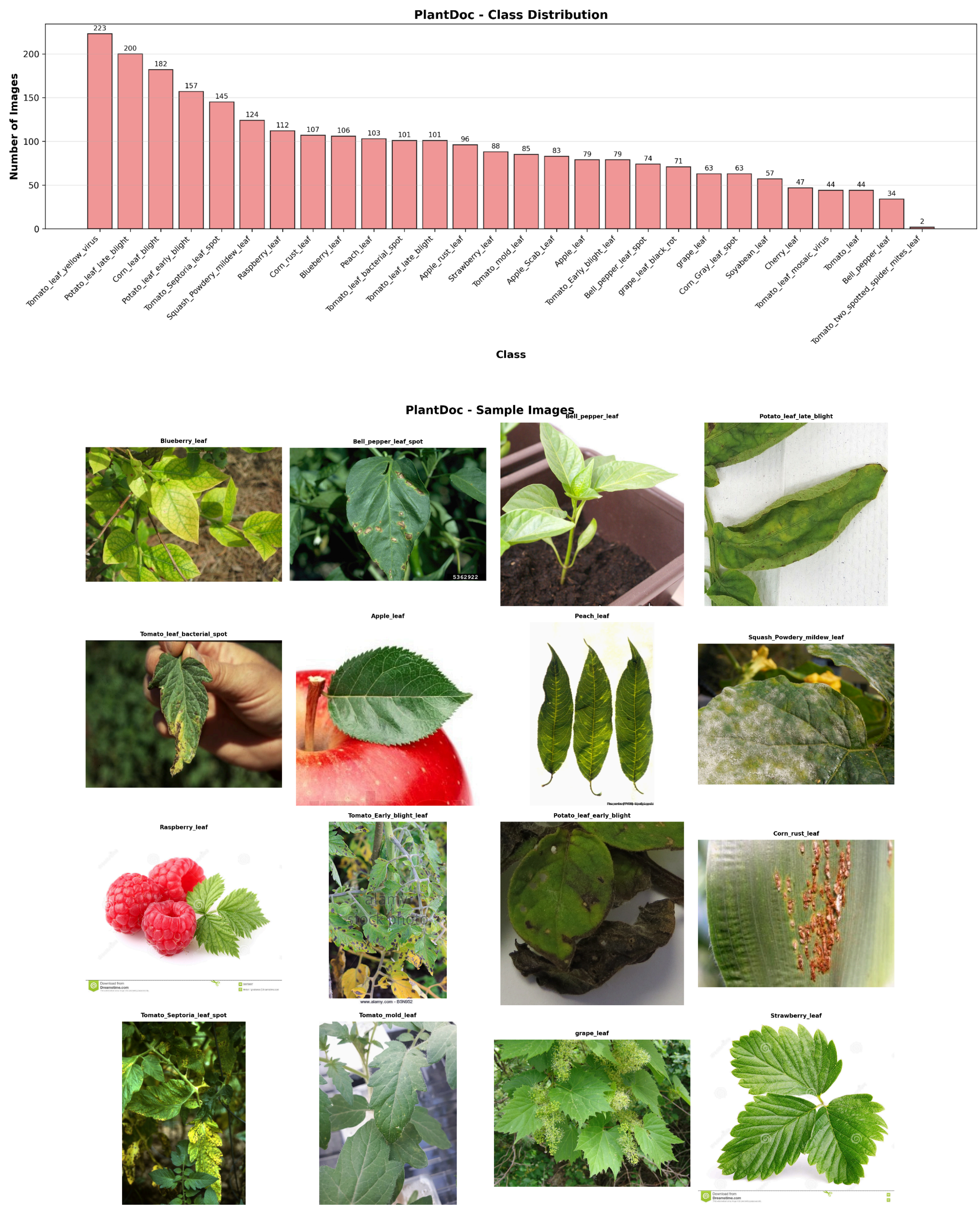

Figure 2: PlantDoc Dataset exploration outputs

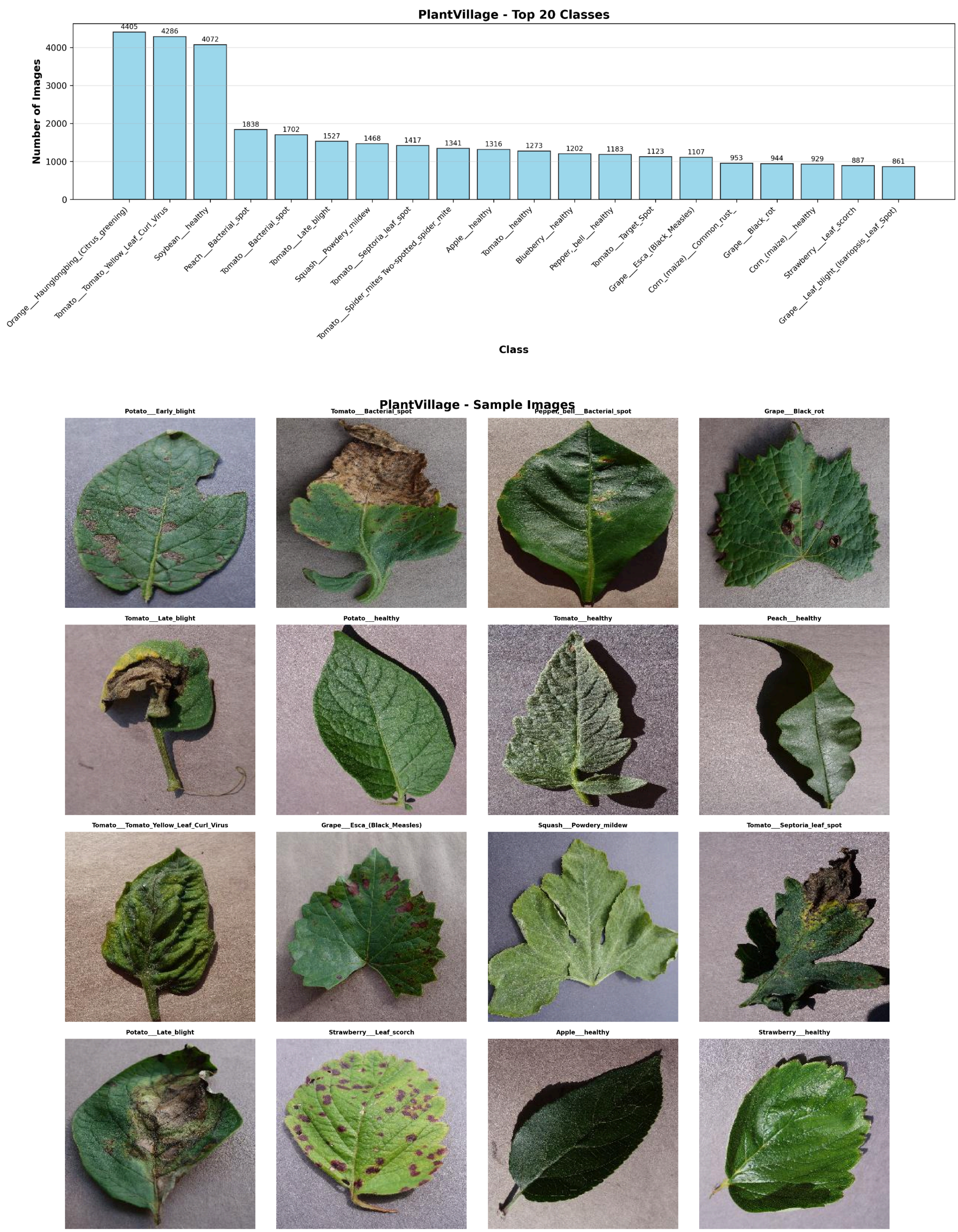

Figure 2: PlantVillage Dataset exploration outputs

Model Definition: The model architecture is already described in Chapter 5 in detail.

Training Procedure: The training is employed in two phases

- Supervised pre-training on PlantVillage for 15 epochs using the Adam optimiser.
- An adversarial domain adaptation phase on unlabelled PlantDoc target samples for 25 epochs.

The target domain contained 2670 training images across 28 classes, and the source domain contributed 43,444 training images across 38 classes with labels remapped to [0, 27].

To avoid overfitting, cosine annealing with warm restarts was used for learning rate. An early stopping patience and distinct checkpoints were also employed.

6.2 Computational Efficiency

The training loop was employed in 2 stages - Stage_1 with 15 epochs and Stage_2 with 25 epochs. 32 images per batch for source domain and 16 images per batch for target domain were used. It took about 4 hours in total to complete the training.

Comprehensive outputs such as confusion matrix, calibration curves and visualization of uncertainty distribution were produced by the entire pipeline.

CHAPTER 7: EVALUATION

With a classification accuracy of 46.34% on the PlantDoc test set, the trained model exhibited significant performance degradation on the target domain. This illustrated the severity of domain shift between controlled laboratory images and real-world scenarios as the model achieved 93.43% accuracy on the source domain.

The inability of the model to distinguish clearly between disease classes under field condition was visible in the confusion matrix. This dictated that predictions were largely concentrated in small subset of classes. Poor generalization is further supported by averaged precision (0.5838), recall (0.4407) and F1-score (0.4622).

According to the uncertainty quantification, more than half of the predictions fell in the "medium-confidence" category. Although overall predictive performance is still too low for widespread use, this classification pattern showed that evidential deep learning framework effectively captures epistemic uncertainty.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

During pre-training, the study of an uncertainty-ever domain adaptation framework for automated plant disease classification achieved 93.43% accuracy on source domain data. However, accuracy on the PlantDoc domain was only 46.34%, which is significantly less. This degradation in performance highlights how difficult it is for agricultural AI systems to generalise from lab to field.

The main drawback is the significant domain shift. Given the short training period (25 epochs), the domain adaptation strategy was unable to close this gap, indicating the need for longer adaptation times.

With 4.9% of samples correctly classified as high-confidence with 100% accuracy, 56.1% of samples classified as medium-confidence with 56.52% accuracy and 39% of samples classified as low-confidence with 25% accuracy, the evidential deep learning component effectively quantified prediction uncertainty despite lower accuracy. Longer training period beyond 25 epochs, progressive unfreezing of ResNet backbone layers, stronger regularization techniques, alternative architectures tailored for agricultural domain adaptation, and few-shot learning integration to better utilize constrained target domain labels are all areas that should be investigated in future research.

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