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Design of an electrical motor with wide speed range for the in-wheel drive in a heavy duty off-road vehicle

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Abstract—The electrification of the mobile machinery is often discussed. For agricultural tractors an electric drive can be an alternative to commonly used hydrostatic-mechanical power split drives. When compared to the hydrostatic drive, the electric motor with an efficiency above 90% offers advantages. For a meaningful comparison the complete drive train (generator, gearbox, power supply, electric motor) has to be considered. Generally, a particularly limited space is available for the integration of an electric drive. This requires a compact design of the electric motor. Therefore, a permanent magnet synchronous motor is the best candidate, due to its high power density and high efficiency. A particular challenge when designing an electric motor is a special requirement on the driving cycle of the agricultural tractor. The electric motor has to provide a high torque for the working operation off-road and a high maximal motor speed for the transportation operation to move the vehicle on road. For this research a shiftable transmission gear is omitted. The design process of the electric motor with special characteristics is described. The challenge of the motor design for a wide speed range is the main subject of this paper.

Index Terms—electric machines, high speed, wide speed range.

I. INTRODUCTION

Today the hydrostatic-mechanical power split drives, used in modern agricultural technique, present the technical state of the art and provide a high efficiency according to [1]. Several studies about the hybridization and electrification in the branch of agricultural machines are discussed in [2], [3]. The rising prices of fossil fuel and legal regulations for reduction of the CO₂ emission motivate the studies about the efficiency improvement by electrification. Several studies [4], [5] state the high potential to the application of electric drives in such application.

The major advantage of the electric drives in comparison to the hydrostatic drives is, besides the higher efficiency better controllability. An example for the integration of the electric motors in mobile machinery is the tractor concept Belarus Typ 3023, presented on Agritechnica 2009 in Germany. This concept contains an induction motor as a central drive [6]. The described concept promises a higher efficiency when compared to the hydrostatic drive, but lower overall efficiency compared to hydrostatic power split transmission [7]. A further promising concept is the integration of in-wheel drives. One example is the Rigitrac tractor concept, developed by the Technical University Dresden, Germany [8]. In this case the main

challenges are the specific drive requirements, which generally include two speed ranges for farm work and transportation operation [1], [9]. A typical torque versus speed diagram for an agricultural tractor is shown in figure 1. The resulting wide speed ratio for an electric motor is shown in figure 2.

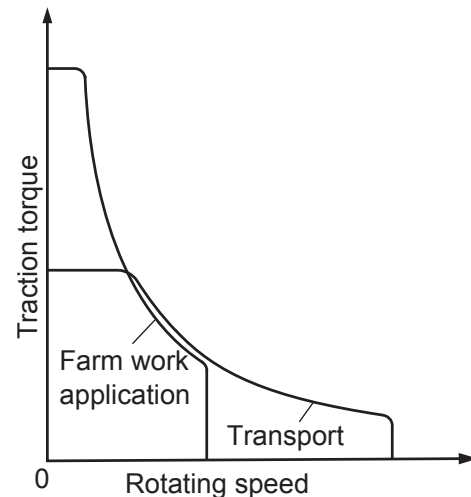


Figure 1. Torque versus speed for an agricultural tractor with two ranges [1].

The speed ratio in the modern tractors can reach the value of 1:15 [7]. In general a shiftable gearbox with two variable speed ranges is beneficial. However, the integration of a shiftable gearbox is excluded by the manufacturer. Therefore, in this study a shiftable gearbox is omitted. The presented research discusses the design of the electric motor with a fixed speed ratio of 1:11 (user requirements). A similar speed ratio for the PMSM is presented in [10]. A DC-link voltage of 650 V is employed.

The study focuses on the design of an in-wheel motor drive concept, consisting of an electric machine and a gearbox, for the agricultural tractor.

