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DEVELOPMENT OF A HIGH CLEARANCE ANDROID-CONTROLLED INTER-ROW WEEDER FOR RICE INTENSIFICATION SYSTEM

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Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DEVELOPMENT OF A HIGH CLEARANCE ANDROID-CONTROLLED INTER-ROW WEEDER FOR RICE INTENSIFICATION SYSTEM

By

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Research was carried out to develop a high clearance inter-row weeder machine with Android control system, to address the challenge of high crop damage associated existing inter-row weeding machines due to low ground clearance under the system of rice intensification. This research was carried out in three main stages namely: Preliminary studies to evaluation of some existing inter-row weeders, Development of a prototype high clearance Android controlled weeding machine and Evaluation of the prototype machine.

Four existing mechanical inter-row weeding machines with different design configurations used by farmers in Tanjung Karang Malaysia under system of rice intensification were selected and evaluated in terms of crop damage factor at forty days after transplanting. The result revealed that none of the four existing machines could weed up to forty days after transplanting (40DAT) due high crop damage as a result of inadequate machine ground clearance. The frequency of weeding cycles was found to increase rice yield, with 13.1tons/ha for the three cycle weeded plots, whereas a maximum of only 9 tons/ha was recorded with two cycle weeded plots.

A prototype hydraulic powered inter-row weeder having 60cm ground with Android control was developed to weed in paddy field at different stages of paddy heights under the system of rice intensification. The machine was built on Kubota S125 engine as its prime mover. A 120cm diameter cage wheel designed with lugs to aid traction, adequate adjustable track width of 25cm to 30cm to accommodate variation in inter-row distance to reduce crop damage. Other components of the machine are the main frame attached to the prime mover; five row rotary weeding assembly units with hydraulic depth control attached to the main frame. A 12V 3-2 way solenoid directional control valves mounted on MMC-01-4 Manifold block regulate flow to

and out of actuators. An android application was developed to automate the prototype machine via Android phone Bluetooth within 100m operating radius. A 2.4G wireless video module on the machines as the mobile node transmits real time video signal, thus enabling tele-operation of the machine via android phone.

The prototype machine was evaluated to establish its performance parameters at block D, Sawah Sempandan, Tanjung Karang, Selangor Malaysia. The experiment was a Split Plot Design experiment with five (5) main and sub-plots were studied. The plot size of 2.3m x 16.5m (37.95m²) each was used for the evaluation. The main plots are two levels of plant spacing of 30cm x 21cm and 30cm x 18cm, Number of weeding cycles (5 levels), two level of rotor 500 RPM & 600 RPM, Seed rate (two levels). Mechanical weeding was carried out using the high clearance inter-row weeder at 10 days interval as recommended by the system of rice intensification (SRI). Data collected on machine weeding performance were subjected to ANOVA and DUNCAN test analysis using the SAS (version 9.3) statistical software.

Result showed that the prototype machine was able to weed up to fifty days after transplanting with low percentage of crop damage of 2.54%. The mean comparison of rice vegetative height were 61.90cm and 62.18cm while yield were 7.09tons/ha and 7.01tons/ha respectively for the fourth and fifth weeding cycles. These results suggest no significant difference between the fourth and fifth weeding cycles, thus implying weeding can be stopped at the fourth cycle without significant loss in yield. The seed rate and hill spacing were also observed to significantly influence the yield positively. The single seedling plots yielded an average of 9tons/ha both for four and five weeding cycles, while the 2-3 seedling per hill plots yielded an average 5.5 tons/ha to 6 tons/ha for same level of weeding. The analysis of machine rotor rpm was shown to be significant on weeding efficiency and fuel consumption at $P \le 0.05$ level, having 92.93% and 1.29 lit/hr respectively at 600 rpm. However, a similar trend was observed in the percentage of crop damage with increase in rotor speed. The android control user interface design implementation among three groups of planters (A) 18-25 years, (B) 26-32 years and (C) above 32 years, revealed no significant different in the scores of the three age groups that participated in the evaluation. This suggests the ability of all age groups to satisfactorily operate the machine via the android control.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PEMBANGUNAN JENTERA MERUMPAI BERKELEGAAN TINGGI KAWALAN ANDROID UNTUK SISTEM INTENSIFIKASI PADI

Oleh

SAMAILA SULEIMAN



Penyelidikan telah dijalankan untuk membangunkan mesin merumpai antara baris barkelegaan tinggi dengan sistem kawalan Android, untuk menangani cabaran kerosakan tanaman yang tinggi yang dikaitkan dengan mesin merumpai antara baris yang sedia ada kerana berkelegaan rendah di bawah sistem intensifikasi padi. Penyelidikan ini dijalankan dalam tiga peringkat utama iaitu: Kajian permulaan untuk menilai beberapa mesin merumpai yang sedia ada, Pembangunan prototaip mesin merumpai berkelegaan kawalan Adroid dan Penilaian mesin prototaip.

Empat mesin merumpai antara baris yang sedia ada dengan konfigurasi reka bentuk yang berbeza yang digunakan oleh petani di Tanjung Karang Malaysia di bawah sistem intensifikasi padi telah dipilih dan dinilai dari segi faktor kerosakan tanaman pada empat puluh hari selepas pemindahan. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahawa kesemua empat mesin yang sedia ada tidak boleh merumpai sehingga empat puluh hari selepas pemindahan (40DAT) mengakibatkan kerosakan tanaman yang tinggi kerana kelegaan tanah yang tidak mencukupi. Kekerapan kitaran rumpai didapati meningkatkan hasil beras, dengan 13.1 ton / ha untuk tiga plot rumpai, sedangkan maksimum hanya 9 tan / ha dicatatkan dengan dua plot kitaran merumpai.

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Prototaip mesin merumpai antara baris berkuasa hidraulik dengan kelegaan 60cm tanah dengan kawalan Android telah dibangunkan untuk merumpai di sawah padi pada tahap ketinggian yang berbeza di bawah sistem intensifikasi padi. Mesin ini di bangunkan di atas enjin Kubota S125 sebagai penggerak utamanya. Roda sangkar bergarispusat 120cm yang direka bentuk dengan 5baris perumpai berputar untuk membantu daya tarikan, lebar trek laras yang boleh disesuaikan 25cm hingga 30cm untuk menampung variasi jarak antara baris untuk mengurangkan kerosakan tanaman. Komponen lain mesin ini adalah bingkai utama yang dipasang pada

penggerak utama melalui perhimpunan penyangkut kerangka utama. Lima baris unit dengan kawalan kedalaman hidraulik dilampirkan pada bingkai utama. Injap kawalan arah solenoid 12V 3-2 yang dipasang pada blok MMC-01-4 Manifold mengawal aliran kepada dan daripda penggerak. Aplikasi android telah dibangunkan untuk automasi mesin prototaip melalui Bluetooth telefon Android dalam lingkungan radius 100m. Modul video tanpa wayar 2.4G pada mesin merumpai sebagai nod mudah alih menghantar isyarat video masa nyata, sekali gus membolehkan operasi mesin melalui telefon android.

Mesin prototaip dinilai untuk menentukan parameter prestasinya di blok D, Sawah Sempandan, Tanjung Karang, Selangor Malaysia. Eksperimen ini adalah Eksperimen rekabentuk plot tapak lima (5) plot utama dan sub-plot dipelajari. Saiz plot 2.3m x 16.5m (37.95m2) masing-masing digunakan untuk penilaian. Plot utama adalah dua peringkat jarak tumbuhan 30cm x 21cm dan 30cm x 18cm, Bilangan kitaran merumpai (5 tahap), dua tahap rotor 500 RPM & 600 RPM, Kadar biji (dua peringkat). merumpai mekanikal dilakukan dengan menggunakan mesin merumpai berkelegaan tinggi pada selang 10 hari seperti yang diperakukan oleh sistem intensifikasi padi (SRI). Data yang dikumpul pada prestasi merumpai mesin dikenakan analisis ujian ANOVA dan TURKEY menggunakan perisian statistik SAS (versi 9.3).

