

1 **Applicability of machine learning-based downscaling method to climate change**

2 **prediction**

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4 Takao Yoshikane^{1,2*}, Kei Yoshimura^{2†}

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7 ¹Precision Earth Ltd, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, Japan

8

9 ²Institute of Industrial Science, The University of Tokyo, Kashiwanoha, Kashiwa-shi,

10 Chiba, Japan

11

12 *Corresponding author

13 E-mail takao-y@iis.u-tokyo.ac.jp

14

15 [†]The authors contributed equally to this work.

16

18 **Abstract**

19 The precipitation characteristics that cause water-related disasters strongly depend on
20 local factors such as topography. Therefore, high-resolution climate change projection
21 data is needed to accurately assess regional flood disaster risk. Climate models generally
22 have low resolution and are insufficient to reproduce observed precipitation distributions.
23 Downscaling techniques are usually applied to estimate detailed precipitation
24 distributions. In recent years, machine learning techniques have been widely adopted for
25 downscaling to improve accuracy. However, data-driven machine learning methods have
26 been criticized for issues such as an inability to make appropriate extrapolations when
27 predicting climate change, and there are currently very few examples of their application
28 in this context. In this study, a machine learning–based downscaling bias correction
29 method that recognizes hourly weather patterns in past and future climates was applied
30 and its validity was examined. This method enables temporal and spatial downscaling
31 and bias correction of multiple variables related to hydrological processes, while
32 adequately reproducing climate change characteristics in climate models that are difficult
33 to achieve using conventional methods. Although each variable was estimated
34 independently, the temporal changes were highly correlated with reanalysis values,
35 indicating that the variables were interrelated. Therefore, this simple method of

36 recognizing temporal and spatial distribution patterns can also be applied to
37 hydrologically relevant climate model output variables, allowing downscaling and bias
38 correction while accurately reflecting the climate change characteristics predicted by
39 global climate models.

40

41 **Introduction**

42 Regional climatic characteristics are highly dependent on local topographic
43 features. Therefore, high-resolution data are required to predict regional water resources
44 and water-related disaster risks in detail [1, 2]. However, global climate models are
45 computationally intensive. Therefore, global climate simulations usually need to be
46 performed at coarse spatial resolutions [3]. Dynamic and statistical downscaling
47 techniques have been used to obtain high-resolution climate prediction data [4, 5].
48 Dynamic downscaling typically uses high-resolution regional climate models, which
49 require significant computational resources for long-term climate simulations. Errors in
50 climate models are likely to be preserved or amplified by high-resolution regional
51 climate models [6]. Climate change projections show substantial differences in climate
52 change characteristics between global and regional climate models [7–9]. Statistical
53 downscaling does not require large computational resources but cannot accurately

54 reflect the effects of local topography; in some cases, the resulting characteristics may
55 differ significantly from observations [10]. In recent years, many downscaling methods
56 using machine learning have been developed to improve accuracy [11–14]. However,
57 there are few cases in which machine learning techniques have been applied to climate
58 change projections. Machine learning models are data-driven and may not accurately
59 extrapolate beyond the range of the training data [15, 16]. To address this issue, a
60 method was developed that incorporates physical constraints into machine learning
61 models to improve predictive accuracy [17]. The methodology employed climate-
62 invariant mapping to improve data efficiency, performance, and reproducibility across
63 different climates. However, not all variables are necessarily applicable, and it is
64 necessary to find a “feature transformation” that result in climate invariance and to
65 verify its performance [17]. Another approach that has been applied to climate change
66 projections is a machine learning–based downscaling method using hourly spatial
67 distribution data, which exploits the strong relationship between the spatial distribution
68 characteristics of precipitation over large areas and local precipitation characteristics
69 [18]. This method estimates the characteristics of climate change by utilizing various
70 weather patterns that emerge as a result of natural climate variability. Here, it is
71 assumed that weather patterns will not change considerably from the past to the future.