II. REQUIREMENTS ON THE ELECTRIC MOTOR

The specific requirements on the traction drive for agricultural tractors are the high torque for farm work operation and high traveling speed for transport. It should be mentioned that available space for the integration of the electric motor is

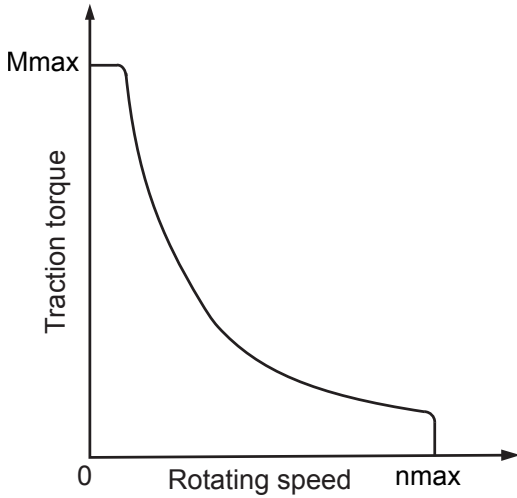


Figure 2. Operation range of an electric drive with fixed gear ratio.

highly limited. This is due to the fact that the existing vehicle concepts are designed for the integration of the hydrostatic motors, which have a higher power density in comparison to the electric motors. Meanwhile, the high maximal torque requires the sufficient sizing of the machine in order to ensure the continuous operation at high torques and high speeds. The relationship between the torque and the dimensions of the electric machine is described in literature [11]. Particular attention should be paid to the choice of the suitable electric motor concept. Previous research has shown that a permanent magnet synchronous machine (PMSM) is favorable for the in-wheel drive of an agricultural tractor due to its higher power density and high efficiency in comparison to the other common electrical machines. Similar research is presented in [12]. Due to a better field weakening capability, a rotor with v-shaped internal magnets is chosen for the application with wide speed range [13]. In [14] a comparable PMSM application is described.

In the required driving cycle both high copper losses (maximal torque operation point) and high iron losses (maximal speed operation point) occur. A compromise between high speed and high torque operation has to be found. Therefore, the overall driving cycle has to be considered. The driving cycle is specified by the manufacturer. The weighted efficiency is chosen as evaluation criteria for the motor design. The efficiency at particular operating point will be multiplied with time portion, relating to this operating point in the drive cycle. The resulting weighted efficiency provides better information about the overall performance than the efficiency calculated at each operation point. Based on these results, the motor efficiency can be improved in the most relevant operating points.

III. INITIAL DESIGN OF THE ELECTRIC MOTOR

The main dimensions of the machine are determined by roughly estimating the specific force density σ , which displays a relation between the mechanical power P_n and the outer

dimensions of the machine.

$$P_n = \sigma \cdot \pi^2 \cdot D^2 \cdot l \cdot n \quad (1)$$

Where D is the rotor outer diameter, l is the active length and n is the rotational speed. Typical values for the specific force density of the particular type of the electrical machine are presented in [15].

The next important parameter for the motor design is the number of pole pairs p . It impacts the main dimensions and the losses distribution in the machine.

Basically, high torque motors are designed with a higher number of pole pairs. This helps reduce the stator outer diameter due to the inverse proportionality of the pole pairs to the yoke b_{yoke} and teeth width b_{tooth} of the electrical machine.

$$p \sim \frac{1}{b_{yoke}}, \frac{1}{b_{tooth}} \quad (2)$$

A higher number of pole pairs ensures thinner yoke and teeth and therefore smaller machine dimensions [15]. The number of pole pairs determines the fundamental frequency of the magnetic field f .

$$f = n \cdot p \quad (3)$$

Consequently, in high speed application a high number of pole pairs can be crucial due to the field frequency dependent iron losses, which can cause overheating at high speeds.

In this work three concepts with different number of pole pairs $p=2$, $p=3$ and $p=4$ are evaluated. All machines are designed with the same outer dimensions (overall length and outer stator diameter). For an accurate comparison a finite element method (FEM) has been utilized. All possible design candidates are simulated at different operating points. The influence of the number of pole pair is presented in the next section.

IV. VARIATION OF THE NUMBER OF POLE PAIRS

Figures 3, 4 and 5 show the resulting efficiency maps for the different motor concepts. The efficiency calculation includes copper losses, iron losses and air friction losses. The eddy current losses in the permanent magnet materials are estimated to be neglected, because in case of the internal magnets these are very low, as it is shown in [16] for the similar machine topology. The electrical steel M235-35A and permanent magnets N45SH at a temperature of 120 °C were utilized for the motor design. Due to the high centrifugal forces in the rotor at maximal speed operation a high strength rotor material is applied [17]. The machine is designed with a distributed symmetrical winding. The winding is adjusted for the particular number of pole pairs. For the copper losses calculation a copper fill factor of $k_{cu}=48\%$, which is common for machine wound windings, was assumed.

