OPTIMIZING BIOFUEL PRODUCTION

WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Edited By
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Scrivener Publishing
WILEY

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Scrivener Publishing
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Beverly, MA 01915-6106

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This edition first published 2025 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA and Scrivener Publishing LLC, 100 Cummings Center, Suite 541J, Beverly, MA 01915, USA

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Wiley Global Headquarters
111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

ISBN 9781394301218

Front cover images supplied by Pixabay.com
Cover design by Russell Richardson

Set in size of 11pt and Minion Pro by Manila Typesetting Company, Makati, Philippines

Printed in the USA

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Preface

This book uses artificial intelligence (AI) as a technique to discuss the production of biofuels. Recent decades have seen a tremendous development in energy and environmental biotechnologies, spurred by societal issues like pollution control, energy security, and climate change. Energy can be obtained from a variety of sources, including coal, oil, natural gas, solar, wind, and nuclear energy. Our need to transition to new energy is a result of finite resources and economic sustainability. To ensure the quality of the final product and boost bioconversion performance efficiency, biotechnological process optimization is crucial. When combined with traditional simulation and modeling methods, artificial intelligence and computer technology can help define the ideal process parameters and save total process costs. The main advantage of biomass over fossil fuels is that it is not exhaustible. Since there are many plants on Earth, biomass has the potential to become a major renewable energy source and a long-term replacement for fossil fuels. The new frontier for energy in the future is biomass. Biomass is produced by as many industries in India as outside. Maybe that will fuel the next generation. The energy business can benefit from the concept of artificial intelligence in several ways, including increased asset efficiency, early detection and assessment of wildfire risks, assistance with vegetation management and storm recovery, and optimized energy use. Biofuel productivity can be increased in this way. It also divided the bioenergy systems into three phases: (i) biomass feedstock detection; (ii) bioenergy production/process; and (iii) energy utilization. These were paired with instances of AI applications. This book covers all the aspect of artificial intelligence for biofuel production. This book has 13 chapters, which provide an overview of current status of biofuel production from lignocellulosic biomass and all the aspect of artificial intelligence for biofuel production.

The book will be useful for students, researchers in the areas of various branches such as – artificial intelligence, environmental biotechnology, bioprocess engineering, renewable energy, chemical engineering, nanotechnology, biotechnology, microbiology etc.

We are grateful to Scrivener Publishing's Phil Carmical for his complete cooperation and assistance in the timely publishing of this book. We would like to express our gratitude to the writers and the publication staff for their efforts for publishing this book.

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Artificial Intelligence in Biofuel Applications

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Abstract

As the world grapples with the challenges of climate change, energy security, and the need for sustainable solutions, biofuels are emerging as a promising alternative to fossil fuels. This chapter delves into how artificial intelligence (AI) is playing a key role in transforming the biofuel industry. From selecting the best crops for fuel production to fine-tuning the processes that turn biomass into energy, AI is making biofuel production more efficient, cost-effective, and sustainable. AI-driven systems can optimize every stage—helping farmers grow better feedstocks, improving production methods, ensuring fuel quality, and even reducing environmental impacts through smart assessments. Real-world examples show how AI is already increasing biofuel yields and reducing waste while tackling challenges like limited data and the complexity of scaling these technologies for widespread use. Despite these hurdles, AI's potential to revolutionize biofuel production is clear, and its future looks even more promising. By combining biofuels with AI technologies, we can move more quickly toward a cleaner, greener energy future, where renewable fuels are critical in addressing global environmental and energy concerns.

