

# An Integrated Data Platform for Agricultural Data Analyses based on Agricultural ISOBUS and ISOXML

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**Abstract:** Over the last years many different agricultural online management portals got to market. The focus of these portals is on documentation, accounting and task planning. Data analyses and process planning are often not considered. For this reason, the existing data in the data platforms of present portals is often badly integrated and consequently not designed for data analyses. This paper introduces a new architecture concept for an integrated agricultural data platform. With this new data platform agricultural data analyses for precision farming become possible. Furthermore, the integration of the agricultural devices and external sources into one platform changes task planning for one machine into a process planning for cooperated machines. Several challenges for the integration of agricultural data and data types for agricultural data analyses are discussed.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The agricultural industry is still in an extreme state of change. Since electronic equipment on the agricultural machinery is established, the digital development of equipment progresses. One of the essential development steps was the launch of ISOBUS, standardised in ISO11783 (ISO, 2007).

Parallel to ISOBUS a huge variety of sensor systems got to market. Two well-known systems are the ISARIA sensor for mineral fertilising (Fritzmeier Umwelttechnik, 2018) and the NIRS sensor for dry substance measurement used for maize harvesting (Maschinenfabrik Bernard Krone, 2015).

To handle this digital data, the farmer can organise inventory and build tasks in farm management information systems (FMIS). For task planning service providers or web services, like weather forecast or precision farming providers, are connected to FMIS. Machinery logged process data is archived and can be displayed for evaluation and documentation.

Most available FMISs are not designed for analyses, process planning and process automation. The main issue is the separate handling of heterogeneous data. FMISs are often not based on an integrated database, storing information, like soil and yield information, in a common way for data analyses. For that reason the potential of collected process data is not fully used to optimise agricultural processes.

New electronic equipment and partial area based documentation enable precision farming. With this method the field is not considered as a homogeneous area. The field is divided into subareas and can be farmed individually. As a result the harvest rises with the same resource input or less resources are needed for the same output. In both cases the efficiency rises and the environmental damage is decreased. Precision farming will be the future direction for agricultural development because there is an increased demand for food to feed the growing population and to handle the reduction of available farmland. In Germany agricultural used areas shrank from 53.5% in 2000 to 51.6% in 2015 (Umweltbundesamt, 2018). At the other hand the population stays nearly constant at 82 million people (Federal Agency for Civic Education, 2015). In comparison the worlds population raised from 6.1 billion to 7.3 billion in this period (Federal Agency for Civic Education, 2017).

The research project OPeRAte - "Orchestration of Process Chains for data-driven Resource Optimisation in Agricultural Business and Engineering" (OPeRAte, 2018) addresses these topics for the next step in farming 4.0. To realise data analyses and process optimisation in agriculture one project target is an integrated data platform. The existing inventory and log data are combined with heterogeneous information from web services, service providers and other external data portals.

This paper introduces an architectural concept for an integrated agricultural data platform designed for data analyses and distributed mobile data. Chapter 2 discusses the FMIS, the agricultural data format ISOXML and different data sources for precision farming. This is followed by the state of the art on data lake and Internet of Things (IoT). Afterwards it is shown how IoT functionality can be provided on the agricultural machine. The challenges of data integration into the data platform are discussed in chapter 5. Before concluding the paper with the summary, chapter 6 presents the new architecture concept of the integrated agricultural data platform in detail.

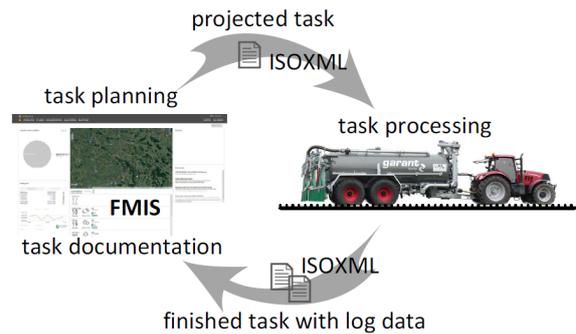


Figure 1: Data exchange between FMIS and agricultural machine.