Hasilnya menunjukkan bahawa mesin prototaip dapat merumpai sehingga lima puluh hari selepas pemindahan dengan peratusan rendah kerosakan tanaman sebanyak 2.54%. Perbandingan purata ketinggian vegetasi padi adalah 61.90cm dan 62.18cm manakala hasil masing-masing adalah 7.09 ton / ha dan 7.01 ton / ha untuk kitaran merumpai keempat dan kelima. Keputusan ini menunjukkan tiada perbezaan yang ketara antara kitaran merumpai keempat dan kelima, dengan itu menyimpulkan merumpai boleh dihentikan pada kitaran keempat tanpa kehilangan hasil yang ketara. Kadar biji dan jarak pokok juga diperhatikan dengan ketara mempengaruhi hasilnya secara positif. Plot anak benih tunggal menghasilkan purata 9 ton / ha untuk empat dan lima pusingan merumpai, sementara plot 2-3 anak setiap plot menghasilkan ratarata 5.5 ton / ha hingga 6 ton / ha untuk tahap merumpai yang sama. Analisis rpm rotor mesin ditunjukkan dengan ketara pada kecekapan pemotongan dan penggunaan bahan api pada tahap P \leq 0.05, masing-masing mempunyai 92.93% dan 1.29 liter /jam pada 600 rpm. Walau bagaimanapun, gaya yang sama diperhatikan dalam peratusan kerosakan tanaman dengan peningkatan kelajuan rotor. Pelaksanaan reka bentuk antara muka pengguna kawalan android di antara tiga kumpulan penanam (A) 18-25 tahun, (B) 26-32 tahun dan (C) di atas 32 tahun, menunjukkan tiada perbezaan yang signifikan dalam skor tiga kumpulan umur yang menyertai penilaiannya. Ini mencadangkan keupayaan semua kumpulan umur untuk mengendalikan mesin dengan memuaskan melalui kawalan android.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 21 June 2017 to conduct the final examination of Samaila Suleiman on his thesis entitled "Development of a High Clearance Android-Controlled Inter-Row Weeder for Rice Intensification System" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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TABLES OF CONTENTS

	1 "50
	i
ABSTRACI	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	III V
APPROVAL	vi
DECLARATION	Viii
LIST OF TABLES	XV
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xxvii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	XXX
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview of the chapter	1
1.2 Background of the Study	1
1.3 Statement of Problem	4
1.4 Research Objective	5
1.5 Scope of the Study	5
1.6 Outline of the Thesis	6
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Overview of the Chapter	7
2.2 Global rice perspective	7
2.3 Rice Production in Malaysia	13
2.3.1 Malaysia Rice Granaries	13
2.3.2 Malaysia rice production among South Ea	ast 15
Asian Nations Region	1 1 10
2.3.3 Malaysia's Current Rice Production, Supp	ply and 18
Demand	
2.3.4 The MR 219 New Rice Variety from Mal	aysia 20
2.3.4.1 Physiology of MR 219	20
2.4 Organic Rice Production and Practices	20 22
2.4.1 MITOROANIC (Malaysian Organic Scher 2.5 System of Disc Intensification (SDI)	me) 22
2.5 System of Rice Intensification (SRI)	22
2.5.1 SKI Objectives and Attribute	24
2.5.2 Deficities of SKI	24
2.5.5 Elimitations to SIT	25
2.5.5 SRL in Malaysia	30
2.5.5 Six in Malaysia 2.6 Types of Weed Control Methods in Rice	30
2.6 1 Preventive Weed Control Method	21
2.6.2 Cultural Weed Control Methods	31
2.6.3 Mechanical Weed Control	32
2.6.4 Inter-row Weeding	32
2.6.4.1 Brush Weeders	35

 \bigcirc

		2.6.4.2 Finger and Torsion Weeders	37
		2.6.4.3 Rotary Weeder	39
		2.6.4.4 Sweep Hoe Weeder	40
		2.6.4.5 Torsion Weeders	41
		2.6.5 Biological Weed Control Methods	43
	2.7	High Clearance Concept Machines in Rice Production	43
	2.8	Hydraulic Systems in Agricultural Machinery	47
		2.8.1 Hydraulic Power	48
		2.8.2 Flow Rate in Hydraulic System	49
		2.8.3 Fluid Horsepower and Toque	50
		2.8.4 Hydraulic Pump	51
		2.8.5 Hydraulic Motors	53
	2.9	Automations in Weed control.	53
	2.10	Android Development Platforms	58
	2.11	Wireless control for Agricultural Equipments	58
		2.11.1 Types of Wireless Communication	58
		2.11.2 Bluetooth Communications	58
	2.12	Tele-operation Control	59
	2.13	Mechanical properties of paddy soil and machine Mobility	59
	2.14	Factor of Safety	60
	2.15	Field Performance of Mechanical Weeders	61
		2.15.1 Weeding Efficiency	61
		2.15.2 Damage Factor (DF)	62
		2.15.3 Performance Factor (PF)	62
		2.15.4 Effective field capacity	62
3	MA	FERIALS AND METHODS	64
	3.1	An Overview of the Chapter	64
	3.2	Experimental Site	65
	3.3	Preliminary Studies on Four Inter-row Weeding machines	66
	3.4	Design and Development of High Clearance Inter-row	68
		Weeder	
		3.4.1 Technical Specifications of the Kubota S125	68
		Plus power tiller	
		3.4.2 Design Process and Considerations	69
		3.4.3 Design Parameters	69
		3.4.4 Power Requirement of the Rotor Unit	71
		3.4.5 Design of the Rotor Shaft, Cover and Frame	74
	3.5	Determination of Prototype Traction Performance	75
		Parameters	
		3.5.1 Rolling Resistance:	76
		3.5.2 Tractive efficiency:	76
		3.5.3 Drawbar power:	77
	3.6	Basic Principles of Fluid Power	77
	3.7	Development of Hydraulic System for the Prototype	78
		weeder	00
		5.7.1 Pump System Analysis	80 00
		3.7.2 Hydraulic Cylinder Sizing Selection	85 01
		5.7.5 Enguratine Cymilder analysis	ð4