72 For example, cold (warm) weather patterns observed during the training period are
73 expected to appear more frequently in cold (warm) climates. If this assumption is
74 incorrect, there will be a large discrepancy between the simulation results of the climate
75 model and the climate change characteristics estimated using machine learning. This
76 method can apply the trained patterns to various climate models by imposing a
77 constraint requiring reproducibility of the physical model, that is, the ability to
78 reproduce phenomena at fivefold or higher resolution. In this study, this method was
79 further developed and downscaling experiments were conducted for past and future
80 climates. Eight variables (precipitation, temperature, specific humidity, surface
81 pressure, surface wind, and downward short- and longwave radiation) were used as
82 inputs to land surface models for water-related risk assessment to verify whether
83 extrapolation could be performed appropriately.

84

85 **Materials and Methods**

86 **Overview of the machine learning method**

87 A downscaling and bias correction method using machine learning [18] (hereafter
88 referred to as YY2023) was developed to enable the application of climate model
89 outputs, such as those from the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) Coupled

90 Model Intercomparison Project Phase 6 (CMIP6). Numerical models can generally
91 reproduce meteorological phenomena at a resolution approximately five times the grid
92 size [19, 20]. Therefore, weather forecasts can reproduce weather events such as warm
93 and cold fronts associated with low-pressure systems, as well as the time-varying
94 characteristics of weather patterns within a domain. However, model biases owing to
95 imperfections in numerical models, such as insufficient resolution, are inevitable [10,
96 21, 22]. Machine learning methods are expected to capture a close relationship between
97 the simulated spatial distribution and observed values located at the center of the domain
98 through weather patterns. It is assumed that climate models with similar resolutions
99 reproduce weather systems with similar characteristics. Therefore, pattern recognition
100 of the relationship between the spatial distribution of various factors simulated by
101 weather forecast models and observational data is applicable to other models. In this
102 study, the effectiveness of this method was demonstrated by applying pattern
103 recognition to 20th Century Reanalysis Data (20CR) [23] and outputs from CMIP6
104 MIROC (MIROC) simulations [24]. This approach is expected to improve the accuracy
105 of estimating the water-related disaster risks and water resources associated with climate
106 change. In this study, the machine learning downscaling bias correction method was
107 applied to estimate precipitation, temperature at 2 m, near-surface wind at 10 m, specific

108 humidity, surface pressure, and downward short- and longwave radiation over land areas
109 worldwide, excluding regions north of 84°N and south of 60°S (Fig 1), and the
110 applicability of the method was demonstrated to climate models. We set 7×7 grid points
111 as the explanatory variables (1.5° grid spacing) and divided the center grid of the
112 explanatory variables into a 3×3 grid to define the objective variables (1.5° grid
113 spacing) (Figs. 1b and 2). In this method, temporal downscaling was simultaneously
114 performed from 3-h values to 1-h values (Figs. 2 and 3 and Table 1). Machine learning
115 effectively corrects the spatial distribution of each variable. The estimated values of each
116 variable reproduce the time-varying characteristics well but tend to be slightly
117 underestimated. Therefore, after machine learning, the quantile mapping (QM) method
118 was applied to the estimated values to perform quantitative correction [18], except for
119 downward shortwave radiation (Fig. 4). Regarding shortwave radiation, no significant
120 need for quantitative correction is determined because the range of values is not
121 expected to change in the future climate. Quantitative bias in global climate model
122 simulations is small, and sufficient accuracy can be achieved through downscaling and
123 bias correction using the machine learning method alone. In addition, an experiment was
124 performed in which only the QM method was applied to evaluate differences relative to
125 this method. In the training process, data upscaled to 0.5° and 1.5° using ECMWF

126 Reanalysis v5 (ERA5) [25] were used as objective and explanatory variables,
127 respectively. The learning period was 11 years, from 2008 to 2018, and a classifier was
128 created for each month (Table 1). For downscaling from 3-h values to 1-h values, data
129 from 3 h before and after the target period were used as explanatory variables, and an
130 hourly classifier was created for each period (Fig 3). For inference, the 20CR and
131 MIROC data were upscaled to 1.5° and applied to the classifier created during the
132 learning process. Finally, the 20CR data and MIROC output values were downscaled to
133 a spatial resolution of 0.5° and a temporal resolution of 1 h (Table 1).

134

135 **Fig 1. Calculation domain and the domains of explanatory variables and objective**
136 **variables used in machine learning.** (A) The calculation domain (gray area) is the land
137 area from 60°S to 84°N . B) The thick frame defines the explanatory variables (1.5° grid
138 spacing) on a 7×7 grid, and the thin inner frame is divided into a 3×3 grid to define
139 the objective variables (0.5° grid spacing).