According to the figures 3, 4 and 5 it can be concluded that the concepts with higher number of pole pairs have higher efficiency at high torque operation, while the concepts with lower number of pole pairs have higher efficiency at high speed operating points. The impact of the number of pole pairs on the weighted efficiency of the machine is shown in figure 6

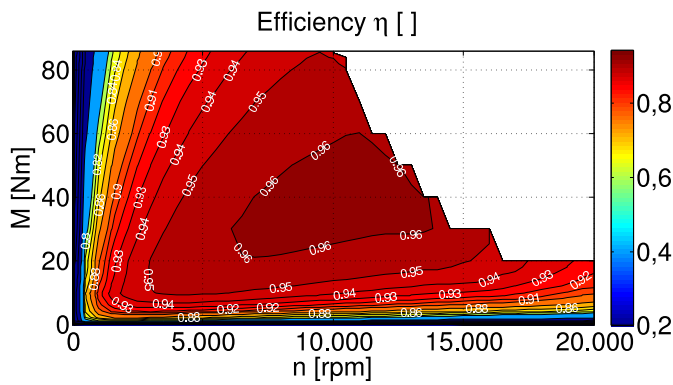


Figure 3. Efficiency of the electric motor with $p=2$.

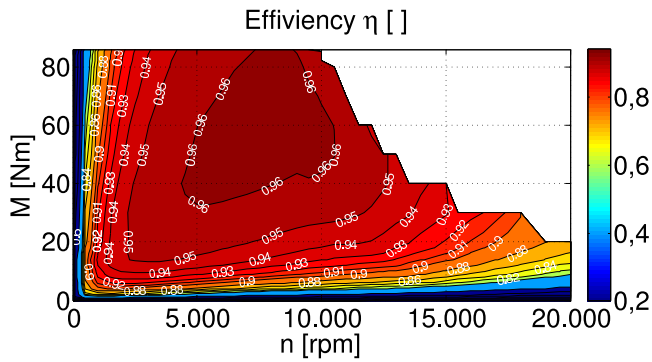


Figure 4. Efficiency of the electric motor with $p=3$.

Lower number of pole pairs provides the highest weighted efficiency, due to the drive cycle considered here.

Figures 7- 9 present the distribution of copper and iron losses in particular operation points as well as their relative occurrence. The operating points are sorted in descending order by the speed. It can be seen that the operating points with the high portion of iron losses occur more frequent during the driving cycle. Therefore, the concept with lower number of pole pairs, providing lower iron losses, results in the higher weighted efficiency. The detailed assessment provides the results, listed in the table I.

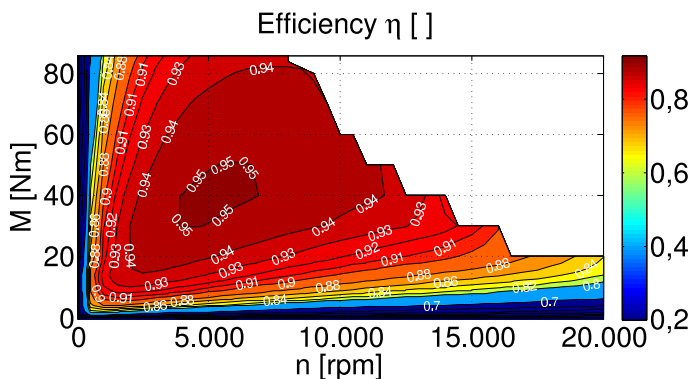


Figure 5. Efficiency of the electric motor with $p=4$.