3.7.5 Hydraulic Motor Mounting Design 87 3.7.6 Clutch Actuation Coupler Design 88 3.7.7 Hydraulic Tank Design 88 3.8 Design of High Clearance Weeder Components 89 3.8.1 Main Frame Design 91 3.8.2 Rotary Unit Design 94 3.8.3 Rotor Cover Design 95 3.8.4 Rotor Frame Design 96 3.8.5 The Assembly of the Prototype Machine 98 3.8.6 Center of Mass for Prototype Machine 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 110 3.10.1 Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Force 183 3.10.2 Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Force 111 3.10.2 Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Force 117 3.12.5 Nather Brototype High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Careator Queeder 117		3.7.4	Hydraulic Pump Mounting Design	85
3.7.6 Clutch Actuation Coupler Design 88 3.7.7 Hydraulic Tank Design 88 3.8 Design of High Clearance Weeder Components 89 3.8.1 Main Frame Design 91 3.8.2 Rotary Unit Design 94 3.8.3 Rotor Cover Design 95 3.8.4 Rotor Frame Design 96 3.8.5 The Assembly of the Prototype High Clearance Inter-row Weeder 98 3.8.6 Center of Mass for Prototype Machine 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 106 3.10.1 Determination of spring constant for Differential 110 3.10 Development for High Clearance Weeder 112 3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.4 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 3.12.5 Machine Effective Figh Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.6 Android User Interfa		3.7.5	Hydraulic Motor Mounting Design	87
3.7.7 Hydraulic Tank Design 88 3.8 Design of High Clearance Weeder Components 89 3.8.1 Main Frame Design 91 3.8.2 Rotary Unit Design 94 3.8.3 Rotor Cover Design 95 3.8.4 Rotor Frame Design 96 3.8.5 The Assembly of the Prototype High Clearance Inter-row Weeder 96 3.8.6 Center of Mass for Prototype Machine 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 3.9 Cage Wheel Design 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Design 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Design 101 3.0.1 Determination of Spring constant for Differential 110 10.2 Determination of Apring constant for Differential 111 11.1 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 3.10.2 Determination of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.11.1 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115		3.7.6	Clutch Actuation Coupler Design	88
3.8 Design of High Clearance Weeder Components 89 3.8.1 Main Frame Design 91 3.8.2 Rotary Unit Design 94 3.8.3 Rotor Cover Design 95 3.8.4 Rotor Frame Design 96 3.8.5 The Assembly of the Prototype High Clearance Inter-row Weeder 98 3.8.6 Center of Mass for Prototype Machine 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 3.9 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 103 3.10.1 Determination of pring constant for Differential 110 3.10.2 Determination of Spring 111 3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 112 3.11.1 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 3.12.5 Field Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.6 Field Audation Procedure of the High 117 3.12.7 Field Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.8 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capaci		3.7.7	Hydraulic Tank Design	88
3.8.1 Main Frame Design 91 3.8.2 Rotary Unit Design 94 3.8.3 Rotor Cover Design 95 3.8.4 Rotor Frame Design 96 3.8.5 The Assembly of the Prototype High Clearance Inter-row Weeder 97 3.8.6 Center of Mass for Prototype Machine 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 103 3.10.1 Determination of pring constant for Differential 110 Lock Return Spring 3.11 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Andrib Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.7 <td< td=""><td>3.8</td><td>Design of</td><td>of High Clearance Weeder Components</td><td>89</td></td<>	3.8	Design of	of High Clearance Weeder Components	89
3.8.2 Rotary Unit Design 94 3.8.3 Rotor Cover Design 95 3.8.4 Rotor Frame Design 96 3.8.5 The Assembly of the Prototype High Clearance Inter-row Weeder 97 3.8.6 Center of Mass for Prototype Machine 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 3.9 Cage Wheel Design 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 106 3.10.1 Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Free 108 3.10.2 Determination of Spring constant for Differential Lock Pulling Free 110 Lock Return Spring 3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 3.12.3 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120		3.8.1	Main Frame Design	91
3.8.3 Rotor Cover Design 95 3.8.4 Rotor Frame Design 96 3.8.5 The Assembly of the Prototype High Clearance 97 1nter-row Weeder 3.8.6 Center of Mass for Prototype Machine 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 3.9 Cage Wheel Design 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 106 3.10.1 Determination of pring constant for Differential Lock Pulling Force 108 3.10.2 Determination of spring constant for Differential Lock Return Spring 111 3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 3.12.3 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Weeding Efficiency 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure		3.8.2	Rotary Unit Design	94
3.8.4 Rotor Frame Design 96 3.8.5 The Assembly of the Prototype High Clearance Inter-row Weeder 97 3.8.6 Center of Mass for Prototype Machine 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 3.9 Cage Wheel Design 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 106 3.10.1 Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Force 108 3.10.2 Determination of Spring constant for Differential 110 Lock Return Spring 3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.5 Field Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.4 Fereentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 </td <td></td> <td>3.8.3</td> <td>Rotor Cover Design</td> <td>95</td>		3.8.3	Rotor Cover Design	95
3.8.5 The Assembly of the Prototype High Clearance 97 Inter-row Weeder 97 3.8.6 Center of Mass for Prototype Machine 98 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 99 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 101 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 106 101 3.10.1 Determination of spring constant for Differential 106 102 3.10.2 Determination of spring constant for Differential 110 102 1.1.2 Creatin Diagram of the Control Unit 115 113 3.12 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 11.1 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 11.2.2 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 121 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 121 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 121 3.12.1 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 128 3.		3.8.4	Rotor Frame Design	96
Inter-row Weeder 3.8.6 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 3.9 Cage Wheel Design 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 106 3.10.1 Determination of spring constant for Differential 102 3.10.2 Determination of spring constant for Differential 110 Lock Return Spring 111 111 110 1.1.1 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 3.1.2 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.1.2.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.1.2.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.1.2.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.1.2.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.1.2.7 Experimental Plot 123 3.1.2.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.1.2.9 MR219 Rice Se		3.8.5	The Assembly of the Prototype High Clearance	97
3.8.6 Center of Mass for Prototype Machine 98 3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 3.9 Cage Wheel Design 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Deterdopment of automated system for the machine 106 3.10.1 Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Force 108 3.10.2 Determination of spring constant for Differential 110 Lock Return Spring 3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 117 3.11.1 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 112 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.1 Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 Clearance Weeder 119 3.12.3 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.10 Machines Performance of Experimental Plot			Inter-row Weeder	
3.8.7 Manufacturing Cost of the Machine 101 3.9 Cage Wheel Design 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 106 3.10.1 Determination of Spring constant for Differential 100 3.10.2 Determination of spring constant for Differential 110 10.2 Determination of Spring constant for Differential 110 11.1 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 3.12.5 Field Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.1 Machine Weeding of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.1 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 123		3.8.6	Center of Mass for Prototype Machine	98
3.9 Cage Wheel Design 101 3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 106 3.10.1 Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Force 108 3.10.2 Determination of spring constant for Differential 110 Lock Return Spring 111 110 3.11 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 3.12 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 3.12.3 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.1 Tarsplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 3.12.10 Tansplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 <tr< td=""><td></td><td>3.8.7</td><td>Manufacturing Cost of the Machine</td><td>101</td></tr<>		3.8.7	Manufacturing Cost of the Machine	101
3.9.1 Design requirements for cage wheels 102 3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 106 3.10.1 Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Force 108 3.10.2 Determination of spring constant for Differential Lock Return Spring 111 3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 112 3.12.1 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.3 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 3.12.13 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12	3.9	Cage W	heel Design	101
3.9.2 Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis 103 3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 106 3.10.1 Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Force 108 3.10.2 Determination of spring constant for Differential 110 Lock Return Spring 111 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 112 3.11.1 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 115 3.12 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 Clearance Weeder 112 3.12.3 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 120 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedling of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.11 Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.11 Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot 127<		3.9.1	Design requirements for cage wheels	102
3.10 Development of automated system for the machine 106 3.10.1 Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Force 108 3.10.2 Determination of spring constant for Differential 110 Lock Return Spring 111 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 112 3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 117 115 3.12 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 Clearance Weeder 112 112.1 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 121 3.1		3.9.2	Cage Wheel Finite Element Stress Analysis	103
3.10.1 Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Force 108 3.10.2 Determination of spring constant for Differential Lock Return Spring 110 3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 112 3.11.1 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 3.12 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 3.12.3 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 3.12.11 Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.13 Harvesting Procedure of Preliminary Ex. Plot 130 Summary 133 14.	3.10	Develop	ment of automated system for the machine	106
3.10.2 Determination of spring constant for Differential Lock Return Spring 110 3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 3.11.1 112 3.11 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 115 3.12 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 115 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High Clearance Weeder 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on Experimental Plot 125 3.12.10 Transplanting Mr219 Seedlings on Experimental Plot 126 3.12.11 Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot 130 Summary 133 14.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS 133		3.10.1	Determination of Differential Lock Pulling Force	108
Lock Return Spring 3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 112 3.11.1 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 3.12 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 3.12.3 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.13 Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot 130 130 Summary 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS 13		3.10.2	Determination of spring constant for Differential	110
3.11 Android Control Development for High Clearance Weeder 112 3.11.1 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 3.12 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 3.12.3 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.11 Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot 127 130 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135			Lock Return Spring	
3.11.1 Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit 115 3.12 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 Clearance Weeder 119 117 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot 130 130 Summary 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder used in SRI 137	3.11	Android	Control Development for High Clearance Weeder	112
3.12 Evaluation of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 3.12.3 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 128 128 12.12.13 130 Summary Summary 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 133 137 137 4.2.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 137		3.11.1	Circuit Diagram of the Control Unit	115
3.12.1 Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface 117 3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High 117 Clearance Weeder 119 3.12.3 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot 130 Summary 130 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS 133 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Number of Tillers and Vegetative Paddy Height 137 4.2.3 Machines perfo	3.12	Evaluati	on of the Prototype High Clearance Weeder	117
3.12.2 Field Evaluation Procedure of the High Clearance Weeder 117 3.12.3 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 128 130 Summary 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS 133 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Number of Tillers and Used in SRI 137 4.2.2 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137 Vegetative Paddy Height 4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop		3.12.1	Evaluation of Android Graphical User Interface	117
Clearance Weeder3.12.3Machine Weeding Efficiency3.12.4Percentage of Crop Damage (%)3.12.5Machine Effective Field Capacity3.12.6Android User Interface Test Procedure3.12.7Experimental Design3.12.8Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot3.12.9MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation3.12.10Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on2.12.11Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot3.12.12Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot3.12.13Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot3.12.14Overview of the Chapter3.12.15Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency4RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS4.1Overview of the Chapter4.2Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder4.3Nachines Performance on Weeding Efficiency4.2.1Machines performance on Number of Tillers and Vegetative Paddy Height4.2.3Machines performance on percentage of Crop137Damage		3.12.2	Field Evaluation Procedure of the High	117
3.12.3 Machine Weeding Efficiency 119 3.12.4 Percentage of Crop Damage (%) 119 3.12.5 Machine Effective Field Capacity 120 3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedlings reparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 3.12.11 Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plot 128 130 3.12.13 Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot 130 Summary 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135 4.2.2 Machines performance on Number of Tillers and Vegetative Paddy Height 137 4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137 </td <td></td> <td></td> <td>Clearance Weeder</td> <td></td>			Clearance Weeder	
3.12.4Percentage of Crop Damage (%)1193.12.5Machine Effective Field Capacity1203.12.6Android User Interface Test Procedure1203.12.7Experimental Design1213.12.8Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot1233.12.9MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation1243.12.10Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on Experimental Plot1273.12.11Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot1273.12.12Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots1283.12.13Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot Summary1304RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS1334.1Overview of the Chapter used in SRI1334.2Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder Vegetative Paddy Height137 Vegetative Paddy Height4.2.3Machines performance on percentage of Crop Damage137 Damage		3.12.3	Machine Weeding Efficiency	119
3.12.5Machine Effective Field Capacity1203.12.6Android User Interface Test Procedure1203.12.7Experimental Design1213.12.8Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot1233.12.9MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation1243.12.10Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on Experimental Plot1273.12.11Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot1273.12.12Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots1283.12.13Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot Summary1304RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS1334.1Overview of the Chapter1334.2Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder used in SRI1374.2.1Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 4.2.21374.2.3Machines performance on percentage of Crop Damage137		3.12.4	Percentage of Crop Damage (%)	119
3.12.6 Android User Interface Test Procedure 120 3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 127 3.12.11 Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots 128 3.12.13 Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot 130 Summary 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 used in SRI 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135 4.2.2 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137 Vegetative Paddy Height 4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137		3.12.5	Machine Effective Field Capacity	120
3.12.7 Experimental Design 121 3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on Experimental Plot 125 3.12.11 Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots 128 3.12.13 Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot 130 Summary 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135 4.2.2 Machines performance on Number of Tillers and 137 Vegetative Paddy Height 4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137		3.12.6	Android User Interface Test Procedure	120
3.12.8 Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot 123 3.12.9 MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation 124 3.12.0 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Experimental Plot 127 3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on 125 Superimental Plot 127 3.12.11 Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots 128 3.12.13 Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot 130 Summary 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135 4.2.2 Machines performance on Number of Tillers and 137 Vegetative Paddy Height 12.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137		3.12.7	Experimental Design	121
3.12.9MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation1243.12.10Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on Experimental Plot1253.12.11Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot1273.12.12Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots1283.12.13Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot130SummarySummary1334.1Overview of the Chapter1334.2Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder133used in SRI4.2.1Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency1354.2.2Machines performance on Number of Tillers and Vegetative Paddy Height1374.2.3Machines performance on percentage of Crop137		3.12.8	Land Preparation of the Experimental Plot	123
3.12.10 Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on Experimental Plot 125 3.12.11 Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot 127 3.12.12 Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots 128 3.12.13 Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot 130 Summary 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135 4.2.2 Machines performance on Number of Tillers and Vegetative Paddy Height 137 4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137		3.12.9	MR219 Rice Seedling Preparation	124
Experimental Plot3.12.11Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot1273.12.12Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots1283.12.13Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot130SummarySummary1334.1Overview of the Chapter1334.2Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder133used in SRI4.2.1Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency1354.2.2Machines performance on Number of Tillers and Vegetative Paddy Height1374.2.3Machines performance on percentage of Crop137DamageDamage137		3.12.10	Transplanting MR219 Seedlings on	125
3.12.11Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot1273.12.12Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots1283.12.13Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot130SummarySummary1334.1Overview of the Chapter1334.2Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder1334.2.1Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency1354.2.2Machines performance on Number of Tillers and Vegetative Paddy Height1374.2.3Machines performance on percentage of Crop137			Experimental Plot	
3.12.12Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots1283.12.13Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot130SummarySummary1334.1Overview of the Chapter1334.2Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder1334.2Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency1354.2.1Machines performance on Number of Tillers and Vegetative Paddy Height1374.2.3Machines performance on percentage of Crop137DamageDamage137		3.12.11	Mechanical Weeding of Experimental Plot	127
3.12.13Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot Summary1304 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS 4.1 4.2133 Overview of the Chapter used in SRI 4.2133 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder used in SRI 4.2.1 4.2.1 4.2.2133 Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135 4.2.2133 134 134 135 135 135 136 137 <b< td=""><td></td><td>3.12.12</td><td>Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots</td><td>128</td></b<>		3.12.12	Harvesting Procedure of Experimental Plots	128
Summary 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS 133 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135 4.2.2 Machines performance on Number of Tillers and 137 Vegetative Paddy Height 4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137 Damage Damage Damage Damage Damage		3.12.13	Harvesting Procedure for Preliminary Ex. Plot	130
4RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS1334.1Overview of the Chapter1334.2Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder1334.2Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder133used in SRI4.2.1Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency1354.2.2Machines performance on Number of Tillers and137Vegetative Paddy Height4.2.3Machines performance on percentage of Crop137DamageDamageDamage137			Summary	
4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS 1334.1Overview of the Chapter1334.2Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder1334.2Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder133used in SRI4.2.1Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency1354.2.2Machines performance on Number of Tillers and137Vegetative Paddy Height4.2.3Machines performance on percentage of Crop137DamageDamageDamage137		III TO AN	ID DISCUSSIONS	122
 4.1 Overview of the Chapter 133 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected Inter-row Weeder 133 used in SRI 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135 4.2.2 Machines performance on Number of Tillers and 137 Vegetative Paddy Height 4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137 Damage 	4 RES	Ouerrie	ND DISCUSSIONS	133
 4.2 Result of preliminary studies on selected inter-row weeder 133 used in SRI 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135 4.2.2 Machines performance on Number of Tillers and 137 Vegetative Paddy Height 4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137 Damage 	4.1	Dvervie Dogult o	w of the Chapter	133
 4.2.1 Machines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135 4.2.2 Machines performance on Number of Tillers and 137 Vegetative Paddy Height 4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137 Damage 	4.2		The premimary studies on selected inter-row weeder	133
 4.2.1 Watchines Performance on Weeding Efficiency 135 4.2.2 Machines performance on Number of Tillers and 137 Vegetative Paddy Height 4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137 Damage 			JNI Machinas Darformanaa on Waading Efficiency	125
 4.2.2 Watchines performance on Number of Thiers and 137 Vegetative Paddy Height 4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137 Damage 		4.2.1 1 2 2	Machines performance on Number of Tillers and	133
4.2.3 Machines performance on percentage of Crop 137 Damage		4.2.2	Wagetative Daddy Height	13/
Tachines performance on percentage of Clop 157		123	Machines performance on percentage of Cron	127
		т.2.Ј	Damage	137

