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ClimateImpactsOnline: A web platform for regional climate impacts

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Climate change is widely known but there is often uncertainty about the specific effects. One of the key tasks is - beyond discussing climate change and its impacts in specialist groups - to present these to a wider audience. In that respect, decision-makers in the public sector as well as directly affected professional groups require to obtain easy-to-understand information. These groups are not made up of specialist scientists. This gives rise to two challenges: (1) the complex information must be presented such that it is commonly understood, and (2) access to the information must be easy. Interested parties do not have time to familiarize themselves over a lengthy period, but rather want to immediately work with the information.

Beside providing climate information globally, regional information become of increasing interest for local decision making regarding awareness building and adaptation options. In addition, current web portals mainly focus on climate information, considering climate impacts on different sectors only implicitly. As solution, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and WetterOnline have jointly developed an Internet portal that is easy to use, groups together interesting information about climate impacts and offers it in a directly usable form.

This new web portal ClimateImpactsOnline.com provides detailed information, combining multiple sectors for the test case of Germany. For this region, numerous individual studies on climate change have been prepared by various institutions. These studies differ in terms of their aim, region and time period of interest. Thus, the goal of ClimateImpactsOnline.com is to present a synthesized view on regional impacts of global climate change on hydrology, agriculture, forest, energy, tourism and health sector. The climate and impact variables are available on a decadal time resolution for the period from 1901-2100, combining observed data and future projections. Detailed information are presented threefold: (1) color maps of absolute and difference values to consider parameter variations, (2) textual tables for individual decades including uncertainties (bandwidth), and (3) time series graphs visualizing the temporal parameter development. Tables and time series graphs are available for administrative units at three aggregation levels (nation, federal state, district).

We executed a larger test study with German public institutions and are currently improving functionalities due to appr. 50 user feedbacks. In the talk/poster, we present the scientific basics, graphical user interface in combination with the visual representations and the feedback from the public sector institutions and portal users.