Keywords**:** Biofuels, artificial intelligence, sustainable energy, feedstock optimization, process control, life cycle assessment

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Arindam Kuila and Depak Kumar (eds.) Optimizing Biofuel Production with Artificial Intelligence, (1–32) © 2025 Scrivener Publishing LLC

1.1 Introduction

The contending factors that are making traditional energy models unviable are climate change, energy security and sustainable development. Under these circumstances, biofuels have become classified as one of the prospective sources of the energy that could replace fossil fuels, and which can potentially be characterized as being more friendly to the environment. At the same time, there is a considerable development of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, which influence different fields among which is the energy field. This chapter focuses on the discussion of the conjunction between these two advanced areas, with the subject on how AIs are revolutionizing biofuel efforts. Biofuels refer to liquid, gas or biogas obtained because of transformation of biomass or biological materials including plants and animal products (Russell & Norvig, 2016). They can also be classified into first-generation biofuels which comes from food crops; second-generation biofuels that come from non-food biomass and the third-generation biofuels such as algal biofuels (Naik *et al.*, 2010). The significance of biofuels is thereby hinged on the ability of these latter to help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, improve energy security and spur countryside revenue generation from the growth of new agricultural outlets (Koh & Ghazoul, 2008).

On the other hand, artificial intelligence can be defined as the creation of more advanced computer systems which possess the competency to complete activities that a human being can perform (LeCun *et al.*, 2015). AI consists of many categories such as but not limited to machine learning, deep learning, natural language processing and computer vision. These technologies allow different systems to analyze the data and perform decisions, as well as to alter their operation without direct programming (LeCun *et al.*, 2015). AI application is playing diverse and now deeply influential roles in the areas of biofuel research and development. AI has been adopted in all aspects of biofuel value system including feedstock sourcing and growing, production, quality assurance, and logistics. In turn, using data analyses, prognosis, and methods of optimization, AI is addressing many concerns connected with biofuel production and utilization (Yue & You, 2013).

Some key areas where AI is making significant contributions include:

1. Feedstock optimization: AI is being employed in the methods of identifying the appropriate species of crops, the expected individual yields, and environmental settings for the feedstock for biofuels (Liakos *et al.*, 2018).

2. Process control and efficiency: They reduce the costs and increase the conversion rates of biofuel production from biomass as well as other raw materials in different reaction conditions (Aghbashlo *et al.*, 2021).
3. Quality assurance: Other methods that are making quality assessment of biofuel faster and accurate include the use of computer vision and spectroscopic methods together with the artificial intelligence technology (Pérez Romero *et al.*, 2022).
4. Sustainability assessment: By implementing the life cycle assessments through the use of artificial intelligence, biofuel production is kept both environmentally sustainable and economically viable (You *et al.*, 2012).
5. Supply chain management: AI is enhancing biofuel distribution networks and refining the prediction of the demand (Awudu & Zhang, 2012a).
6. Research and development: More advanced techniques such as high–throughput screening with AI support are improving the identification of new microbial species as well as new biofuel molecules (Carbonell *et al.*, 2018).

Let us now look at each of these applications one by one, as we proceed further into this chapter to describe how AI is disrupting the biofuel landscape for a cleaner energy transition. Thus, researchers and industry professionals apply artificial intelligence to biofuel production and utilization, which once was too complicated, getting the potential to bring the society to low carbon economy faster.

1.1.1 Brief Overview of Biofuels and Their Importance

Biofuels are a type of renewable energy generated from organic substances with possible applicability as conventional fuels. They can be broadly categorized into:

1. First-generation biofuels: They are manufactured from food commodities like corn, sugarcane, and vegetable oils (Demirbas, 2009).
2. Second-generation biofuels: Obtained from non-food biomass such as agricultural residues, woody crops and Municipal solid waste (Naik *et al.*, 2010).

3. Third-generation biofuels: Mainly produced from the growth of algae and occasional other microorganisms (Koh & Ghazoul, 2008).

Biofuels have significant role in energy scenario of the world. They offer several key advantages:

a) Reduced greenhouse gas emissions: Biofuels may reduce carbon dioxide emissions than fossil fuels because the carbon largely emitted during burning is taken from the atmosphere during the growth of crops (Russell & Norvig, 2016).
b) Enhanced energy security: Since biofuels bring about diversification of energy sources and decrease of the fossil fuel importation dependence, the biofuels enhance the national energy security (LeCun *et al.*, 2015).
c) Rural development: Thus, the biofuel industry opens new markets for agriculturally produced products and a new dynamism to rural economies (Yue & You, 2013).
d) Waste reduction: A few biofuels employ waste products which then help towards the solutions of waste (Liakos *et al.*, 2018).
e) Biodegradability: Some biofuels are less hazardous to the environment than the fossil fuels are in case of spillage and leakage (Aghbashlo *et al.*, 2021).