## 2 INTRODUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL DOMAIN

### 2.1 Farm Management Information Systems

Farm management information systems have been established to organise a farm with machinery, fields, resources, and task planning as a desktop software. During the last years many FMIS online portals got to market (NEXT Farming, 2019), (365FramNet, 2019). Thereby the farmer can access the FMIS with a computer, mobile device and other electronic equipment.

In Germany the number of agricultural companies decreases about 20 - 30 times faster (Federal Institute for Population Research, 2018) than the agricultural surface (Umweltbundesamt, 2018). Consequently the remaining farmers need the assistance of an FMIS to handle the additional ground and work economically.

In order to achieve a suitable workload of the large and expensive machines, FMISs allow the farmer to plan tasks digitally. Afterwards the tasks can be transferred to and integrated in to the machinery. Finished tasks combined with logged process data are the result of these jobs and will be transferred to the FMIS for documentation and interpretation (Figure 1).

The information exchange between FMISs and machinery is based on the ISOXML format and is not prepared for a data exchange during task runtime. A summary of this format follows in section 2.2. Most of the time the physical transport is realised by mobile storage mediums. The transfer via mobile communication and internet is not provided by every system.

Proprietary telematic systems (Claas E-Systems, 2019) are able to collect and store parameters of the machinery during task runtime for the manufacturers. In a portal the farmer has access to this information for live monitoring and parameter evaluation.

### 2.2 Agricultural Data Format

Based on the ISO11783 standard, called ISOBUS, the ISOXML structure is the agricultural data exchange format between machinery and FMISs. Each XML element has several mandatory and optional attributes. Representative for each attribute name a character is defined. Similar to this, the element name in the xml schema is represented by a shortcut of three characters. Some of the attributes hold references to other elements in the structure.

In the following ISOXML example a farm called *Hof Herrmann* and a field called *Exx Platz* is shown.

```

1:<FRM A="FRM1" B="Hof Herrmann"/>
2:<PFD A="PFD1" C="Exx Platz" F="FRM1">
3:  <PLN A="1">
4:    <LSG A="1">
5:      <PNT A="2" C="52.28.." D="8.02.."/>
6:      <PNT A="2" C="52.28.." D="8.02.."/>
7:      <PNT A="2" C="52.28.." D="8.02.."/>
8:      <PNT A="2" C="52.28.." D="8.02.."/>
9:      <PNT A="2" C="52.28.." D="8.02.."/>
10:    </LSG>
11:  </PLN>
12:</PFD>
    
```

The field (line 2) has a reference to the farm (line 1) at the attribute F. Part of the field element is a polygon (line 3) with a line element (line 4) and five points (line 5-9) for the field border. All elements inside the field do not have an additional identification as they are assigned inside the field element.

Main problem is the interpretation of the standard by the manufacturers. For example, optional attributes are defined as mandatory attributes. A second problem is the data exchange between different FMISs without user interaction because of the unique identification only inside the transfer file. For this reason only information of executed tasks from machinery can be automatically imported, if the planned task was generated by this FMIS before. For an automatic integration in every situation a comparison of selected

descriptive string attributes has to be made. This does not preclude duplicate records in the database and rises the amount of redundant linked data from the external sources discussed in the next section.

### 2.3 External Data Sources for Precision Farming

To realise precision farming different data sources have to be used to represent the influencing factors for crop production. An example is a combination of yield information of the last years to get a yield potential map. To improve quality an additional combination with the soil type map (State Office for Mining, Energy and Geology, 2019) is used in practice.

A large part of external data sources are geographic data, like historical weather data (Deutscher Wetterdienst, 2018), weather forecasts, soil maps, topological maps and process data. Furthermore satellite images (German Aerospace Center, 2019) provide information of crop growth and the condition outside of the field, e.g. water bodies. To get matchable geographic data for analyses, the granularity of the data must be dissolved.