140

141 **Fig 2. Schematic view of the training and inference processes.** The numbers of
142 explanatory and response variables (dimensions) were 147 and 1, respectively. A 7×7
143 grid was selected as the explanatory variable, including data from 3 h before (“-3h”)

144 and 3 h after (“+3h”) the target time (1.5° grid spacing). The central grid of the
145 explanatory variables was divided into 3×3 grid points, which were selected as the
146 objective variables (0.5° grid spacing). Twenty-seven classifiers were created for each
147 grid with a coarse mesh (spatial downscaling) and for temporal downscaling from three-
148 hourly to hourly resolution. For variables other than precipitation and downward short-
149 and longwave radiation, “0 h,” “+1 h,” and “+2 h” represent the initial time, 1 h later,
150 and 2 h later, respectively. Precipitation and solar radiation corresponded to averages
151 over 0–1 h, 1–2 h, and 2–3 h.

152

153 **Fig 3. Schematic view of temporal downscaling.** The explanatory variables used are
154 data from three hours before and after the “target time.” Precipitation and downward
155 short- and longwave radiation were estimated using 3-h averages, whereas the other
156 variables were estimated using snapshot values. At the target time, the objective
157 variable is set for each hour. “Initial time,” “1st time,” “2nd time,” and “3rd time”
158 represent 0 h, 1 h, 2 h, and 3 h after the initial time in the target time period. “Initial
159 time,” “1st time,” and “2nd time” are used for variables other than precipitation and
160 downward short- and longwave radiation and correspond to “0h,” “+1h,” and “+2h” in

161 Fig. 2. Precipitation and downward short- and longwave radiation correspond to three-

162 hourly integrated or average values for 0–1 h, 1–2 h, and 2–3 h.

163

164 **Table 1. Experimental conditions.**

Experiment	MLDS_20CR	MLDS_MIROC
Explanatory variable	ERA5 reanalysis data (upscaled 1.5degree) 7 by 7 grids	Same as MLDS_20CR
Objective variable	ERA5 reanalysis data (upscaled 0.5 degree)	Same as MLDS_20CR
Training term	Every month from 2008 to 2018	Same as MLDS_20CR
Target mode output	NOAA-CIRES-DOE 20th Century Reanalysis V3	Atmosphere and Ocean Research Institute; Centre for Climate System Research - National Institute for Environmental Studies: WCRP CMIP6: the MIROC team MIROC6 model output.
Downscaling term	Past: Every month from 1955 to 1984 Present: Every month from 1985 to 2014	Historical: Every month from 1985 to 2014 SSP126: Every month from 2071 to 2100

165

166

167 **Fig 4. Flowchart of the method.** DSWR denotes downward shortwave radiation.

168

169 **Bias correction and downscaling methods using machine
170 learning.**

171 A support vector machine regression (SVM–SVR) [26], constructed in a previous

172 study [18], was used. An SVM is a supervised learning technique that uses a subset of the

173 data to derive predictions from support vectors. An SVM seeks to obtain optimal results

174 by finding a maximum-margin hyperplane determined by maximizing the distance

175 between support vectors. Compared with other machine learning techniques, such as
176 neural networks and random forests, SVM has several advantages [27–29]. For example,
177 SVR has been shown to perform well, even with small sample sizes [26]. SVMs have
178 been employed in various fields, including meteorology, hydrology, disaster prevention
179 management, and water resources management, and have proven effective in recognizing
180 rare precipitation events [30–32]. In this study, the SVM library was used in the Intel®
181 Extension for Scikit-learn (ver. 2023.1.1) [33] and the Epsilon-Support Vector
182 Regression (SVR) implementation in Scikit-learn (ver. 1.2.2) [34]. The SVR method
183 requires the hyperparameters gamma, C, and epsilon to be specified. Gamma is a kernel
184 parameter that specifies the width of the Gaussian radial basis function (RBF) kernel, C
185 is the penalty constraint error, and epsilon is the width of the dead zone [35]. Determining
186 these hyperparameters is crucial for improving the generalizability of precipitation
187 estimates. However, determining the optimal parameters requires substantial
188 computational resources [34, 35]. Therefore, it is necessary to efficiently obtain optimal
189 hyperparameters. Although hyperparameters can be specified at each time point in this
190 method, this approach is highly inefficient because determining the optimal values over
191 the entire domain requires substantial computational resources. Therefore, the same set
192 hyperparameter values were applied to all the grid cells in the domain, following the same

193 methodology used in previous studies involving YY2023 (S1 Table) [18, 36].