xii

	4.2.4	Machines performance on Yield of Rice	138
	4.2.5	Summary of Results on preliminary studies	138
4.3	Result of	of Success Rate Evaluation of Android Controller	138
4.4	Result of	of Android Controller User Interface Evaluation	139
4.5	Perform	nance evaluation of Prototype High Clearance	142
	Inter-ro	w Weeder	
4.6	Main Fa	actors Effect Plots	145
4.7	Single F	Factor Effect on response variables	152
	4.7.1	Effect of number of weeding cycles on response	152
		Variables	
	4.7.2	Effect of Hill Spacing on dependents variables	155
	4.7.3	Effect of RPM on dependents variables	157
	4.7.4	Effect of Forward speed on dependents variables	159
	4.7.5	Effect of Seed rate on response variables	160
4.8	Two Fa	ctor Interaction Effect on response variables	162
	4.8.1	Effect of Number of Weeding and Hill spacing	164
		on response variable	
	4.8.2	Effect of Number of Weeding and RPM on	167
		response variables	
	4.8.3	Effect of Number of Weeding and Forward	170
		Speed on response variables	
	4.8.4	Effect of Number of Weeding and Seed Rate on	173
		response variables	
	4.8.5	Effect of Number of Hill spacing and RPM on	175
		response variables	
	4.8.6	Effect of Hill spacing and Forward speed on	177
		response Variables	
	4.8.7	Effect of Number of Hill spacing and Seed Rate	178
		on response variables	
	4.8.8	Effect of RPM and Forward speed on response	179
		Variables	
	4.8.9	Effect of RPM and Seed rate on response	181
		variables	
	4.8.10	Effect of Forward speed and Seed rate on	183
		response variables	
4.9	Three F	actor Interaction Effect on response variables	186
	4.9.1	Effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing and	186
		RPM on response variables	
	4.9.2	Effect of Number of weeding, forward speed,	190
		Seed rate on response variables	
	4.9.3	Effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Forward speed	194
		on response variables	
	4.9.4	Effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Seed rate on	196
		response Variables	
4.10	Four Fa	ctor Interaction Effect on response Variables	199
	4.10.1	Effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing,	199
		Forward speed and Seed rate on response	
		Variables	

		4.10.2	Effect of Hill spacing, RPM, Forward speed and Seed rate on response variables	200
	4.11	Five Fact	tor Effect on response variables	202
		4.11.1	Effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing,	202
			RPM, Forward speed and Seed rate on Weeding	
			Efficiency	
		4.11.2	Effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing,	203
			RPM, Forward speed and Seed rate on Effective	
			field capacity	
		4.11.3	Effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing,	203
			RPM, Forward speed and Seed rate on Plant	
			Height	
		4.11.4	Effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing,	203
			RPM, Forward speed and Seed rate on Fuel	
			Consumption	
		4.11.5	Effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing,	203
			RPM, Forward speed and Seed rate on Number	
			of Tillers	
		4.11.6	Effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing,	204
			RPM, Forward speed and Seed rate on Number	
			of Effective Tillers	
		4.11.7	Effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing,	204
	4.10	G 1.	RPM, Forward speed and Seed rate on Yield	204
	4.12	Correlati	on Coefficient among studied responses	204
5	CON		NS AND DECOMMENDATIONS	207
3	5 1	Conclusio	NS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	207
	5.1	Recomm	endations	207
	5.2	Contribut	tion of the Research	208
	5.5	Contribu	tion of the Research	208
REFE	RENCI	ES		210
APPE	NDICE	S		230
BIOD	ATA O	- F STUDE	NT	332
LIST	OF PUI	BLICATI	ONS	333

6

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
2.1	Comparison of rice productivity among the various rice growing areas in the Peninsular of Malaysia	14
2.2	Rice Production, Supply and Demand of Milled rice in Malaysia.	19
2.3	Farming practices of organic and conventional rice farming	21
2.4	Principles and Practices of SRI	24
3.1	Specification of SRI Inter-row Weeders evaluated	67
3.2	Standard values of Cone Index for different soil surface condition	75
3.3	Drawbar power coefficient for Tractors and soil condition	77
3.4	Rexpower Hydraulic Pump RG-F Series Specification data sheet.	82
3.5	Mass Properties of Rotor Unit Assembly	83
3.6	Weight of Power tiller components removed.	91
3.7	Material Properties of the main frame	92
3.8	Main Frame loading and magnitude	93
3.9	Von Mises Stress Analysis of the Main Frame Assembly	94
3.10	Technical Specification of the Machine	100
3.11	Cost of manufacturing prototype high clearance inter-row weeder	101
3.12	Material Properties of Alloy Steel used for Cage Wheel	104
3.13	Cage Wheel Loading fixture	104
3.14	Mass properties of cage wheel assembly	106
3.15	Differential brake action force	109
3.16	Spring properties	111