However, as with other newer products, there are some issues with the production and use of biofuel such as food issue, changes in land use and the efficiency of the biofuel production. It is important for biofuels to increase its utilization rates and become self-sustaining; that is why these challenges must be addressed.

1.1.2 The Role of AI in Advancing Biofuel Technology

Biofuels are proving to be an important focus in the contemporary management of energy challenges and artificial intelligence is assuming an ever more significant position in facing the challenges and seizing the opportunities. AI's contributions span the entire biofuel value chain:

a) Feedstock optimization: Currently, machine learning is being used to forecast crop yields, environment suitable for cultivation and appropriate plant breeds for biofuels (You *et al.*, 2012).

b) Process enhancement: Process control systems which have been enhanced through the integration of AI are helping in enhancing the conversion rates and the reduction of energy utilization in plants that deal with biofuels (Awudu & Zhang, 2012a).
c) Quality control: Computer vision and machine learning are making it possible to make the quality assessment of biofuel faster and accurate to conform to the set quality standards (Carbonell *et al.*, 2018).
d) Sustainability assessment: AI has enabled the production of the more holistic of life cycle impact assessments which serves to protect the environment as well as the economy in the net production biofuels (Baral *et al.*, 2019).
e) Supply chain optimization: Increased application of AI is observed in the biofuel supply chain by improving demand forecasting models, inventory control, and distribution (Esmaeili *et al.*, 2020).
f) Research and development: AI is assisting in identifying new microbial strains for biofuel production and even in the conceptualization of new biofuel molecules (Wehrs *et al.*, 2019).
g) Predictive maintenance: These application of artificial intelligence and analytics has made it easier to have predictive maintenance hence reducing downtime in the production of biofuel production plants (Bertolini *et al.*, 2021; Jiao *et al.*, 2020; Kang *et al.*, 2020).

1.2 AI in Feedstock Selection and Optimization

Selection of feedstock and optimizing them for conversion to biofuels is one of the most crucial activities in biofuel conversion chains, a determining factor for feasibility, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness of biofuel systems. Recently, a lot of focus has been placed on feedstock management, and the management of it as well, and AI has become a most effective tool for solving the present difficulties from various points of view which cannot be overpassed using traditional approaches (Aghbashlo *et al.*, 2021). Machine learning techniques and the genetic algorithm are the two most common AI technologies that are changing the way feedstocks are chosen and improved for biofuel production. Such sophisticated computational methods can handle large volumes of patterned information such as climate conditions, genotypes, and past results for a proper decision and prognosis (Liakos *et al.*, 2018).

AI is widely used in this area regarding feedstock selection, optimal crops for certain regions, as well as the yields' forecast. AI processing can take into account at the same time that region's climate, the soil type, and the economics of that area and apply those considerations to the selection and growth of crops (Chlingaryan *et al.*, 2018). More so, AI is helping in devising new enhanced biofuel crops; this is by mimicking thousands of generations of crop breeding in a short time like what would take years for normal breeding. This capability lets researchers determine what set of genes provides the highest levels of biofuel production while not compromising with the crop's ability to withstand these conditions (Eftekhari *et al.*, 2024; Khan *et al.*, 2022). The developments in AI in feedstock selection and in optimization are enhancing efficient and sustainable biofuel systems that also have a lower cost. Using such technologies the biofuel industry stands in a better place to meet the increasing global demand for renewable energy sources without adverse effects on the environment (K. Ahmad & Ming, 2024; Duarah *et al.*, 2022). Thus it is anticipated that AI applications on feedstock selection and optimization will receive increasing attention as the technology unfolds further. Future developments in this area also shows the potential to boost the production of biofuel while increasing its sustainability so as to support the energy change required towards a low carbon economy (Song *et al.*, 2024; S. Wu *et al.*, 2024).

