EGU22-8008
https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-egu22-8008
EGU General Assembly 2022

Using the Subseasonal-to-Seasonal (S2S) Real Time Pilot (RTP) Initiative to understand the challenges and opportunities of co-production in S2S forecast application development

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The aim of the Subseasonal to Seasonal (S2S) Prediction Project Real Time Pilot (RTP) Initiative is to identify best practices for the development of useful and usable, user-orientated S2S forecasts. Typically, S2S forecasts are only available to researchers with a 3-week lag, but this can represent a barrier to the development of user-orientated applications as it prevents users from being able to understand the utility of this information in real time within their decision-making frameworks. To accomplish the aims of the RTP, the initiative looked to engage with existing user-orientated projects and offer them the opportunity to access real time S2S forecast information to enable better end-to-end development and evaluation of applications. To ensure that sufficient time was available for projects and users to use and become familiar with the real time S2S forecasts, an agreement was reached where S2S forecasts would be available in real time, to a small set of projects for a 2-year period (November 2019 up to November 2021). This has since extended up to November 2022.

To address the aims of the S2S RTP a series of feedback activities have been undertaken with the 16 projects involved. This has included the dissemination and analysis of 2 sets of questionnaires, followed by more detailed semi-structured interviews and subsequent synthesis. All feedback activities were inclusive of researchers and users participating in the initiative. This presentation will describe the different approaches projects have taken in the development of S2S forecast applications, focussing on co-production and user engagement activities across the value chain. Benefits, opportunities and challenges to using co-production methods in the development of user-orientated forecasts are identified through the feedback activities and wider literature. These findings suggest that the application of co-production methods remains novel in the S2S time range, with time and resource availability for stakeholder engagement posing a challenge. However, the feedback indicates that where bi-directional interaction is sustained, positive feedback mechanisms can develop, which build trust, strengthen collaborative working arrangements and enhance forecast product development specific to user requirements.