	4.1	Result of Mechanical Inter-row Weeders performances	134
	4.2	ANOVA for performance parametes	135
	4.3	Tukey mean comparison of dependent variables	136
	4.4	Success Rate for Android Controller Evaluation.	139
	4.5		
	4.6	Grouping Information Using Tukey Method	141
	4.7	ANOVA for Mean squares single and interaction effects on response variable	143
	4.8	Tukey Mean comparison of treatment effects	144
	4.9	Tukey Mean comparison effect of number of weeding on responses	152
	4.10	Tukey mean comparison of hill spacing on responses	156
	4.11	Tukey Mean comparison of RPM on response	158
	4.12	Tukey mean comparison for effect of forward speed on responses	159
	4.13	Tukey mean comparison of effect of seed rate on response variable	160
	4.14	ANOVA for Two factor interaction effects on response variables	163
	4.15	Tukey means effect of Number of Weeding and Hill spacing onWeeding efficiency	164
	4.16	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Hill spacing on Plant height	164
	4.17	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Hill spacing on Number of Tillers	165
	4.18	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Hill spacing on Number of Effective Tillers	165
	4.19	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Hill spacing on Yield	166
	4.20	Effect of Number of Weeding and RPM on Weeding efficiency	167

	4.21	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and RPM on Plant height	167
	4.22	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and RPM on Fuel Consumption	168
	4.23	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and RPM on Percentage of crop damage	168
	4.24	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and RPM on Number of Tillers	169
	4.25	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and RPM on Number of Effective Tillers	169
	4.26	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and RPM on Yield	170
	4.27	Turkey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Forward Speed on EFC	170
	4.28	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Forward Speed on Plant height	171
	4.29	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Forward Speed on Fuel Consumption	171
	4.30	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Forward Speed on Number of Tillers	172
	4.31	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Forward Speed on Number of Effective Tillers	172
	4.32	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Forward Speed on Yield	173
	4.33	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Seed Rate on Plant height	173
	4.34	Effect of Number of Weeding and Seed Rate on Number of Tillers	174
	4.35	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Seed Rate on Number of Effective Tillers	174
	4.36	Tukey mean effect of Number of Weeding and Seed Rate on Yield	175
	4.37	Tukey mean effect of Number of Hill spacing and RPM on weeding efficiency	176

4.38	Tukey mean effect of Hill spacing and RPM on Fuel consumption	176
4.39	Tukey mean effect of Number of Hill spacing and RPM on percentage of Crop damage	176
4.40	Tukey mean effect of Number of Hill spacing and RPM on Yield	177
4.41	Tukey mean effect of Number of Hill spacing and Forward speed on Effective field capacity	177
4.42	Tukey mean effect of Number of Hill spacing and Forward speed on Fuel consumption	178
4.43	Tukey mean effect of Number of Hill spacing and Forward speed on Yield	178
4.44	Tukey mean effect of Number of Hill spacing and Seed Rate on Number of Tillers	178
4.45	Tukey mean effect of Number of Hill spacing and Seed Rate on Number of Effective Tillers	179
4.46	Turkey mean effect of Number of Hill spacing and Seed Rate on Yield	179
4.47	Tukey mean effect of RPM and Forward speed on weeding efficiency	180
4.48	Tukey mean effect of RPM and Forward speed on Effective field capacity	180
4.49	Tukey mean effect of RPM and Forward speed on Fuel consumption	180
4.50	Tukey mean effect of RPM and Forward speed on crop damage	181
4.51	Tukey mean effect of RPM and Seed rate on weeding efficiency	181
4.52	Tukey mean effect of RPM and Seed rate on Fuel consumption	182
4.53	Tukey mean effect of RPM and Seed rate on percentage of crop damage	182
4.54	Tukey mean effect of RPM and Seed rate on Number of Tillers	182
4.55	Tukey mean effect of RPM and Seed rate on Number of Effective Tillers	183

4.56	Tukey mean effect of RPM and Seed rate on Yield	183
4.57	Tukey mean effect of Forward speed and Seed rate on Effective field capacity	184
4.58	Tukey mean effect of Forward speed and Seed rate on plant height	184
4.59	Tukey mean effect of Forward speed and Seed rate on Fuel consumption	184
4.60	Tukey mean effect of Forward speed and Seed rate on Number of Tillers	185
4.61	Tukey men effect of Forward speed and Seed rate on Number of effective Tillers	185
4.62	Tukey mean effect of Forward speed and Seed rate on Yield	186
4.63	Tukey mean effect of Nweeding, HS, and RPM on weeding efficiency	186
4.64	Tukey mean effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing and RPM on plant height	187
4.65	Tukey mean effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing and RPM on Fuel consumption	188
4.66	Tukey mean effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing and RPM on percentage of crop damage	188
4.67	Tukey mean effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing and RPM on Number of Tillers	189
4.68	Tukey mean effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing and RPM on Number of Effective Tillers	189
4.69	Turkey mean effect of Number of weeding, Hill spacing and RPM on Yield	190
4.70	Tukey mean effect of Number of weeding, Forward speed, Seed rate on Effective field capacity	190
4.71	Tukey mean effect of Number of weeding, Forward speed, Seed rate on Plant height	191
4.72	Tukey mean effect of Number of weeding, Forward speed, Seed rate on Fuel consumption	192

	4.73	Tukey mean effect of Number of weeding, Forward speed, Seed rate on Number of Tillers	
	4.74	Tukey mean effect of Number of weeding, Forward speed, Seed rate on Number of Effective Tillers	193
	4.75	Tukey mean effect of Number of weeding, Forward speed, Seed rate on Yield	193
	4.76	Tukey mean effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Forward speed on Weeding efficiency	194
	4.77	Tukey mean effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Forward speed on Effective field capacity	194
	4.78	Tukey mean effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Forward speed on Fuel consumption	195
4.79		Tukey mean effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Forward speed on percentage of crop damage	195
	4.80	Turkey mean effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Forward speed on Yield	196
4.8		Tukey mean effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Seed rate on Weeding efficiency	196
2	4.82	Tukey mean effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Seed rate on Fuel consumption	197
4.83		Tukey man effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Seed rate on percentage of crop damage	197
	4.84	Tukey men effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Seed rate on Number of Tillers	198
	4.85	Tukey mean effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Seed rate on Number of Effective Tillers	198
	4.86	Tukey mean effect of Hill spacing, RPM and Seed rate on Yield	198
	4.87	Simple correlation for the studied factors and responses.	205

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
2.1	World map illustrating the centers of origins for crop plants as proposed by Vavilov (1926): 1. Mexico-Guatemala, 2. Peru- Ecuador-Bolivia, 2A. Southern Chile, 2B. Southern Brazil, 3. Mediterranean, 4. Middle East, 5. Ethiopia, 6. Central Asia, 7. Indo	8
2.2	Historical and modern map of rice distribution	8
2.3	Milled rice world production map	9
2.4	World map showing consumption, import, and export of milled rice 2009–2010	10
2.5	Current Global Paddy Production and Imports	11
2.6	Average Rice Productivity by Country 2000-2008	11
2.7	World/Asia per capita rice consumption	12
2.8	World Rice Consumption trend 1960-2011	12
2.9	Malaysian Rice Granary Map	14
2.10	Malaysia rice yield target for self-sufficiency (a) and Rice Cultivated Area (b)	16
2.11	Southeast Asia rice area and milled rice	16
2.12	Southeast Asia nations rice productions in tons per hectare 2005-2016	17
2.13	Malaysia Rice Yield Productivity Changes per Year	18
2.14	Malaysia rice yield	19
2.15	MR219 Vegetative height measurement	20
2.16	Global adoption of System of Rice Intensification	23
2.17	Cono Weeder being used on SRI plot at Putrajaya, Malaysia	26
2.18	Two-row low clearance motorised weeder for SRI	27
2.19	Five-row walk behind weeder for SRI	27

2.20	Un-weeded area left behind due to inadequate rotor width	28
2.21	Three-row weeding machine for paddy	29
2.22	Lack of ground clearance for three-row weeder	29
2.23	Crop damage path due to lack of clearance height at 30DAT	30
2.24	Inter-row Mechanical weeders for SRI	34
2.25	Inter-row Mechanical Weeding in Vegetables	35
2.26	Illustrating the working principles of vertical brush weeding	36
2.27	The Thermec B brush weeder	36
2.28	Horizontal axis Inter-row Brushing Machine	37
2.29	Tine mechanical inter-row weeder	37
2.30	Finger weeder	38
2.31	Finger weeder components and pattern.	38
2.32	Powered rotary weeder	39
2.33	Tractor Mounted Three Point Hitch Rotary Weeder	40
2.34	Sweep hoe weeder (Non-Spring)	40
2.35	Spring Loaded Sweep Weeder	41
2.36	Torsion Weeder	42
2.37	Torsion weeder sketch	42
2.38	High Clearance Sprayer for Paddy Developed at MARDI	44
2.39	High Clearance Sprayer Developed on Kubota Tractor by Paddy Farmers at Tanjung Karang, Malaysia	44
2.40	High Clearance Boom Sprayer Developed by MARDI	45
2.41	High Clearance Sprayer Build on Paddy Transplanter at MARD	45
2.42	High Clearance Track Boom on Kubota Tractor (MARDI)	46
2.43	Utility Vehicle (Sprayer Version, Iseki JK-14).	46