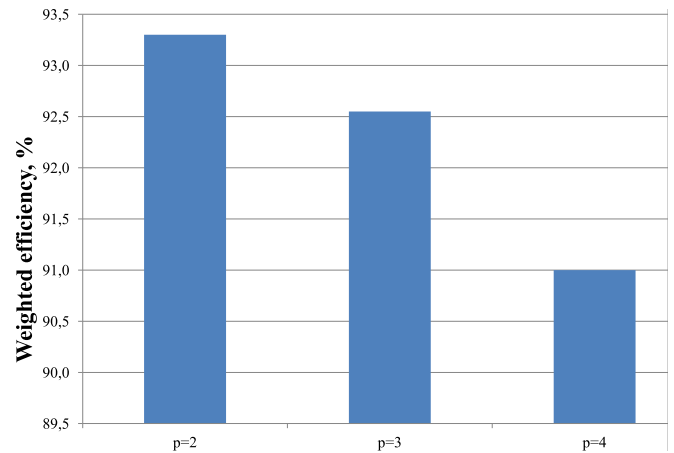


Figure 6. Weighted efficiency for different number of pole pairs.

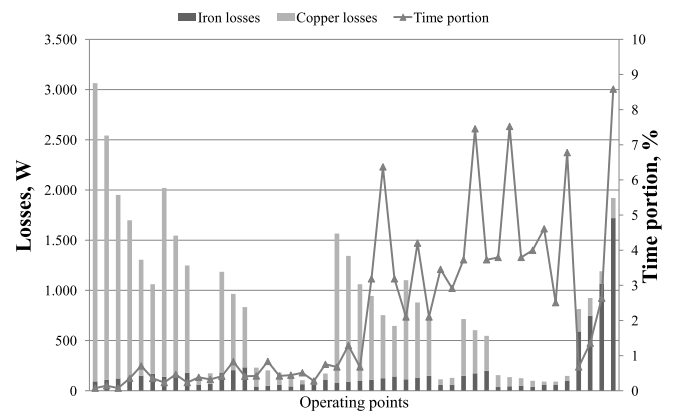


Figure 7. Distribution of losses with $p=2$ during drive cycle.

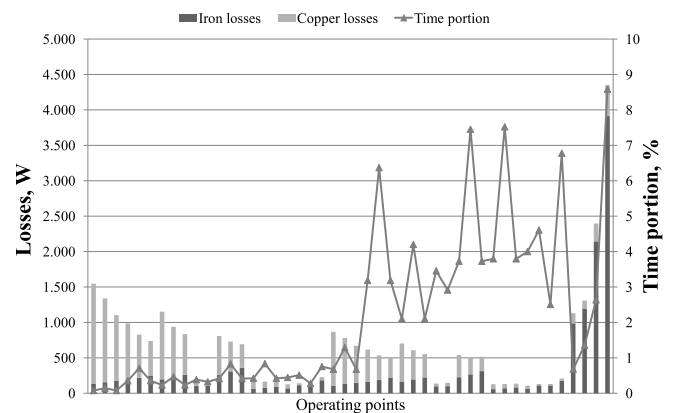


Figure 8. Distribution of losses with $p=3$ during drive cycle.

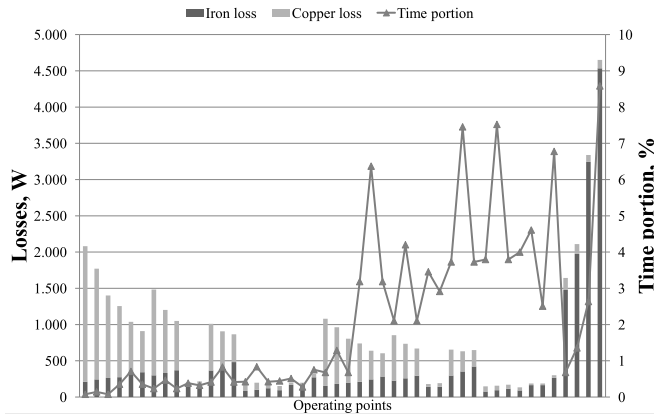


Figure 9. Distribution of losses with $p=4$ during drive cycle.

Table I
COMPARISON OF THE DIFFERENT MACHINE CONCEPTS WITH THE SAME
OUTER DIMENSIONS.

