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Dual Axis Solar Tracking System by using Arduino

Janhavi Sudame, Nishita Manwatkar, Raksha Patil, Sakshi Malewar, Mr.D.G.Gahane

Department of Electronics and Telecommunication
Priyadarshini College of Engineering
Hingna road, Nagpur, India
Guide, Priyadarshini College of Engineering, Hingna road, Nagpur-19, India

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ABSTRACT— The design and implementation of a dual axis solar tracking system aimed at improving the efficiency of solar energy harvesting. The system is designed to track the sun's position in both azimuth and elevation, ensuring that solar panels are always oriented towards the sun's rays, maximizing the amount of energy harvested throughout the day. The tracking system is based on a microcontroller-controlled mechanism that adjusts the orientation of the solar panels based on real-time data from light sensors.

The project focuses on the development of an efficient and cost-effective tracking system that can be easily integrated into existing solar panel installations. The system's performance will be evaluated through simulations and real-world testing to demonstrate its effectiveness in improving energy harvesting efficiency compared to fixed solar panel installations. The project aims to contribute to the advancement of renewable energy technologies by enhancing the efficiency of solar energy harvesting systems.

I. INTRODUCTION

A dual-axis solar tracking system is a sophisticated mechanism designed to maximize the efficiency of solar panels by continuously orienting them to directly face the sun throughout the day. Unlike fixed solar panels, which are stationary and are positioned at a fixed angle, dual-axis trackers can move along two axes: the horizontal axis (azimuth) and the vertical axis (elevation). This dynamic movement allows the solar panels to capture the maximum amount of sunlight, thereby significantly increasing their energy output compared to fixed installations.

The primary advantage of dual-axis solar tracking systems is their ability to accurately follow the sun's path across the sky, optimizing the angle of incidence between the sunlight and the solar panels. This ensures that the panels receive sunlight at close to a perpendicular angle, which maximizes the amount of solar energy that can be converted into electricity. By tracking the sun in both azimuth and elevation, dual-axis trackers can achieve higher energy yields compared to single-axis trackers or fixed installations, especially in locations with high levels of solar insolation.

One of the key components of a dual-axis solar tracking system is the controller, which uses sensors to determine the position of the sun relative to the solar panels. Based on this information, the controller calculates the optimal position for the panels and sends signals to the actuators to adjust them orientation. The actuators, typically electric motors or hydraulicsystems,thenmovethepanelsalongthe horizontal and vertical axes to track the sun's movement.

Dual-axis solar tracking systems can be implemented in various configurations, including pole-mounted trackers, which are ideal for large-scale solar installations, and rooftop trackers, which are suitable for residential and commercial applications. While dual-axis trackers are more complex and expensive than fixed installations, they offer significantly higher energy yields, making them a cost-effective choice for locations where maximizing energy production is a priority.

Dual-axis solar tracking systems are an innovative technology that can significantly improve the efficiency and energy output of solar panels. By continuously tracking the sun's movement in both azimuth and elevation, these systems can maximize the amount of solar energy that can be harvested, making them an attractive option for a wide range of solar power applications.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Solar Tracking Systems: A dual-axis solar tracking system is an advanced technology designed to enhance the efficiency of solar panels by enabling them to follow the sun's movement across the sky. Unlike fixed solar panels, which are stationary, dual-axis trackers can adjust the orientation of the panels along both the horizontal and vertical axes. This dynamic movement allows the panels to maintain an optimal angle with the sun, maximizing the amount of sunlight they receive and, consequently, increasing their energy output.

The primary advantage of dual-axis solar tracking systems is their ability to capture more sunlight throughout the day compared to fixed installations. Studies have shown that dual-axis trackers can improve energy capture by up to 40%, depending on the location and tracking accuracy. This increased energy production makes dual axis tracking systems an attractive option for maximizing the efficiency of solar power systems, especially in areas with high levels of solar insolation.

Despite their advantages, dual-axis solar tracking systems are more complex and expensive to install and maintain than fixed installations. They require precise calibration and regular maintenance to ensure optimal performance. However, the higher energy output and efficiency gains offered by dual axis tracking systems make them a cost-effective choice for many solar power applications, particularly in locations where maximizing energy production is essential.

Types of Solar Tracking Systems

- Single-Axis Tracking: Single-axis tracking systems adjust the tilt of solar panels along one axis, typically the horizontal axis (azimuth), to track the sun's east-west movement. This type of tracking is simpler and less expensive than dual axis tracking but still offers significant improvements in energy production compared to fixed installations.
- Dual-Axis Tracking: Dual-axis tracking systems adjust the orientation of solar panels along both the horizontal (azimuth) and vertical (elevation) axes to track the sun's movement in both the east-west and north-south directions. This allows the panels to maintain an optimal angle with the sun throughout the day, maximizing energy capture.