2.44	Hydraulic operated weeder and depth control	47
2.45	Pump Classification chart	52
2.46	External gear pump	52
2.47	Layout of sensors and components Robot Vehicle	55
2.48	Row-following control system.	56
2.49	Cultivator with weeding cleaner.	56
2.50	Schematic diagram of dual-spectra camera system.	57
2.51	Vehicle teleoperation.	59
3.1	Flow Chart of the research processes	64
3.2	Google map of experimental plot at Tanjung Karang Malaysia	65
3.3	Inter-row SRI mechanical weeders evaluated	67
3.4	Kubota RT125 Plus power tiller used as prime mover	68
3.5	Paddy parameters adopted in design	70
3.6	Weeding Claw Unit Geometry	71
3.7	Alternate arrangement of weeding claw units on octagonal rotary wheel	72
3.8	Five units of weeding Rotors	74
3.9	Hydraulic Manifold circuite showing solenoids and connection ports	78
3.10	Hydraulic Manifold with 12V solenoid directional control valves	79
3.11	Hydraulic Manifold 3D & 2D design	79
3.12	Hydraulic Circuit Diagram of the Andriod Wireless Inter-row Weeder	80
3.13	Rexpower Hydraulic Pump RG-F306 Series mounted on the Machine	82
3.14	BOSCH 18cm stroke hydraulic cylinders and Rotor unit assembly	83

3.15	The Rotor Unit Assembly	
3.16	Hydraulic Pump Mounting arrangement	86
3.17(a)	3D model of Hydraulic Motor coupler	87
3.17(b)	Hydraulic motor mounting and coupler.	87
3.18	Hydraulic Clutch actuation design	88
3.19	3D Model of the hydraulic tank	89
3.20	Fabricated Hydraulic tank design and features	89
3.21	Weighing of Soil Working Components of the Power Tiller	90
3.22	Main hitch frame	91
3.23	Main Frame dimensions and Assembly	92
3.24	Main Frame 3D Mesh	93
3.25	Rotor weeding Unit.	95
3.26	Orthographic views and dimensions of the Rotor unit	95
3.27	Rotor chain cover housing	96
3.28	Rotor frame Assembly	97
3.29	3D Design of high clearance assembly	98
3.30	Prototype high clearance inter-row weeder	99
3.31	Cage Wheel with Lugs for high clearance Weeder	103
3.32	Cage Wheel Mesh analysis	105
3.33	Cage Wheel Von Mises Stress analysis	106
3.34	Flow Chart diagram of Android Application	107
3.35	Measurement of brake actuation force on the prime mover.	108
3.36	An 8Kgf Electromagnetic Pull type Solenoid	109
3.37	Spring property test on Instron Universal Testing Machine Model 5565	111

xxiv

3.38	Coiled Springs tested	
3.39	Spring Load (N) Vs Compression Extesion (mm)	112
3.40	Block Diagram of Android Wireless Control Architecture.	113
3.41	Layout Architecture for the Wireless Control	114
3.42	Solenoid actuators for left and right differential locks	115
3.43	Circuit Diagram of the Mobile Node	116
3.44	Mobile Node Hardware	116
3.45	Mobile node hardware mounted on Prototype machine	117
3.46	Weed density data collection	118
3.47	Rotor rpm experimental measurement	118
3.48	Tank refill and rpm throttle control	119
3.49	Android User Inter face	121
3.50	Experimental factors and their levels	122
3.51	Rotavation, Leveling and Puddling operations	123
3.52	Seed treatment and seedling tray preparation	124
3.53	MR219 Seedling Nursery	125
3.54	MR219 Seedling showing inset machine transplanting	126
3.55	MR219 transplanted on 11/07/2016	126
3.56	Experimental Plot at Nine (9) days after Transplanting	127
3.57	Shows (a) Tiller counting, (b) Plant height measurement and (c) Weed sampling.	128
3.58	(a) Weeding at 40DAT and (b) Weeding at 50DAT	128
3.59	Matured rice before harvesting operation	129
3.60	Experimental yield harvesting process	130
3.61	ISEKI 695 model rice combine on experimental plot	131

	3.62	.62 The Mini GAC, moisture meter	
	4.1	Effect of Machine ground clearance and Vegetative paddy component	134
	4.2	Graphical performance of the selected machines	135
	4.3	Effect of small rotor width (five row weeder) of cut on weeding efficiency	137
	4.4	Success Rate of Wireless Connectivity	139
	4.5	Android control Application interface.	140
	4.6	Normal Probability plot of residuals	141
	4.7	Main effect plots on yield of rice	145
	4.8	Main effect plots on Number of Effective Tillers	146
	4.9	Main plot effect on Number of Plant Tillers	147
	4.10	Main plot effect on percentage of Crop damage	148
	4.11	Main plot effect on Fuel consumption	149
	4.12	Main plot effect on Plant Vegetative height	150
	4.13	Main plot effect on effective field capacity of the machine	151
	4.14	Main plot effects on weeding efficiency of the machine	151
4.15		Line plot yield with respect to number of weeding and seeding rate	154
	4.16	Line plot of Yield from N.weeding Vs Hill spacing	155
	4.17	Line plot of rice yield vs hill spacing and number of weeding	157
	4.18	Line plot of effect of seed rate on rice yield	161
	4.19	Box plot Number of weeding Vs Hill spacing on Yield	166
	4.20	Box plot of Number of weeding Vs Seed rate on Yield	175

LIST OF APPENDICES

	Appendix		Page
	A1	Technical specifications of Kubota S125 power tiller	230
	A2	Performance curve for Kubota RT125DI power tiller engine	231
	B1	Detailed Working Drawing of the High Clearance SRI Mechanical Weeder	232
	B2	2 inch Rotor Frame support bar	233
	В3	Rotor Frame Assembly	234
	B4	Main Frame Assembly	235
	В5	Crop Protection Guard	236
	B6	Main Frame Hitching Bar	237
	В7	Hydraulic Motor Coupler	238
	B8	Lower Rotor Drive Sprocket	239
	В9	Upper drive sprocket	240
	B10	Sprocket casing	241
	B11	Rotor shaft	242
	B12	Rotor Frame	243
	B13	Weeding claw	244
	B14	Rotor unit assembly	245
	B15	Lug Wheel Traction Unit	246
	B16	Rotary Unit Exploded View	247
	B17	Main Frame Hitch	248
	B18	Rear Wheel Adjuster	249
	B19	Caster Wheel carrier	250
	B20	New rear wheel assembly	251

	B21	Rear wheel section	252
	B22	Cage Wheel	253
	С	Android Program/Sketch	254
	D1	ANOVA Table: Effect of independent variables on Weeding efficiency	263
	D2	ANOVA Table: Effect of independent variables on Effective Field Capacity (EFC)	264
	D3	ANOVA Table: Effect of independent variables on Plant height	265
	D4	ANOVA Table: Effect of independent variables on Fuel Consumption	266
	D5	ANOVA Table: Effect of independent variables on Percentage of Crop Damage	267
	D6	ANOVA Table: Effect of independent variables on Number of Tillers (NT)	268
	D7	ANOVA Table: Effect of independent variables on Number of Effective Tillers (NET)	269
	D8	ANOVA Table: Effect of independent variables on Yield	270
	D9	SAS Codes and Data set	271
	D10	Table 0.1 : One-way ANOVA: score versus age groups	278
	E1	Mass property simulation of Rotor unit assembly	279
	E2	Mass properties of Main frame	280
	E3	Mass properties of Cage Wheel Assembly	281
	E4	Table 4.2 : ANOVA: Weeding efficiency versus Machines (Treatments)	282
	E5	Table : ANOVA: Paddy Height 30 DAT (cm) versus Machines (Treatments)	282
	E6	Table : ANOVA: Number of Tillers 30 DAT versus Machines (Treatments)	282
	E7	Table : ANOVA: Cd versus Machines (Treatments)	282

E8	Table : Grouping Information Cd Using Tukey Method	283
E9	Table ANOVA: Yield versus Machines (Treatments)	283
E10	Table : Mean comparison of Yield and Treatments Using Tukey Method	283
F1	Table 4.87	284
F2	Table 4.88	286
F3	Table 4.89	288
F4	Table 4.90	290
F5	Table 4.91	292
F6	Table 4.92	294
F7	Table 4.93	296
F8	Table 4.94	297
F9	Table 4.95	298
F10	Table 4.96	299
F11	Table 4.97	300
F12	Table 4.98	301
F13	Table 4.99	302
F14	Table 4.100	303
G1	Table 4.101	304
G2	Table 4.102	308
G3	Table 4.103	312
G4	Table 4.104	316
G5	Table 4.105	320
G6	Table 4.106	324
G7	Table 4.107	328