Number of pole pairs	$p=2$	$p=3$	$p=4$
Electrical data			
Rated power	20.000 W		
Operating point	Maximum torque		
Copper losses	2,97 kW	1,40 kW	1,87 kW
Iron losses	0,09 kW	0,13 kW	0,20 kW
Efficiency	83,00 %	90,00 %	88,00 %
Operating point	Maximum speed		
Copper losses	0,20 kW	0,44 kW	0,12 kW
Iron losses	1,70 kW	3,90 kW	4,50 kW
Efficiency	90,00 %	81,00%	79,50 %
Geometrical data			
Number of teeth	24	36	48
Tooth width	7,0 mm	5,5 mm	3,8 mm
Slot area	213,3 mm ²	163,6 mm ²	140,7 mm ²
Core length	110,0 mm	130,0 mm	145,0 mm
End windings length	85,0 mm	65,0 mm	50,0 mm
Outer diameter	184,0 mm		
Overall length	195,0 mm		

According to table I and figure 6 it can be concluded that the concept with $p=4$ is an unsuitable candidate for the given application. The mentioned concept provides low efficiency at both high torque and high speed. This is because the large number of pole pairs results in thin slots and consequently a higher current density is required to achieve the maximum torque, leading to the higher copper losses. The high number of pole pairs causes high iron losses at the high speed.

When comparing the concept with $p=2$ and $p=3$, it is clear that the concept with $p=2$ has the maximal power losses at high torque operation, whereas the concept with number of pole pairs $p=3$ has the maximal power losses at high speed operation. According to the weighted efficiency comparison, the $p=2$ concept appears more favorable. However, the high power losses can present a thermal problem. In this case it has to be examined, which kind of the power losses is more crucial for the electric motor. Therefore, a thermal analysis is required for the fair comparison between the concepts. Based on the results of the thermal simulation the final decision for a suitable concept can be made. The results of the thermal simulation are described in the next section

V. THERMAL ANALYSIS

The thermal analysis of the electrical machine is the next important evaluation step in the design process. It helps to evaluate, if the machine can be operated at specified conditions. It should be noted that due to high power losses and limited dimensions an air cooling is not suitable for the continuous operation in the required operating point. For this study a cooling jacket is considered. In the presented work the thermal analysis is based on an analytic approach and is provided using the lumped-parameter model of the electrical machine. Similar thermal calculations are presented in [18], [19]. The following boundary conditions are assumed for the thermal analysis for this study: the rotor temperature is estimated to be 120 °C (maximal allowed operating temperature of the permanent magnets) in each operating point, the temperature of the coolant is 70 °C (specified by the user), the average temperature on the housing surface is constant and reaches 75 °C. The thermal simulation was implemented in the two most crucial operating points of the machine: at maximal torque and at maximal speed. The temperatures, occurring in the electric machine are compared to the different design concepts. The results are presented in figures 10 and 11.

For the $p=2$ concept the highest temperature occurs at maximal torque operation in the end winding. The temperature reaches the value of 380 °C and exceeds the maximal permissible value of common insulating class H [20] for the electric machines. Therefore, the concept with $p=2$ is not suitable for this application.

For the $p=3$ concept the highest temperature occurs at the maximal speed operation and reaches 214 °C. In this case the hot spot of the machine is the tooth tip of the stator. The common temperature capability of insulation coating is defined in [21]. According to [21] the maximal temperature of the machine core should not exceed over 180 °C. As it can be seen, both concepts can result in overheating at different operating points. However, it should be noted that the $p=2$ concept reaches a higher peak temperature in comparison with the $p=3$ concept.

As a consequence, the high copper losses are more crucial for the electric machine compared to the iron losses of the

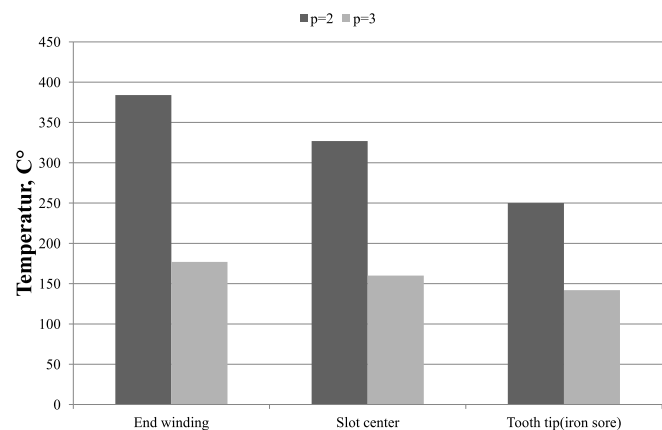


Figure 10. Temperatures in the electric machine at maximal torque.