1.2.1 Machine Learning for Crop Selection and Yield Prediction

With help of the Machine learning (ML) crop selection and yield prediction for feedstocks has got far more efficient with the help of complex datasets and their patterns which are not visible easily in a normal approach.

1.2.1.1 Crop Selection

The features of landscape amenities and producer surplus have also been seen to benefit from the usage of ML algorithms, especially from Random Forests and Gradient Boosting Machines in considering the likelihood of biofuel crops across given regions. These models integrate various data sources, including reflectance data (temperature, precipitations, solar radiation); pH, texture, and nutrient status of soils; topographical features; historical crop performance; and economic indicators. A Random Forest model was integrated by (Shevchenko *et al.*, 2024) to analyze suitability of different energy crops on the various geographical regions of China. It took into consideration 23 environmental variables and it has 92% efficiency in predicting suitable bioenergy crops for the five main bioenergy crops (Shevchenko *et al.*, 2024). Yet, another creativity application utilized a deep learning model that incorporates both the CNNs and LSTM networks to identify statistical data satellite images, and climate patterns to estimate favorable switch grass growing zones. This model boasted of a slightly better performance than the standard statistical analysis with a 15% increase in predictive probability (Cacho *et al.*, 2023; Momm *et al.*, 2020).

1.2.1.2 Yield Prediction

A good forecast of the yield is essential in the coordination of production in the biofuels industry. Some of the advanced techniques of ML includes deep learning have enhanced the yields forecasts with greater precision. A recent groundbreaking work present a satellite imagery analysis of the terrestrial environment complemented with ground sensors by a deep hybrid CNN-Transformer model. Overall, the application of this method allowed for achieving high accuracy of corn yields' predictions for ethanol production – 95%, with geographical differences being taken into consideration (Briones *et al.*, 2024). Another innovative application uses the Graph Neural Network (GNN) in the interaction of different environmental factors and crop genetics of Miscanthus for yield prediction. The GNN approach described in the work showed 20% better results in terms of prediction accuracy compared to a regular regression (Šurić *et al.*, 2023).

1.2.2 Genetic Algorithms for Optimizing Some Biofuel Crop Attributes

Genetic Algorithms (GAs) are among the most effective technologies which have been applied in the optimization of biofuel crop traits; thanks to their ability to explore large volumes of a genetic landscape swiftly to arrive at the most suitable blend.

1.2.2.1 Trait Optimization

GAs are being applied to optimize various traits crucial for biofuel production, including:

- Biomass yield
- Available lignin and cellulose content
- Tolerance to water deficit and to pests
- Fatty matter content of the feedstock (for biodiesel production feedstocks)

One of the recent studies applied a multi-objective GA for the development of multiple traits of switchgrass for biofuel production. The algorithm aimed for the maximization of biomass yield alongside minimizing for lignin content and at the same time for increasing drought tolerance. The GA-optimized varieties had an increase of 30% of the theoretical ethanol yields than the conventional varieties (Cacho *et al.*, 2023).

1.2.2.2 Integration with Genomic Data

The combination of GAs with genomic information has given new directions as to how crop improvement can be done. A new method integrating GAs with GWAS data was later on designed to optimize Miscanthus traits. This method helped in identifying the genetic indicators with reference to biomass yield and bioconversion and as a result Miscanthus of higher biofuel potential by 25% was developed (Sandhu *et al.*, 2022).

1.3 AI-Driven Process Optimization

Artificial intelligence (AI) is at the forefront of process improvement in the biofuel sector through its enormous processing, cost-saving, and quality promotion advantages. Thus, it could be noted that, biofuel production processes are complicated often involving several parameters and complex interactions and this is where AI techniques can be helpful to overcome this complicatedness and help in extracting the optimum performance (Okolie, 2024). Within the process of biofuel production, integration of AI involves application of the machine learning and deep learning models for pretreatment of the feedstock, fermentation process, distillation as well as purification. These high-level mathematical models can take large quantity of real time inputs, process them, and adapt quickly to the parameter settings to respond to the process observed (Saad & Murray, 2022).