Important external data sources are legal requirements of the government for nitrate (European Commission, 2019) and pesticide (European Commission, 2018) application. Failure to comply will result in penalties and compromise the environment. Only in combination with a geographic map and the applying product it is usable for precision farming.

Furthermore data sheets of the agricultural machinery are external data sources used for precision farming. A precision farming application can also be optimised for the properties of the machinery or for required absolute values for application rates adapted to the product.

## 3 STATE OF THE ART

### 3.1 Data Lake

A data warehouse (Inmon et al., 2008) combines data from different sources in an integrated schema based on requirements of defined analyses, evaluation, and reporting tasks. Distributed data is combined for analyses, evaluation and reporting tasks in a data lake. This approach is defined as a non fixed coupling of structured, semi structured and unstructured data in a central data management system (Maccioni and Torlone, 2017), (Tomcy and Pankaj, 2017) and is able to apply the data warehousing concept. The main

components of a data lake are the connectors with different quantity and complexity levels. This setting is mostly chosen at semantic-aware big data systems (Nadal et al., 2017) and context-aware data lakes (Ahmed et al., 2017) for the data management.

For data management at data lakes, extract, transform and load (ETL) tools are used (Zhu, 2017). If there are already different kinds of data silos available, methods of machine learning fit for the data integration (Wibowo et al., 2017). Additional concepts load all data in the data lake and do the integration and organisation of the data lake afterwards (Terrizano et al., 2015).

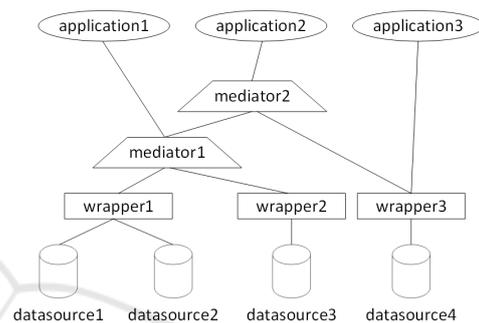


Figure 2: Architecture of mediator-wrapper technology.

With the mediator-wrapper technology (Figure 2) external, heterogeneous data can be connected to a data lake (Wiederhold, 1992). The wrapper adapts the data and communication from external sources to the mediator and provides a unified access to a data source. The mediator combines the adapted data from wrappers at the same domain as a single data source to higher applications. To have an efficient implemented mediator it is fundamental to get the right balance at service level and domain level. An example for wrapper design is web wrapper.

After connecting the external sources to the data lake, the distribution of data can be handled by a publish/subscribe system in combination with a message passing system. Published data will be automatically forwarded to the subscribed users. For handling the data flow from a publisher to the subscribers a message passing system like kafka (Apache Software Foundation, 2019) can be used.

### 3.2 Internet of Things

The Internet of Things (IoT) combines several technologies to connect cyber physical systems with each other. The systems provide their information in an open format to the network. A lot of information and functions combined with an interface description are available as commercial or open source solutions.

By using ontologies (Bermudez-Edo et al., 2016) it is possible to automatically process and integrate these interface descriptions.

The heterogeneity and variety of IoT also includes the individual system properties, e.g. the currency or reliability of information. In the end, you have to trust the provided description or merge several systems with identical information to derive information about the individual system properties.

For information exchange, message bus systems are used in the IoT. The information is published on a message bus, like Message Queuing Telemetry Transport protocol (MQTT) (Stanford-Clark and Nipper, 2019), to reach the subscribed system. The exchange of sensitive information in IoT is realised by access control to the message bus.

## 4 IoT ENABLED SMART FARMING

For an independent integration of the different sensor systems of a modern agricultural machine in an FMIS, a self description of the machinery is needed. With the description additional standalone sensor systems can be used as Internet of Things devices to support the agricultural application.

In the research project OPeRAte such a universal valid description to handle a machine like an Internet of Things device has been developed. To get the available process data from the machine during a running agricultural process, an essential function is missing.