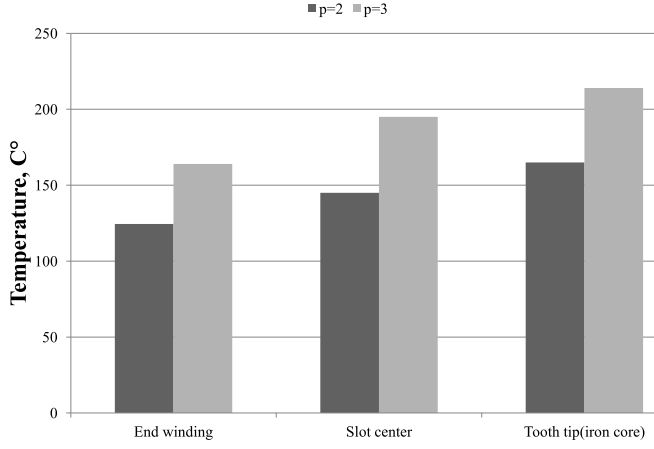


Figure 11. Temperatures in the electric machine at maximal speed.

same value. It means that the iron losses can be dissipated more effectively from the machine surface. For this reason, the concept with number of pole pairs $p=3$ is chosen for the given application. However, in order to avoid overheating at high speed operation the iron losses have to be reduced. This can be achieved by choosing another steel grade. Several sorts of the electrical steel were evaluated. The results of the comparison are presented in the next section.

VI. COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT CORE MATERIALS

The choice of the electrical steel is the next important step. The goal is to reduce the iron losses and to improve the overall efficiency. Electrical steel impacts the torque capability and the iron losses in electrical machines. The iron losses occur in the stator and rotor of the electrical machine. The resulting iron losses in the stator and rotor of the machine are listed in II.

Table II
IRON LOSSES OF THE RESEARCHED MACHINE.

	Stator iron losses	Rotor iron losses
Value	3.418W	150W
Percentage of the overall losses	96%	4%

The rotor iron losses are only 4 percent of the overall iron losses. Therefore we focus on the reduction of the stator iron losses.

For iron losses estimation the 5-Parameter-IEM-Formula, described in [22], [23] is used:

$$P_{Fe} = P_{hyst} + P_{eddy} + P_{excess} + P_{sat}, \quad (4)$$

where P_{hyst} describes hysteresis losses, P_{eddy} - eddy current losses, P_{excess} - excess losses and P_{sat} saturation losses. The iron losses components can be calculated according to the following formulations:

$$P_{hyst} = a_1 \cdot B^\alpha \cdot f \quad (5)$$

$$P_{eddy} = a_2 \cdot B^2 \cdot f^2 \quad (6)$$

$$P_{excess} = a_5 \cdot B^{1.5} \cdot f^{1.5} \quad (7)$$

$$P_{sat} = a_3 \cdot a_4 \cdot B^{a_4+2} \cdot f^2 \quad (8)$$

B is the amplitude of the flux density, a_i is a material independent parameter, which is determined based on the measurement in an Epstein frame for a large frequency range [22]. The flux densities are evaluated based on FEM simulations. The eddy current losses, which are proportional to the square of the field frequency, are most crucial at high speeds. Figure 12 represents the iron losses distribution at high speed. The eddy