6

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS / NOTATIONS

AISC	American Institute of Steel Construction
ASME	American Society of Mechanical Engineers
ASABE	American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers
MARDI	Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute
CCD	Charge-coupled device
DAT	Days after Transplanting
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FAOSTAT	Food and Agricultural Organization. Statistics
GM	Genetically Modified
GPS	Global Positioning System
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IADA	Integrated Agricultural Development Area
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
KADA	Agricultural Development Authority
MADA	Muda Agricultural Development Authority
NIR	Near Infrared
NOSC	National Organic SRI Center
OA	Organic Agriculture
RMP	Recommended Management practice
RM	Malaysian Ringgit
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia

UKM	National University of Malaysia
MMS	Multimedia Messaging Service
3D	Three dimensions
Р	Pressure (N/m^2)
F	Force (N)
A	Area (m^2)
W	Work done (Nm)
P _w	Power (Nm/s)
t	Time (s)
HP	Horsepower
V	Displacement in $in^3/stroke$
A	Cross section of the bore in in^2
L	Cylinder stroke in <i>in</i> .
Q	Flow rate gal/min orliter/min
N	Speed (rpm)
Т	Torque $(N.m)$
ηρ	Overall pump efficiency (%)
Tt	Theoretical torque $(lbf - in)$
Vp	Displacement (in ³)
Fs	Factor of safety
Sal	Allowable strength
σαρ	Applied stress
η _w	Weeding Efficiency
W1	Weight of weeds before weeding (g)

	W2	Weight of weeds after weeding (g)
	DF	Damage factor
	Q1	Number of tillers in 10 m row length before weeding.
	Q2	Number of tillers damaged along 10 m row length after weeding
	Се	Effective field capacity (hah ⁻¹)
	S	Travel speed of the weeder (kmh ⁻¹)
	Wc	Width of work (m)
	Fe	Field efficiency of the weeder (%)
	Tt	Total time (h)
	Te	Useful time working (h)
	Wc	Working capacity (hha ⁻¹)
	RPM	Revolution per minute
	Awc	Area of weeding claw (cm ²)
	Aru	Number of claws on each rotor
	Edf	Effective draft force (N)
	Aru	Area of rotor unit (cm ²)
	Ss	Shear stress of soil (Ncm ⁻²)
	Pr	Power requirement for the rotor unit (Hp)
	Ks	Maximum tangential force (kg)
	Cs	Reliability factor, 1.5 for non-rocky soils and 1 for rocky soil
	Nc	Power rating of the prime mover (Hp)
	ης	Tractive efficiency value for forward rotation of rotor shafts
	ηz	Coefficient of engine power reservation between 0.7 to 0.8
	μmin	Minimum tangential speed of the rotor (m/s)

xxxii

	F	Force applied (N)
	-K	Spring constant
	x	Spring extension (cm)
	Qact	Actual pump flow rate (gpm)
	D	Displacement (cc/rev)
	V _{eff}	Volumetric efficiency (%,)
	E_p	Pump's mechanical efficiency (%)
	Ls	Lug spacing (mm)
	h	Depth of lug sinkage (mm)
	S	Minimum shear spacing (mm)
	i	Maximum slip
	r	Wheel radius (mm)
	Μ	Mobility number (dimensionless)
	CI	Cone Index (kPa)
	W	Weight on tyre (kN)
	b, d & h	Tyre width, tyre diameter & tyre section height (m)
	δ	Tyre deflection underweight W, (1m)
	ρ	Coefficient of rolling resistance
	Wv	Dynamic weight on the tyres
	Dpull	Draw bar pull (N)
	Н	Tractive force (N)
	R	Rolling resistance (N)
	Ψ	Tractive coefficient
	V_f	Dynamic weight on the front wheel (N)
	V _r	Dynamic weight on the rear wheel (N)

xxxiii

$ ho_f$	Coefficient of rolling resistance on the front wheel
W_f	Static weight on the front wheel (N)
W_r	Static weight on the rear wheel (N)
Х	Distance between the front and rear axel (m)
<i>y'</i>	Distance between the point of action of the draw bar and ground level (m)
W1	One weeding plot
W2	Two weeding plot
W3	Three weeding plot
W4	Four weeding plot
W5	Five weeding plot
R1	Rotor 500 rpm
R2	Rotor 600 rpm
FS1	Forward speed 0.6m/s speed
FS2	Forward speed 0.8m/s speed
H1	Hill spacing (30cm x 18cm)
H2	Hill spacing (30cm x 21cm)
SR1	Seed rate (1 seedling)
SR2	Seed rate (2 to 3 seedlings)
Adj.Wt	Adjusted weight (ton)
Adj.Mc	Adjusted moisture content (%)
Aact.Mc	Actual moisture content at harvest (%)
Measured Wt	Measured weight at harvest (ton)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter describes the background of rice production, its increasing demand and concern for sustainability, environment and health. The growing need organic rice and the challenge that impede the adoption of organic practice such as the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) are highlighted. The problems identified with mechanical weeding in SRI, the objectives set to be achieved and the scope of work is presented.

1.2 Background of the Study

Rice a semi-aquatic grass species that comprises about twenty two species of the class Oryza, out of which twenty are wild. Thus, two classes or species of rice are essentially consumed by humans: Oryza sativa (Asian rice) and Oryza glaberrima (African rice) are the main food for about three quarter of the world population and fundamental to food security since majority of the global population depends on it. This translates to approximately about three to four billion people that depend on rice daily as staple food. It's been estimated that nearly 144 million hectares of land is cultivated with rice each year, with the annual global rice production and average yield at 454.6 million tons and 4.25 ton/ha respectively (Sumithra et al., 2014; Harijono and Desa, 2014 and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), 2012). Rice production and consumption has been expanding in the last decade outside the traditional rice producing areas, especially in western Asia and Europe (Seck et al., 2012 and Cherati et al., 2012). Food habits, demand due to population, economic needs and related issues are encouraging people to produce rice anywhere water is available (Seck et al., 2012 and SRI, 2006). Rice a consistent constituent of cuisines of Asians, producing about 95% of the global rice, and provides up to 50% of the calories of Asian nourishment (Sumithra et al., 2014; Wayayok et al., 2014; Alizadeh, 2011 and Chamhuri et al., 2014). With current global rice yield of 454.6 million tons, it is uncertain if yield increases can be attained to keep leap with the increasing food demand. To this regard, Nellemann (2009) reported that current projections reveals that 50% raise in rice production is needed by 2050 to withstand the demand, taken into considerations the losses in yield and land mass due to environmental impact. Hence, Remesan et al., (2007) reported that the existing increasing domestic and international demand for rice as food can only be achieved through enhanced productivity and intensive cropping. These views suggest that, it is very vital to improve yield through intensive agriculture, meaning better inputs and management practices.

Rice is considered the number three most important crop in Malaysia, mostly cultivated in the eight granary areas of Peninsular Malaysia (Chamhuri et al., 2014; FAO, 2014 and Rezaul et al., 2004). Rice is cultivated on about 600,000 ha in

Malaysia; two-third of which are situated in Peninsula Malaysia's eight major granary areas (Muazu et al., 2014 and Cheong, 1998). These granary areas collectively produce about seventy percent (75%) of paddy cultivated in the country. About 150,000 farmers in Malaysia solely depend on rice production as their major source of income Najim et al., (2007). With Malaysia's current population figure of about 28, 401,000 and rice consumption per capita of 110kg/year, to achieve 100% self-sufficiency from the 75% level, rice production targets 3,216,100 tons and average yield of 5.32 tons/ha. Malaysia's high annual rainfall and humidity in conjunction with its tropical temperature supports double cropping system, thus a potential to increased yield and the desired self-sufficiency. However, notwithstanding yearly government expenditure to support paddy cultivation, the mean national rice yield standing at about 3.782 tons/ha is still about 10% less than global average yield (Muazu, 2015; Man and Sami, 2009 and Murad et al., 2008). Hence, increasing rice production in Malaysia is achievable if the limited (yet productive) land resource are matched with improve cultivation organic practices such as the system of rice intensification (SRI) in conjunction with high yielding seed such as MR219 developed by the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI), with potential output of up to 10 tons/ha. On the other hand, increasing output should be pursued along with sustainability, environment and consumers growing interest in organic food.

The system of rice intensification (SRI), an Organic agriculture (OA) practice follows the principle of circular relationship and has arisen in response to questions about health, environment and sustainability issues Jitendra & Singh, (2012), advocates against use of chemical and genetically modified (GM) materials on farms Nandwani & Nwosisi, (2016). OA shuns the use of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, and growth controllers. In its place encourages crop rotations, natural manures, mechanical method of weed control, and biological weed/pest control to preserve soil health, provide plant nutrient needs, minimize insects and control weed. Most agricultural producer's especially organic farmer's rank weed management as their major production cost. Thus, weed management has progressively turned out to be important in organic products such as SRI due to increased market stake and drawing greater courtesy in recent years (Fumitaka et al., 2015; Young and Pierce, 2014 and Ana, 2010). The challenge in mechanical weed control is further amplified due to rising choice of farmers and consumers for safety and healthy organic products (Fumitaka et al., 2015; Willer & Kilcher, 2011). The system of rice intensification (SRI), has been reported as a potential way to save resources (water, seed) in growing organic rice with an impressive average yield of about 7tons/ha under irrigated or rain-fed conditions. However, water management and controlling weeds through mechanical weeding are the main challenges connected with rice production under SRI (Preston, 2014). Therefore, SRI researchers and farmers as well have invented and deployed scientific methods in mechanical weed control (Kwesi & Datti, 1991; Merry et al., 2015).