194

195 **SVR method.**

196 The SVR method requires the hyperparameters gamma, C, and epsilon to be set.

197 Gamma is the kernel function parameter that specifies the width of the Gaussian radial

198 basis function kernel, C is the penalty constraint error, and epsilon is the width of the

199 dead zone [35].

200 In the SVM method, the vector $x = (x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_p)^T$ consisting of p

201 explanatory variables is the input, and a classifier is trained to correctly output the

202 objective variable $f(x_i)$. By introducing the intercept b and the coefficient vector

203 $w = (w_1, w_2, w_3, \dots, w_p)^T$, the linear regression function was defined as follows:

204
$$f(x_i) = w^T x_i + b \quad (1)$$

205 In this function, b and w are estimated to satisfy this relationship. In SVR, the non-

206 negative parameter ε is set in advance, and only large residuals of e_i that exceed the

207 range of $-\varepsilon \leq e_i \leq \varepsilon$ are recorded as penalties of ξ_i . The parameters are estimated to

208 minimize the following equation:

209
$$\psi_\varepsilon(w, \xi) = \frac{1}{2} \|w\|_2^2 + C \sum_{i=1}^n \xi_i \quad (2)$$

210 $\| w \|_2 = \sqrt{w_1^2 + w_2^2 + \dots + w_p^2}$ (3)

211 However, the following restrictions apply.

212 $-\varepsilon - \xi_i \leq f(x_i) - (w^T x_i + b) \leq \varepsilon + \xi_i$ (4)

213 In the above equations, C is the penalizing constraint error and, ε (epsilon) is the

214 width of the insensitive zone. To determine the nonlinear regression equation, a feature

215 map $\phi(x)$ that represents the vector of the nonlinear terms (features) of the explanatory

216 variables was introduced. The regression function using the feature map is as follows:

217 $f(x) = w^T \phi(x) + b$ (5)

218 To avoid increased computational cost owing to increasing dimensionality of the feature

219 space, kernel functions that can express the inner products in the feature space were

220 introduced.

221 $k(x_1, x_2) = \phi(x_1)^T \phi(x_2)$ (6)

222 The inner product of two vectors is maximized when they have the same direction.

223 Therefore, the kernel function can be interpreted as the similarity between two vectors

224 in the feature space. However, when the dimensions of the feature space are large,

225 calculating the inner product (6) is difficult. Therefore, the kernel method uses the

226 following function, which is the inner product in a high-dimensional space:

227 $k(x_1, x_2) = \exp(-\gamma \|x_1 - x_2\|^2)$ (7)

228 This function is called the Gaussian radial basis function kernel and, γ (gamma) is the
229 kernel function parameter [37,38]. The hyper-parameters and scale factors for each
230 variable are shown in S1 Table.

231

232 **Training and test data.**

233 The fifth-generation ECMWF reanalysis for global climate and weather (ERA5)
234 hourly data were used as the training data for 11 years, from 2008 to 2018. As test data,
235 the 20th century reanalysis data (20CR) for 60 years, from 1955 to 2014, and climate
236 model data (MIROC) for historical data from 1985 to 2014 and future projections for the
237 SSP126 scenario from 2071 to 2100 were used. The resolution of the 20CR and MIROC
238 data was adjusted to 1.5° for consistency with the recognition patterns produced by the
239 ERA5 reanalysis data. The variables were estimated at a resolution of 0.5° by
240 downscaling them to a fine grid (3×3) using the same hyperparameters and feature
241 ranges (7×7 grid points) used in the recognition pattern of the weather forecast model
242 (Figs 1, 2, and 3; Table 1).