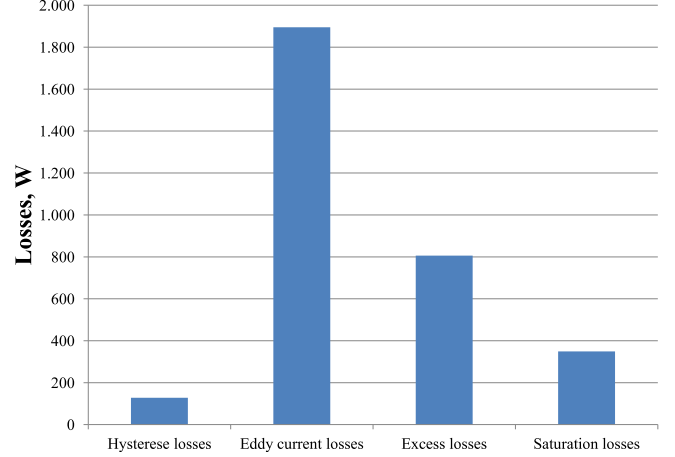


Figure 12. Iron losses distribution at maximal speed.

current parameter a_2 depends on the sheet thickness [22], therefore electrical steel with lower sheet thickness has to be used for the designed PMSM. Several lamination materials with different sheet thickness are compared: M250-35A, NO-30 and NO-20. The identified parameters for the evaluated materials are presented in the table III. It should be mentioned that the reduction of the sheet thickness provides a lower stacking factor, which increases the copper losses. Due to reduction of the magnetic flux a higher current density is required to achieve the required torque. As a result a higher temperature is expected at high torque operation. To avoid overheating, the core length is increased. The typical stacking factors for particular sheet thicknesses are used in the simulation and shown in table III. The results of the stator material variation are presented in the table IV. The impact on the weighted efficiency is shown in the figure 13.

Based on the presented results, it can be concluded that the NO-20 electrical steel is most suitable for the motor design. According to the figure 13, the reduction of the sheet thickness to 0.2mm has a significant impact on the machine

Table III
IDENTIFIED PARAMETERS FOR THE DIFFERENT MATERIALS.

	M235-35A	NO-30	NO-20
Sheet thickness	0,35 mm	0,30 mm	0,20 mm
Stacking factor	97,00%	96,50%	95,00%
Core length	130,00 mm	130,50 mm	132,50 mm
a_1	$13,88 \cdot 10^{-3}$	$20,63 \cdot 10^{-3}$	$16,10 \cdot 10^{-3}$
a_2	$44,78 \cdot 10^{-6}$	$39,98 \cdot 10^{-6}$	$14,30 \cdot 10^{-6}$
a_3	0,17	$0,26 \cdot 10^{-3}$	0,14
a_4	2,95	1,76	5,53
a_5	$0,52 \cdot 10^{-3}$	$0,45 \cdot 10^{-3}$	$0,33 \cdot 10^{-3}$
α	1,98	2,00	2,00

Table IV
RESULTS FOR DIFFERENT STATOR MATERIALS.

	M235-35A	NO-30	NO-20
Operating point	Maximum torque		
Copper losses	1,41 kW	1,43 kW	1,46 kW
Iron losses	0,13 kW	0,15 kW	0,10kW
Efficiency	90,00%	90,00%	90,00%

	M235-35A	NO-30	NO-20
Operating point	Maximum speed		
Copper losses	0,44 kW	0,40 kW	0,38 kW
Iron losses	3,90 kW	3,00 kW	1,40 kW
Efficiency	81,00%	84,00 %	91,00%

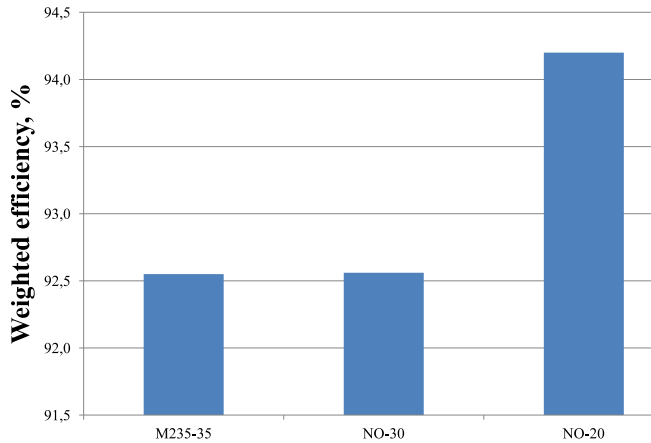


Figure 13. Impact of the different stator core materials on the weighted efficiency.

performance, increasing both the efficiency at high speed operation as well as the weighted efficiency. The thermal analysis provides the following results:

Table V
TEMPERATURES IN THE ELECTRIC MACHINE WITH NO-20 ELECTRICAL STEEL.