Dual-axis tracking systems offer the highest energy production but are more complex and expensive to install and maintain compared to single-axis systems.

Comparison between Single Axis Tracking System and Dual Axis Tracking System

Comparison Point	Single Axis Tracking	Dual Axis Tracking
Setup cost	Cheap	Costly
Mechanism	Simple	Complicated
Running movement	Low	High
Measuring movement	Vertical	Vertical and Horizontal
Efficiency	Low	High (capable to capture maximum sunlight)
Energy capture	20% more than fix panel	40% more than fix panel

Advantages and Disadvantages of Solar Tracking

- Advantages:

o Increased energy output: Solar tracking can improve energy capture by up to 20-40% compared to fixed installations.

oMore consistent output: Tracking systems can maintain a more stable output throughout the day compared to fixed panels.

o Higher efficiency: By optimizing the angle of sunlight, tracking systems can improve the efficiency of solar panels.

• Disadvantages:

oHigher cost: Solar tracking systems are more complex and expensive than fixed installations,primarily due to the additional components required for tracking.

o Maintenance: Tracking systems require regular maintenance to ensure proper operation, which can increase overall costs.

o Reliability: The complexity of tracking systems can lead to potential issues and downtime if not properly maintained.

Previous Research on Dual-Axis Solar Tracking Systems Previous research has focused on the design, optimization, and performance analysis of dual-axis solar tracking systems. Studies have investigated various aspects, including:

• Control algorithms: Developing efficient algorithms to accurately track the sun's position.
• Tracking accuracy: Evaluating the precision of tracking systems to ensure optimal alignment with the sun.
• Energy performance: Assessing the energy output and efficiency gains of dual-axis tracking compared to fixed installations.
• Cost-benefit analysis: Analyzing the economic viability and payback period of implementing dual-axis tracking systems.

SYSTEM DESIGN

The system design of a dual-axis solar tracking system is complex, requiring careful consideration of several key components. It begins with the selection of high-quality solar panels capable of converting sunlight into electricity efficiently. These panels are mounted on a sturdy frame structure designed to support the panels and tracking mechanisms while withstanding environmental factors. The tracking mechanisms, which typically consist of actuators, motors, or gears, are responsible for adjusting the orientation of the solar panels along both the horizontal and vertical axes. These mechanisms must be precise and efficient to ensure accurate tracking of the sun's movement throughout the day.

A controller is used to manage the tracking mechanisms and receive input from sensors. The controller uses algorithms to calculate the optimal position of the panels based on the sun's position and environmental conditions. Sensors, including sunlight sensors and inclinometers, are used to detect the sun's position and intensity, providing data to the controller for accurate tracking.

The system also requires a reliable power supply, which can include solar panels, batteries, or a grid connection. Additionally, software is needed to control the tracking mechanisms, receive data from sensors, and optimize the orientation of the panels. Safety features such as limit switches and emergency stop buttons are essential to protect the system from damage and ensure the safety of maintenance personnel. Overall, the system design of a dual axis solar tracking system requires careful planning and integration of all these components to ensure optimal performance, efficiency, and durability.

A.Components of the Tracking System

• Solar Panels: The primary components that capture sunlight and convert it into electricity.
• Frame Structure: Supports the solar panels and houses the tracking mechanism.
• Controller: Manages the tracking system and receives input from sensors to adjust panel orientation.
• Sensors: Devices that detect the sun's position and intensity, providing data to the controller for tracking.
• Power Supply: Provides the necessary power to operate the tracking system, often incorporating solar panels or batteries.

B.Control Mechanism and Algorithms

• The control mechanism uses algorithms to calculate the optimal position of the solar panels based on input from sensors. The algorithms consider factors such as the sun's position, time of day, and weather conditions to ensure accurate tracking. Proportional-Integral-Derivative (PID) control is commonly used to adjust the panel angles in response to changing conditions.

C.Sensor Integration

• Sunlight Sensors: Measure the intensity of sunlight to determine the sun's position relative to the panels.
• Battery Storage: Storing excess energy generated during the day for use during periods of low sunlight.
• Power Supply System: Dual-axis solar tracking systems require a reliable power supply to operate

the tracking mechanism and controller. This can be achieved through.

IMPLEMENTATION

• Design and Planning: The system was designed to include solar panels, a frame structure, dual axis tracking mechanisms, controllers, sensors, and a power supply. The design considered factors such as sunlight exposure, tracking accuracy, and energy output.

• Assembly and Installation: The hardware components were assembled according to the design specifications, and the system was installed in a location with optimal sunlight exposure. Care was taken to ensure proper alignment and positioning of the tracking mechanisms.