243

244 **Quantile mapping method**

245 To perform quantitative corrections, the CDF transformation method [39] was
246 applied to the machine learning downscaling estimates, except for downward shortwave
247 radiation. In machine learning methods, the accuracy is highly dependent on the number
248 of samples. Heavy rainfall results in a small number of samples, which makes it difficult
249 to accurately estimate rainfall. Techniques such as undersampling and oversampling are
250 available to correct for unbalanced sampling [40]. In this study, the quantile mapping
251 method (CDFt in the R package) [41] was used instead of undersampling or oversampling,
252 considering the complexity of the adjustment. “CDF-t” assumes that there exists a
253 transformation T that can convert the CDFs of GCM variables (e.g., temperature,
254 precipitation, wind speed) into CDFs representing long-term variables at a local scale. To
255 estimate the quantitative correction for future outputs of machine learning estimates, the
256 transformation T is:

$$257 \quad T(F_{Gh}(x)) = F_{Oh}(x) \quad (8)$$

$$258 \quad T(F_{Gf}(x)) = F_{Of}(x) \quad (9)$$

259 where F_{Oh} is the CDF of observation data over current period, and F_{Gh} is the CDF of the
260 bilinearly interpolated simulation data over current period. F_{Of} and F_{Gf} are the equivalent
261 CDFs of F_{Oh} and F_{Gh} , respectively, for future (or simply different) periods. To model T,

262 x in Gh in Equation (1) with $F(u)$, where u is $[0,1]$ and the following relationship is

263 obtained:

264
$$T(u) = F_{Oh} \circ F_{Gh}^{-1}(u) \quad (10)$$

265 Hence, assuming that the relationship (4) remains valid, the CDF is provided by

266
$$F_{Of}(x) = T(F_{Gf}(x)) = F_{Oh} \circ F_{Gh}^{-1}(u) \circ F_{Gf}(x) \quad (11)$$

267 In the CDFt package, Eq. (1) reconstructs F_{Of} from F_{Oh} , F_{Gh} , and F_{Gf} , and Eq. (8) performs

268 quantile mapping from F_{Of} and F_{Gf} to correct Gf . In practice, F_{Oh} , F_{Gh} , and F_{Gf} were

269 estimated using the empirical cumulative distribution function. However, the CDFt

270 method only works correctly when the observed values of Oh and Gh have similar ranges.

271 In this study, we used ERA5 data with 0.5° resolution from 2008 to 2018 and 20CR and

272 MIROC data over the current period from 1985 to 2014 instead of Oh and Gh . Instead of

273 Gf , the machine learning estimates use 20CR for past period from 1955 to 1984 and

274 MIROC for future projection from 2071 to 2100 (Fig 5).

275

276 **Fig 5. Schematic view of quantile mapping method.** F_{Oh} is observation (ERA5

277 reanalysis data) at 0.5° . F_{Gh} and F_{Gf} are present and future/past climate model outputs

278 ($20CR$ and MIROC, respectivervy). F_{Of} is quantitatively corrected value (final product).

279

280 **Results**

281 **Validation of the downscaling bias correction method**

282 July is the month with an active Asian monsoon that brings large amounts of
283 rainfall. This not only causes frequent flooding and other water disasters but also has a
284 major impact on water resources; therefore, estimating the amount of rainfall during this
285 period is extremely important. Figs 6 and 7 show the precipitation and temperature
286 distributions for July over the global and Asian monsoon regions for the 30-year
287 average values of 20CR, MLDS_20CR, and ERA5 from 1955 to 1984. Downscaling the
288 20CR data using this method confirmed that the distribution of precipitation and
289 temperature were almost identical to that of ERA5. The precipitation characteristics
290 corresponding to the topography were reproduced, indicating that the downscaling and
291 bias correction methods were effective. The detailed spatial distribution characteristics
292 of the temperature distribution corresponding to the topography were also estimated.
293 Correction of the temperature distribution in alpine zones has a large effect on snow
294 accumulation and snowmelt; therefore, it is also important for estimating water
295 resources. The correlation coefficients and RMSEs of the spatial distributions of the
296 eight variables in the 30-year average values of MLDS_20CR, 20CR, and ERA5

297 showed that, relative to ERA5, the bias of 20CR bias was significantly improved in
298 MLDS_20CR for all variables (Fig 8). In particular, the overestimation of 20CR in the
299 low-temperature range was improved by MLDS_20CR, indicating that the bias was
300 corrected and the performance was improved by this method. The spatial distribution
301 characteristics of spatial distributions were accurately well estimated using by this
302 method (S1, S2, and S3 Figs).