The data exchange between machinery and FMIS is currently only possible before and after an agricultural task is processed. An extension of the ISOBUS standard with a streaming protocol for data streaming during application is still an ongoing task (Harris, 2018). For process regulation or adaptation there is no controlling function available.

To solve this problem, the OPeRAte project is developing a separate ISOBUS module. An individual adaptation of the task processing unit (Task Controller) on the machine is too complex. With a Task Controller (TC) client the module can have a direct online connection and a peer-control connection via ISOBUS to the implement. Similarly, the client can be commissioned by the TC for the recording of the log data. This client is much easier to adapt to new requirements and can still take over almost all functions from the TC. Only a simplified part of a task needs to be integrated into the TC.

## 5 CHALLENGES FOR THE DATA ENRICHMENT IN AGRICULTURAL AREA

### 5.1 Different Level of Granularity

Data analyses at the finest level of granularity often do not show all relationships. A first abstract view at higher granularity level opens up new insights for detailed analyses at finer resolution. An example is a summary of the different agricultural resources to categories. At the first step winter and spring barley together make up the category barley. Barley together with wheat and rye forms the next category cereals. Similar a temporal summary of information can be useful for analyses. A good example is the water supply for plants over the full growth phase and the impact on work planning and the resulting yield.

For realising data analyses at these different levels of granularity, information must be available in the smallest granularity level, if possible. The summary in a higher level of granularity takes place via separately stored filters, categorization or linkage.

For the representation of such information in different levels of granularity so-called data cubes are used (Totok, 2000). Here the data is arranged in a multi-dimensional cube and the user can analyse within the different planes. Most of the time the data itself is already stored as a data cube in order to be quickly available during analyses.

### 5.2 Data Identification at ISOXML

For ISOXML files, a simplified example shown in section 2.2, no unique identification is defined. Only a manufacturer given machine identification ISON-AME is included. Alternatively, the coordinates of the field can be used for identification. For the other data only an identification with the available links to the machines and fields or a string comparison of description is possible.

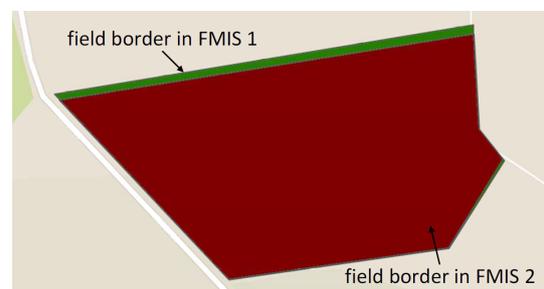


Figure 3: Two different field borders for the same field.

A problem of identification by location is the discrepancy in locations at the different FMISs shown in Figure 3 with green and red colour. To solve that problem, a variation rate has to be defined. For example, a difference for the field area matching of five percent.

### 5.3 Process Data Cleansing

The sensor value recording takes place during task processing without observing the working state for a defined interval or by threshold values. Yield recording is carried out, for example, position according to a distance interval. If a machine turns at the end of the field during harvest, a yield of 0 is recorded. The same recording problem occurs for start-up, run out and back ride. These errors must be removed, otherwise the average yield, for example, is falsified.

Manually collected data, that has subsequently been digitised, is still used in agricultural. To use these data, overlaps, gaps or self-intersects of polygons have to be removed.

The five coordinated steps of data cleansing take place with saving all raw data. Thereafter, the requirements of the data are derived from the properties of the data. If the requirements for the data are present, an analysis shows which data meets the requirements. Before the data is cleaned up, the data goes through standardisation to resolve remediable errors.

### 5.4 Runtime Data Handling

Agricultural machinery record large numbers of sensor values. To provide this captured information directly to the system during processing, the previously presented treatment steps have to be integrated directly into the provisioning process.

Thus the records can be included directly in new analyses. In order to reduce the resulting queries of the external data sources, the data sources should be subdivided into the following categories.

- local available with online connection
- only local available
- access only with online connection

To avoid expensive queries from external sources, a local part for the existing datasets or the entire external source is the better solution. The information of the source is available in the prepared state during task processing and is updated at a fixed interval or at a new dataset. Sources without an online connected interface have to read locally in the system.