Operating point	Maximal speed
End windings temperature	126°C
Tooth tip	144°C
Slot center	137°C

Using NO-20 electrical steel, the thermal loading of the machine is in the permitted limits in both relevant operating points.

VII. RESULTS

The design of the electric motor with wide speed ratio for the integration as in-wheel drive, consisting of an electric machine and a gearbox, for an agricultural tractor is presented in this paper. A permanent magnet synchronous motor (PMSM) has been chosen for the application due to its high power density. It is shown that the required high maximum torque and high maximum rotational speed are a particular challenge for the motor design. Both high copper losses and high iron losses occur at corresponding operating points. Therefore, a compromise between reducing copper losses and iron losses in the design of the electrical machine is necessary. For this reason the comparison of the different concepts with different number of pole pairs over the weighted

efficiency is implemented to consider a suitable motor concept. The concepts with the number of pole pairs $p=2$ and $p=3$ are possible for the given application, where the concept with $p=2$ provides a higher weighted efficiency. However, the concept with $p=2$ is not applicable due to the high end-windings temperature of 380 °C at high torque operating point. For the concept with $p=3$ the highest temperature occurs at maximal speed operation due to high iron losses. However, the thermal analysis shows that iron losses at high speed operation ($p=3$) can be dissipated more effective than copper losses at high torque operation ($p=2$). A design concept with $p=3$ is therefore chosen as most suitable. The designed permanent magnet synchronous motor is presented in figure 14.

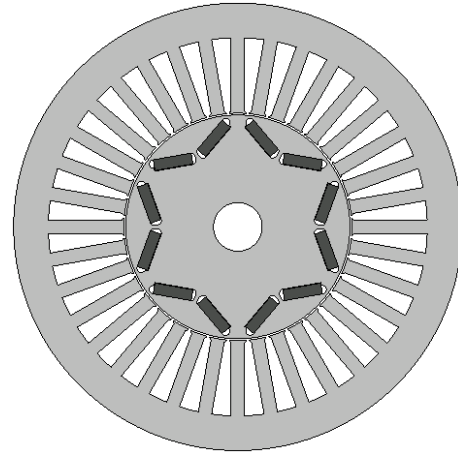


Figure 14. The studied PMSM with $p=3$.

It was found that the conventional electrical steel grades are not suitable due to high iron losses with the risk of overheating at high speeds. The main reason being high eddy currents losses, depending on the sheet thickness. In order to decrease the iron losses the comparison of different electrical steel sorts with different sheet thickness was performed. An electrical steel NO-20 with sheet thickness of 0.2 mm was chosen. The reduction of iron losses is necessary to avoid the overheating at high speed operation and also improves the weighted efficiency of the machine. In order to prevent the temperature increase at high torque the core length is increased. The resulting dimensions and values of the final geometry are listed in the table VI.

Table VI
THE FINAL MACHINE DATA.

Number of pole	6
Number of slots	36
Stator outer diameter	184,0 mm
Rotor outer diameter	92,0 mm
Air gap length	0,75 mm
Core length	132,5 mm
Stacking factor	95,0 %
End windings length	65,0 mm
Overall length	197,5 mm
Weighted efficiency	94,2%

It should be mentioned that the design of the high speed electric motor can also improve the power density and reduce

the machine dimensions. However, the wide speed ratio and consequently required high maximal torque leads to the large outer dimensions. In this case the utilization of a shiftable gearbox can be meaningful. The drive unit, including a high speed electrical motor and a shiftable gearbox will be examined in further research.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Mobile machinery is a promising branch for the application of electric motors, which have the potential to improve the efficiency of the vehicle. This study shows the potential of integrating an electric motor to an in-wheel drive, consisting of an electric machine and of a gearbox, fulfilling the particular requirements of an agricultural tractor.

Results presented in this work are intended to provide guidelines for design of the permanent magnet synchronous machine for both high torque and high speed application simultaneously. The design aspects, having the most significant influence on the machine dimensions and efficiency, are described.

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IX. BIOGRAPHIES

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