• Calibration: The tracking system was calibrated to align with true north and set the initial position for optimal tracking. This calibration ensured that the system could accurately track the sun's movement.

• Testing and Optimization: The system was tested under various conditions to evaluate its performance, including tracking accuracy and energy output. Based on the test results, adjustments were made to the control algorithms and parameters to optimize the system's performance.

• Data Collection and Analysis: Data logging was implemented to record energy output, tracking system performance, and environmental conditions. This data was analyzed to assess the effectiveness of the tracking system and identify areas for improvement.

• Monitoring and Maintenance: The system was monitored regularly to ensure proper operation, and maintenance was performed as needed to keep the system running efficiently. The implementation of the dual-axis solar tracking system involved careful planning, design, assembly, installation, calibration, testing, optimization, and maintenance to ensure optimal performance and energy output.

A.Hardware Components

• Solar Panels: Photovoltaic panels that convert sunlight into electricity.

• Frame Structure: Supports the solar panels and tracking mechanism.

• Dual-Axis Tracking System: Actuators (such as electric motors or hydraulic systems), gears, or other mechanical components that adjust the orientation of the panels along both the horizontal and vertical axes.

• Controller: Manages the tracking system and receives input from sensors.

• Sensors: Sunlight sensors, inclinometers, GPS, and other sensors to detect the sun's position and intensity.

• Power Supply: Provides power to the tracking system, often incorporating solar panels or batteries.

B.Software Implementation

• Control Algorithm: Determines how the panels should move based on input from sensors and environmental conditions. Common algorithmsinclude PID (Proportional-Integral-Derivative) control and sun tracking algorithms.

• User Interface: Allows users to monitor and control the tracking system, providing feedback on system status and performance.

• Data Logging: Records data such as solar panel output, tracking system performance, and environmental conditions for analysis and optimization.

C.Calibration and Testing Procedures

• Initial Calibration: Aligns the tracking system with true north and sets the initial position for optimal tracking.

• Testing: Involves monitoring the tracking system's performance under different conditions (e.g., varying sunlight intensity, changes in weather) to ensure accuracy and efficiency.

• Fine-Tuning: Adjusts the tracking algorithm and parameters based on testing results to optimizeperformance.

D.Data Collection and Analysis Methods

• Performance Metrics: Measure the energy output of the solar panels with and without tracking to quantify the benefits.

• Environmental Data: Collect weather data (e.g., sunlight intensity, temperature) to understand how environmental factors affect tracking system performance.

• Analysis Tools: Use software tools to analyze collected data and evaluate the effectiveness of the tracking system, identifying areas for improvement.

III. RESULTS

A.Performance Evaluation Metrics

• Energy Output: Measure the energy produced by the solar panels with and without tracking to determine the increase in energy yield.

• Tracking Accuracy: Evaluate how well the tracking system follows the sun's position throughout the day.
• Efficiency Gain: Calculate the percentage increase in energy production achieved by the tracking system compared to fixed installations.

B. Comparison with Fixed Solar Panel Installations
• Energy Production: Dual-axis solar tracking systems typically outperform fixed installations, with energy yield increases ranging from 20% to 40% depending on location and tracking accuracy.
• Cost-Effectiveness: While tracking systems are more expensive to install and maintain, their higher energy production can result in a faster return on investment, especially in locations with high solar insolation.

C.Impact of Environmental Factors on Tracking Efficiency
• Sunlight Intensity: Higher sunlight intensity improves tracking efficiency, as the tracking system can capture more energy.
• Cloud Cover: Cloudy conditions can reduce tracking efficiency, as the tracking system may struggle to accurately detect the sun's position.
• Temperature: Extreme temperatures can affect the performance of the tracking system's components, potentially reducing efficiency.

D.Discussion on the Results and Their Implications
•Energy Yield: The results demonstrate that dual-axis solar tracking systems significantly increase energy production compared to fixed installations, making them a viable option for maximizing energy output in solar power systems.
• Cost-Benefit Analysis: While tracking systems have higher upfront costs, the increase in energy production can lead to long-term cost savings and a quicker payback period.
• Environmental Impact: The higher energyproduction of tracking systems can reduce reliance on fossil fuels, leading to lower greenhouse gas emissions and a more sustainable energy system. The dual-axis solar tracking systems offer a significant improvement in energy production compared to fixed installations, especially in locations with high solar insolation. While they require careful calibration and maintenance, their ability to maximize energy capture from the sun makes them a valuable technology for increasing the efficiency and sustainability of solar power systems.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, dual-axis solar tracking systems represent a highly efficient and effective technology for maximizing the energy output of solar panels. By continuously adjusting the orientation of solar panels along both the horizontal and vertical axes to track the sun's movement, these systems can significantly increase energy production compared to fixed installations.