Mechanical weeding an important and labour intensive unit operation in organic rice is fatiguing and time consuming. In practice, quite a number of weeding cycles may be required to ensure the crops are weed free crop to prevent yield losses. Globally, rice yield loss as a result of weeds is put at 10% of estimated yield (Fletcher, 1983), between 16 to 42 % depending on crop and location (Rangasamy et al.,1993) and 75-100% loss in yield (Mahdi et al., 2005; Cordill and Grift, 2011). These reports indicate that to achieve high yield in organic rice production, good agronomic practices such as intensive weeding are required. Thus, Dale et al., (2014); Olaoye et al., (2012); Cordill and Grift, (2011) and Tony et al., (2008) opined that the only sustainable solution to weed control is high-speed mechanical weed control or the deployment of weeding robots that can replace chemical application especially in organic agriculture. On the other hand, manual weeding though effective and its labour demand are high and time consuming (Marenya,2009). It was reported that averagely, the energy requirement of manual tillage (hoe) ranges from 7 to 9.5kJ/min in comparison to 4.5 kJ/min (75 watts) the optimum limit of constant energy output of man (Silas & Husseni, 2015 and Nwuba, 1981).

Mechanical weeding implements are available based on cutting, burying and uprooting of weeds. Based on the cutting and burying of weed, mechanical weeding implements are classified into inter-row and intra-row weeders. According to Pullen & Cowel, (1997) there are six categories of inter-row mechanical weeders deployed to control weeds namely: harrow, rotary hoe, duck foot, ground wheel driven rotary hoes and brush weeders. The efficacy of mechanical weeding operations according to Ahmad, (2012) depends on factors such as plant height, rooting depth and forward speed. He further opined that more aggressive operations, generally result in higher weeding efficiency, but often increase the risk of damaging crop plant. Similarly, it was reported in Uphoff et al (2002) and Uphoff (2006) that, rotary inter-row weeding increases aeration and better root growth development. Hence, choosing and deploying appropriate method of weed control for organic and system of rice intensification has been focused on increased yield, environment and health (Bhatt, 2015). On the other hand, the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) methodologies for producing rice under irrigated or rain-fed conditions, containing set of simple principles help produce more productive and robust organic rice with high yield. The main SRI Practices are: (a) Transplanting tender seedlings of 8-15days grown in an un-flooded nursery at 25cm x 25cm inter-row and intra-row. (b) Transplant seedlings carefully at shallow depth. (c) Controlled water management (no permanent flooding) (d) Intensive mechanical weeding at 10 days interval, up to 40 days after transplanting and (e) Application of organic matter or manure. These practices according to Barison & Uphoff (2010) and Uphoff (2006) can yield a better root and vegetative development of rice under SRI as compared to Non-SRI is shown in Figure 1.0 below. Under SRI, the MR219 variety developed by Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI), records yield of up to 13 tons per hectare as reported in Melati, (2012) and Styger et al. (2011). The success story of SRI prompted research interest to make comparative studies with other known cultural practices in rice cultivation. Thus, Alfred et al., (2016) studied and analyzed yield per hectare and opined that SRI present a substantial and economic advantage with about 60% of yield gains and reduced production cost per hectare. Earlier Thura, (2010) compared the performance of SRI and Recommended Management Practice (RMP), and reported that both practices resulted in high yield gains at row and intra-row spacing of 25cm x 25cm, however the yield under SRI was 40% higher than recommended practice. The result indicates that even the

recommended Management practice (RMP) yields better at SRI recommended spacing. Despite the potential of increased yield, cost and water saving potential under SRI, a major constraint to adoption by farmers is the high labor demands for mechanical weeding and single seedling transplanting (Alam et al., 2015; Ramachandra et al., 2012b; Reddy, 2009; Tilahun et al., 2015). The high labour demand in SRI practices may be due to the intensive mechanical weeding required, principally due lack of high clearance mechanical weeders. The limitation of low ground clearance weeders was further highlighted by Cloutier et al., (2007) they reported that, the constraint to mechanical weeding is that weed control can only be achieved at early stages of crop growth because of limited machine ground clearance and machine-crop contact can lead to substantial damage to the foliage or vegetative component of the crop at advanced state of growth. Similarly, Alam et al. (2015) and. Van der et al. (2008) further reported that the efficacy of mechanical weeding procedures usually depends on often factors such as crop height and depth of the root zone. Thus, the constraint for effective SRI recommended intensive weeding in rice by farmers, is lack of a high clearance weeder that can effectively weed when rice are at advanced stage of growth (height). However, high clearance machine for weed control in rice only exist in the form of sprayers, no documented mechanical inter-row weeders was found in literature capable of weeding up to forty days after transplanting (40DAT) in paddy fields at different stages of paddy height as recommended by the system of rice intensification. With mechanical rotary weeding, weeds are incorporated into the soil; build up soil organic matter and increase microbial activity in the soil, resulting in better rice yield (Styger et al, 2011; Uphoff et al., 2006 and Barison & Uphoff, 2010). To address the need for intensive mechanical weeding requirement under SRI, research was carried out to develop a high clearance inter-row weeder with android tele-oprated control for System of Rice Intensification (SRI), specifically for MR219. The new high clearance machine will enable weeding at stages of paddy growth, reduce high labour demand due to intensive weeding requirement in SRI, reduce drudgery, promotes organic rice production and making farming an interesting business venture. The research will also add to existing body of literature on android application in the control of agricultural machinery. Entrepreneurs in agricultural machinery development will also benefit from the technology by way of patronage from SRI/organic rice farmers.

1.3 Statement of Problem

The System of Rice Intensification (SRI), an organic rice production practice identified that mechanical weeding in paddy up to four times at ten days interval, increases yield up to above 7tons/ha. Weeds control under SRI however remains a serious challenge facing famers, due mainly to the practice of intensive mechanical weeding requirement up to 40DAT (Alam, 2015; Ramachandra, 2012c; Ramachandra, 2012b and Adusumilli et al. 2015). Studies on existing inter-row weeders used in SRI revealed no available machine with enough ground clearance to weed beyond thirty days after transplanting (30DAT) with minimum percentage of crop damage. Thus, there exist limitations to adoption of inter-row weeders, due to inadequate machine ground clearance. Currently cono-weeder and manual weeding are mainly used, they are however labour intensive and low field capacity (Adusumilli et al. 2015; Upadhyaya et al., 2007; Hegazy et al., 2014; Ahmad, 2012

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and Cloutier et al., 2007). Hence, the constraint faced by SRI farmers for effective adoption of recommended intensive weeding needs is the lack of a high clearance weeding machine that can effectively weed with less crop damage when rice are at advanced stage of growth (height) and its labor intensive nature.

This research work was therefore aimed at developing a high clearance Inter-row weeding machine with android control to effectively weed in paddy fields at different stages of plant growth, without the need for the operator walking behind the machine along paddy field. Distinct parameters that could affect weed control efficacy will be studied. This research will add to the existing body of literature on mechanical weed control, and the application of android application to automate agricultural machinery to attract younger generation in paddy cultivation. Rice growers' especially those adopting SRI and organic rice producers can benefit from this research through access to a high clearance weeder suitable for multiple mechanical weeding at all stages of paddy growth with less fatigue and increase yield.

1.4 Research Objective

The general objective of this research is to develop a High Clearance Inter-row Weeder for the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), specifically for the MR2119 cultivar, widely grown by paddy farmers across the eight rice granary areas in Malaysia. The specific objectives of this study are:

- 1. To evaluate the existing inter-row weeders used for weed control in SRI
- 2. To develop a hydraulic powered inter-row rotor with appropriate clearance height to weed in paddy with less crop damage.
- 3. To develop an android operated control system to automate the high clearance inter-rwo weeder.
- 4. To evaluate the performance of the prototype high clearance inter-row weeder.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on developing a new high clearance inter-row weeder with android control for SRI, to increase the frequency of weeding cycles to five times. Preliminary studies will be conducted on four selected inter-row weeders to assess their ability to weed up to 40DAT with less crop damage. The prototype will be evaluated with MR219 cultivar. Data collection on the cultivation practices was limited to those of mechanical weeding and yield, because of their direct relation with the operations of the high clearance inter-row weeding machine. Android application user interface for tele-operation of the machine via Android Hand-phone was equally evaluated in terms of obstacle avoidance.

1.6 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one explains the background of the research, provides an overview on rice production most especially on organic rice and the system of rice intensification along with the objective set to be achieved in the study. Literatures related rice production particularly on non-chemical weed control in paddy and factors considered for the design; development and control of the high clearance inter-row are presented in chapter two. The methodology, materials and evaluation procedure used to achieve the set objectives are explained carefully in chapter three. Chapter four contains the comprehensive results and subsequently discussed in relation to set objectives. The conclusions drawn at the end of the study and suggestions for further research are presented in chapter five.



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