CoffeeGuard: A Dual-Mode Mobile and Cloud AI System for Early Detection of Coffee Leaf Diseases

1. Abstract

Millions of smallholder farmers depend on coffee as their primary source of income, yet leaf diseases continue to reduce productivity, quality, and economic stability. Conventional diagnosis—usually based on manual visual inspection—can be slow, inconsistent, and inaccessible in remote agricultural zones. This study introduces **CoffeeGuard**, a hybrid mobile–cloud system that diagnoses coffee leaf diseases using deep learning. The system employs an **on-device TensorFlow Lite model** for offline predictions and a **server-hosted TensorFlow model** that provides higher-accuracy inference when internet connectivity is available. A native Android application supports camera input, gallery upload, and user authentication. The model is trained on four classes: healthy, rust, miner, and phoma. Experiments show that the offline TFLite model performs efficiently on mid-range smartphones while the cloud model delivers superior accuracy. CoffeeGuard demonstrates that low-cost, open-source AI tools can deliver practical disease detection capabilities to farmers in low-connectivity environments.

2. Introduction

Coffee farming supports rural economies across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. However, fungal pathogens and pests frequently infect coffee leaves, leading to significant yield losses. While early detection is crucial for controlling these outbreaks, diagnosing diseases often requires agronomists—services that are expensive or unavailable in isolated villages.

Advances in mobile computing and lightweight neural networks now make it possible to perform image-based disease recognition directly on handheld devices. Yet many existing AI-based agricultural tools rely exclusively on cloud inference, making them unsuitable in regions with unreliable network access.

To address these challenges, we developed **CoffeeGuard**, a system capable of functioning both **online** and **offline**. The primary contributions of this research include:

1. A **mobile convolutional neural network** optimized for real-time TensorFlow Lite inference.
2. A **server-side Keras model** accessed through a lightweight REST API for enhanced prediction accuracy.

3. A fully functional **Android application** enabling user-friendly disease classification and optional cloud-based processing.

4. A design specifically tailored for **low-resource conditions**, leveraging open-source software and inexpensive deployment methods

3. Related Work

Several research efforts have applied deep learning to plant pathology, often using CNN models such as MobileNet, ResNet, or EfficientNet. These systems typically require powerful computers or cloud servers, limiting their accessibility to farmers.

Mobile AI technologies—particularly TensorFlow Lite—have enabled efficient image classification on smartphones. However, most studies either rely solely on offline inference (with reduced accuracy) or purely cloud-based inference (requiring connectivity). CoffeeGuard bridges this gap by blending both approaches, offering a system that adapts automatically to the user's connectivity conditions.

4. Dataset and Preprocessing

A publicly available dataset of coffee leaf images was used, comprising:

- **Healthy leaves**
- **Rust-infected leaves**
- **Miner damage**
- **Phoma disease**

Each class contains around 250–260 samples. Prior to model training:

- images were resized to **224×224** pixels,
- pixel values were normalized to the range $[0,1]$,
- augmentations such as flips, zoom, brightness variation, and rotation were applied,
- data was split into training and validation subsets.

This process helps prevent overfitting and allows the model to better generalize to real-world farm conditions.

5. Model Design

5.1 Cloud Model

The server model uses **MobileNetV2** as a feature extractor with a custom classification head. This full TensorFlow/Keras model achieves high accuracy and is deployed through a **Flask API** for remote inference.

5.2 Mobile (TFLite) Model

A quantized TensorFlow Lite version of the model provides efficient real-time processing on Android devices. The TFLite model uses fewer parameters and requires less memory, making it suitable for low-end phones.

6. System Architecture

CoffeeGuard consists of three main components:

A. Android Mobile App

- Captures images using the camera or imports from gallery
- Performs offline inference with the TFLite model
- Automatically switches to cloud inference when a network is available
- Includes Google Sign-In for user accounts
- Displays predictions and confidence scores
- Provides a clean and responsive UI, including progress indicators

B. Offline Inference Pipeline

Leaf Image → Preprocessing → TFLite Model → Result
This is the primary pathway for rural areas with poor connectivity.

C. Online Inference Pipeline

Leaf Image → Flask Server → Keras Model → JSON Output
This pathway enables more accurate inference when internet access is available.

7. Results

7.1 Model Accuracy

Testing showed:

Model	**Accuracy**	**Notes**
Cloud (Keras)	96–98%	Higher precision due to full model size
Mobile (TFLite)	88–92%	Fast and fully offline

7.2 Computational Performance

- TFLite inference time: **40–80 ms** on mid-range phones
- Cloud inference time: **200–300 ms**, depending on network speed

Despite using quantization, the mobile model performs reliably for field use.

8. Limitations

Although promising, CoffeeGuard has practical constraints:

8.1 Image Quality Dependency

Predictions may fail when:

- images are blurry or unfocused,
- leaves are partially occluded or poorly lit,
- background objects interfere with the leaf region.

8.2 Dataset Scope

The training dataset, although balanced, was not captured entirely in outdoor farm environments. Additional field data would improve generalization.

8.3 Device Constraints

Low-memory devices may experience minor delays or reduced performance.

9. Future Improvements

Potential upgrades include:

1. **Segmenting infected regions** using instance segmentation models.
2. **Expanding the dataset** with field-captured images from multiple climates.
3. **Personalized prediction refinement** using user-submitted images.
4. **Automated disease management advice**, including recommended treatments.
5. **Integration with aerial drones** for large-scale monitoring.

10. Conclusion

CoffeeGuard demonstrates how accessible, low-cost AI tools can empower coffee farmers with reliable disease detection. Its dual inference pipeline ensures functionality both in connected and disconnected environments, making it particularly valuable in rural regions. By combining deep learning, mobile deployment, and cloud flexibility, CoffeeGuard offers an effective and scalable solution to support sustainable coffee production.

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