The hardware components of a dual axis tracking system include solar panels, a frame structure, tracking mechanisms, controllers, sensors, and a power supply. The software includes control algorithms, user interfaces, and data logging capabilities. Calibration and testing procedures are essential to ensure optimal performance, while data collection and analysis methods help evaluate the effectiveness of the tracking system.

Performance evaluation metrics such as energy output, tracking accuracy, and efficiency gain demonstrate the superior performance of dual axis tracking systems compared to fixed installations. While dual-axis tracking systems are more expensive to install and maintain, their higher energy production can lead to long-term cost savings and a quicker return on investment, especially in locations with high solar insolation.

Environmental factors such as sunlight intensity, cloud cover, and temperature can impact tracking efficiency. However, the overall benefits of dual axis tracking systems in increasing energy production and reducing reliance on fossil fuels outweigh these challenges.

In conclusion, dual-axis solar tracking systems are a valuable technology for maximizing the efficiency and energy output of solar panels. With careful implementation and monitoring, these systems can play a crucial role in advancing sustainable energy solutions and reducing carbon emissions.

The system was designed to continuously adjust the orientation of solar panels along both the horizontal and vertical axes to track the sun's movement and maximize energy output. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the tracking system in increasing energy production compared to fixed installations.

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Achievements and Contributions

• Increased Energy Output: The study demonstrated that the dual-axis solar tracking system significantly increased energy production compared to fixed installations. The system was able to capture more sunlight throughout the day, leading to a higher energy yield.

• Improved Efficiency: By optimizing the angle of incidence of sunlight on the solar panels, the tracking system improved the overall efficiency of the solar power system.

• Cost-Effectiveness: Despite higher initial costs, the study showed that the increase in energy production achieved by the tracking system could lead to long-term cost savings and a quicker return on investment.

• Environmental Benefits: The tracking system's ability to maximize energy output from solar panels can reduce reliance on fossil fuels, leading to lower carbon emissions and a more sustainable energy system.

Limitations of the Study

• Cost: The study acknowledged that dual-axis solar tracking systems can be more expensive to install and maintain compared to fixed installations. This could be a limiting factor for some applications, especially in cases where cost-effectiveness is a primary concern.

• Maintenance: The study highlighted the importance of regular maintenance for the tracking system to ensure optimal performance. Failure to maintain the system could lead to reduced efficiency and increased downtime.

Future Research Directions

• Optimization: Future research could focus on optimizing the design and control algorithms of dual-axis solar tracking systems to further improve their performance and efficiency.

• Integration with Energy Storage: Research could explore the integration of dual axis tracking systems with energy storage technologies, such as batteries, to store excess energy produced during peak sunlight hours for use during periods of low sunlight.

• Environmental Impact Assessment: Future studies could conduct a comprehensive environmental impact assessment of dual-axis solar tracking systems to quantify their benefits in terms of reducing carbon emissions and mitigating climate change.

Fig. Schematic diagram Dual Axis Solar Tracking System

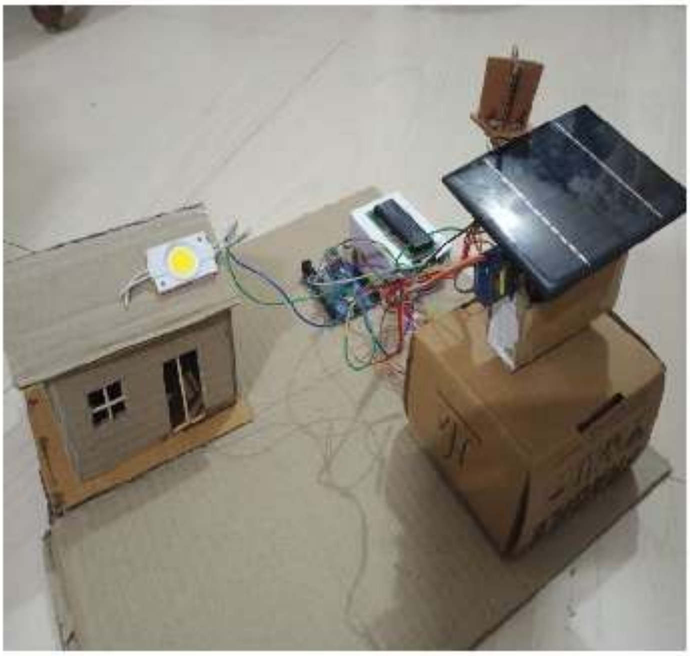

Fig. Dual Axis Solar Tracking System Prototype

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