The different levels of granularity can be used for an additional optimisation of source queries. Assigning the information of an external source to a higher granularity level also requires queries only for records at that level. The data in the underlying levels can be added to the dataset without a source query.

## 6 AN AGRICULTURAL DATA PLATFORM FOR DATA ANALYSES

### 6.1 Provided Characteristics of the Agricultural Data Platform

The data platform has to support different characteristics focused on FMIS functionality and data analyses. For task management and process planning a data pool with user, resource, yard, and field management is needed. The logged process data has to be integrated during task execution and prepared for analyses, process optimisation and the required documentation.

Second, the platform has to connect the distributed external sources and mobile devices to a common exchange layer. The exchange layer enables the availability of the external sources at the agricultural device without data lake interaction and a data access from process management for process controlling.

### 6.2 Concept of the Agricultural Data Lake

The main component of the data platform, the data lake, works as a single point of truth and supports distributed data subsets on mobile devices like agricultural machinery. In the opposite direction the device transfers the process data back. The data will be enriched with additional information from external data sources during the integration process. The runtime integration process is necessary to provide the data for reactive process optimisation across machines performed by a connected process management.

The core of the data lake is build on the ISOXML format described in section 2.2. Therefore, the architecture is following the data warehouse approach with a database, ETL processes and a data warehouse. The database is realised with relational database technology and an extension for spatial functions.

To enrich the core data, different additional data sources are integrated, e.g. historical weather information of Germany (Deutscher Wetterdienst, 2018),

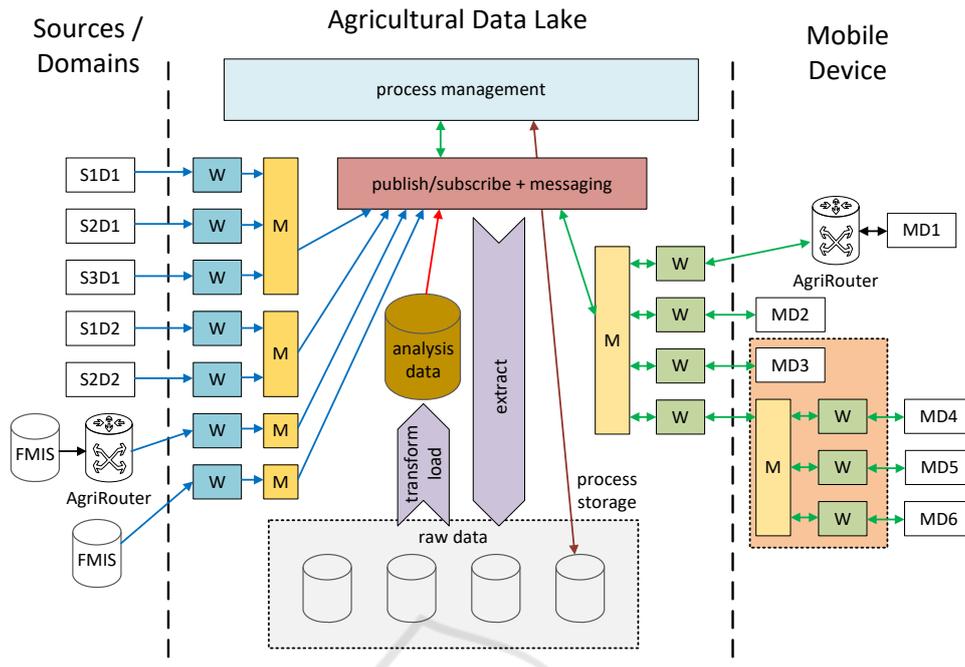


Figure 4: Architecture of the data platform with agricultural data lake.

soil types of Germany (Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources, 2019), field borders of Lower Saxony (Servicezentrum Landentwicklung und Agrarförderung, 2019) and sentinel2 satellite images (German Aerospace Center, 2019). The different categories of enriched data are as follow:

- Spatio temporal data: A significant proportion of data in agricultural has a spatial and temporal correlation. For example the recorded yield with the position and associated time stamp is used in analyses, separated in subareas for each year.
- Spatial data: If the time factor disappears from the data, the data only provides information about a specific location. Here you can call soil maps as examples. Once captured, this data is used without any time limit.
- Meta data: In order to get properties of resources, consumables and plants, additional information needs to be collected, if it is not supplied by the product. An interface for machine-specific properties for the manufacturers database for business and service purposes would help. Meta data on mineral fertilizers and pesticides can often be obtained from the central licensing authority.

In parallel to the fixed linked data, temporal linked data is possible too, for example weather forecasts. The forecast is linked to the core to include the information into decision making. If the process planning is not finished or cancelled, the weather forecast

is deleted like a garbage collector. Only permanent linked data stays in the data lake to keep the growth of data small. This ensures to keep important correlations for decision reconstruction and evaluation.

The measured data from the agricultural machineries is transferred to the data lake during application execution. This data is enriched by the following integration with additional data in real time. Missing additional data for this dataset as well is reloaded in real time from the external data source.

The technical architecture is built-up with classic data warehouse technology. There is a multi-layer mediator/wrapper in combination with a publish subscribe system shown in Figure 4. With the publish subscribe system other applications can get enriched data from the data lake or directly from external data sources. The integrated topic structure enables a selective access to sensitive data.

The functions of wrappers are divided into different adaptation aspects, which handle the granularity levels. One function solves the temporal issues like time zone and resolution. Another function solves the different spatial issues, e.g. the adaptation between different geographical coordinate systems and formats. Wrappers for the machinery also contain a function to perform data cleansing of the process and sensor data. At the next level the mediator combines different external data sources with similar information. By this procedure a temporarily not reachable external data source is compensated. In addi-

tion to the combination mechanism the different quorum (Ozsu and Valduriez, 1991) techniques best vote, weighted vote and majority vote are implemented.

The prepared information is available at the publish/subscribe system by the mediator as a publisher. All different connected players such as the core data base, the data lake or third party actors, like mobile devices on the field, can register to the available services at the publish/subscribe system. This technique reduces the complexity of the architecture and allows a flexible mapping to new agricultural applications.

For the integration of new ISOXML data from agricultural machinery a trigger for validation of existing enriched data in the data lake is performed. For this purpose, a message-passing system is used, which receives the new ISOXML data and summarises the data to data sets on the same reference. Thereby, the verification of enriched data must be performed only for the summary and the identification problem, shown in section 5.2, is dissolved.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

The need for an increasing resource efficiency in agriculture, for farm economics and to feed the world's growing population, is shown in the introduction. The establishment of electronic systems such as sensors and farm management information systems in agriculture contributes to this as well as precision farming. However, the available FMISs, with their badly integrated data platforms, have limited scope for data analyses and cross-machine process planning for collaborative machines.

The presented data platform for agriculture addresses this problem. The data lake architecture already considers the integration of different data sources as well as the connection of the agricultural machine itself. For the integration of an agricultural machine to the data platform, a new ISOBUS module, comparable to an IoT device, is introduced. Within the architecture the integration of the external data source and the agricultural machines takes place by mediator-wrapper method.

The data exchange between the connected components within the data platform is realised via a message bus according to the publish/subscribe principle. With this method, external data sources are available to the agricultural machinery for assistance in task processing. Topics in the message bus system are used for selected access to sensitive data.

The challenges of data processing in the components of the new agricultural data platform are discussed. For example, the data often has a different

granularity, has to be cleaned up for further processing and must be available for new analyses or process optimisation at runtime. In order to ensure data provision at runtime, a different integration of external data sources according to their characteristics has to be considered additionally.

The distributed and modular design of the new agricultural data platform ensures adaptation and extension capabilities for future topics. For an easier integration of external sources, a partially to fully automatic integration process would make sense.

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