AI and its role in Processes is not merely to operate at the control layer but is also present in other layers such as predict, detect, and learn layers. Hence, with the help of historical information and instant feed, AI systems can forecast process variations, avoid equipment breakdowns, and optimize the yield and quality of products on a permanently ongoing basis (Alagumalai *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, AI-driven process optimization is playing a crucial role in addressing one of the key challenges in biofuel production: introduction of variability it feedstock composition. Through the real time monitoring of feedstock properties and the instant control of process parameters AI systems have provided the rather rigid system with a level of flexibility that permits the conversion of a broader range of feedstock materials (Y. Yang & Harper, 2024).

AI is being complemented by IoT and better sensors to improve the systems of process optimization. The integration of these two provides better ways of monitoring and controlling the production hence efficiency control of energy use, wastage, and overall sustainability of biofuels (Shelare *et al.*, 2023). It is therefore anticipated that with increasing improvement of the AI technologies, their involvement in the enhancement of processes used in biofuel production will also increase. Some of the evolutions are reinforcement learning for self-sufficient process management, digital twins for virtual improvement, and federated learning for synchronized enhancement across several facilities (Petsagkourakis *et al.*, 2020a). The usage of AI in the process optimization of biofuel production is not without difficulties, which can relate to data quality, the understanding of the results provided by the implemented model, or integration with existing systems. But the opportunities for improvement of efficiency, cost decrease, and environment preservation make the investments and innovations in this sphere persistent (T. Ahmad *et al.*, 2021).

In addition, Table 1.1 illustrates various AI-driven process technologies that have been applied in biofuel production over the past decade, along with their specific applications and relevant references. This table provides a comprehensive overview of the major technological advancements in the field and their contributions to optimizing biofuel production processes. These technologies, as outlined in Table 1.1, showcase how AI applications have been utilized across various stages of biofuel production to improve efficiency, sustainability, and scalability. Each technology targets specific challenges such as process variability, resource optimization, and quality control, making them vital components in advancing the biofuel industry toward a cleaner energy future.

Table 1.1 AI technologies applied in biofuel production processes over the last decade.

Technology	Application in biofuel production	References
Machine Learning (ML)	Used for feedstock optimization by predicting the best crops and environmental conditions for biofuel production.	Liakos *et al.*, 2018; Eftekhari *et al.*, 2024
Genetic Algorithms (GA)	Optimization of biofuel crop traits like yield, lignin content, and drought resistance.	Cacho *et al.*, 2023; Sandhu *et al.*, 2022
Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs)	Modeling and optimization of fermentation processes, enhancing ethanol yields from lignocellulosic biomass.	Kumar *et al.*, 2016; David *et al.*, 2023
Reinforcement Learning (RL)	Process control optimization for biodiesel and ethanol production, improving yields and reducing energy consumption.	Petsagkourakis *et al.*, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2024
Deep Learning (DL)	Real-time quality control using computer vision for assessing biomass and biofuel quality.	Zhang *et al.*, 2023; Contreras-Medina *et al.*, 2024
IoT with AI Integration	Real-time monitoring of biofuel production, optimizing water and energy use in large-scale biodiesel plants.	Shelare *et al.*, 2023; Duarah *et al.*, 2024
Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) with AI	Dynamic sustainability assessments of biofuel production, accounting for environmental impacts from feedstock to biofuel use.	Algren *et al.*, 2021; Losada *et al.*, 2024
Ensemble Machine Learning	Predicting bioethanol yields based on biomass composition and process conditions, improving process efficiency.	Konishi, 2020; Briones *et al.*, 2024
Computer Vision + Spectroscopy	Non-destructive real-time quality assessment of biofuels using image and spectroscopic data for contaminant detection.	Liang *et al.*, 2024; Rao *et al.*, 2023
Digital Twins + AI	Virtual optimization of biofuel production processes to reduce energy use and emissions in biorefineries.	Demirel & Rosen, 2023; Gurawalia *et al.*, 2024

1.3.1 Neural Networks for Biofuel Production Process Control

Neural networks, particularly deep learning models, are very powerful tools for process control and optimization of biofuel production processes. The methods allow handling of complex and nonlinear relationships and