303

304 **Fig 6. Precipitation distribution characteristics in July.** Thirty-year average of
305 precipitation in July from 1955 to 1984 in the global and Asian monsoon area of 20CR,
306 MLDS_20CR, and ERA5, respectively. (A) Global area of 20CR. (B) Global area of
307 MLDS-20CR. (C) Global area of ERA5. (D) Asian monsoon area of 20CR. (E) Asian
308 monsoon area of MLDS-20CR. (F) Asian monsoon area of ERA5.

309

310 **Fig 7. The same figure as Fig 6 except for temperatures.**

311

312 **Fig 8. Bias correction effect using this method.** Scatter diagrams of the 30-year
313 average of annual mean values of MLDS_20CR for 20CR and ERA5 for the first 30
314 years, from 1955 to 1984. (A) 20CR in temperature (TEMP2M). (B) 20CR for

315 downward long-wave radiation (DLWR). (C) 20CR at specific humidity (SHUM). (D)
316 20CR for downward short-wave radiation (DSWR). (E) ERA5 as a function of
317 temperature (TEMP2M). (F) ERA5 under downward long-wave radiation (DLWR). (G)
318 ERA5 at specific humidity (SHUM). (H) ERA5 under downward short-wave radiation
319 (DSWR). (I) 20CR surface pressure (SP). (J) 20CR in the near surface winds (zonal) at
320 10m (U10M). (K) 20CR under near-surface winds (meridional) at 10m (V10M). (L)
321 20CR during precipitation (PREC). (M) ERA5 surface pressure (SP). (N) ERA5 under
322 near-surface winds (zonal) at 10m (U10M). (O) ERA5 under near-surface winds
323 (meridional) at 10m (V10M). (P) ERA5 during precipitation (PREC). MLDS_20CR and
324 ERA5 were upscaled to match the resolution of 20CR. The correlation coefficients (R)
325 and RMSEs of the spatial distributions are shown in each diagram.

326

327 The 99th percentile values of the hourly data except for precipitation and
328 temperature in the first 30 years, and the climatic different values between the first and
329 last 30 years in ERA5 and MLDS_20CR are shown in S4 and S5 Figs. The spatial
330 distribution characteristics of extreme values in MLDS_20CR corresponded well with
331 those in ERA5, with a high correlation of >0.97 . The values of precipitation and
332 temperature data are described in detail in the following subsections.

333

334 **Validation for past climate change**

335 The spatial distribution of the annual mean climate change for the eight variables
336 of 20CR, MLDS_20CR, and ERA5 over the first 30 years (1955–1985) versus the
337 second 30 years (1985–2014) is shown in Fig 9 and S6 and S7 Figs. The shaded areas
338 indicate areas with a significant change at the 95% significance level with respect to
339 interannual variation. For the seven variables, including temperature (TEMP2M),
340 except for precipitation (PREC), the climate change distribution of MLDS_20CR was
341 almost the same as that of 20CR, and the change characteristics were consistent with
342 ERA5. The DSWR of MLDS_20CR also closely reproduced the change characteristics
343 of the 20CR, even though no quantitative correction was performed (Figs 9G and 9H).
344 The areas showing significant changes corresponded well. Regarding precipitation, the
345 amount of climate change was small, and the spatial distribution characteristics of the
346 amount of change were different. The correlation coefficients and RMSEs of
347 MLDS_20CR and 20CR for the annual mean climate change of the eight variables also
348 showed that, except for precipitation, the correlation coefficients were over 0.93, and
349 the quantitative correspondence was almost the same. However, for precipitation, the
350 correlation was weak, and the quantitative correspondence was not consistent (Fig 10).

351 However, the spatial distribution of climate change trends in ERA5 corresponded well
352 with those in MLDS-20CR and 20CR, but the amount of change at each grid point did
353 not correspond well (S8 Fig). This indicates that the climate change at each grid point is
354 small and that the climate differences between different reanalysis data do not match
355 well. The frequency and extreme values of precipitation and temperature are important
356 for assessing flood disaster risk in a region. The performance of the temporal
357 downscaling from three-hourly to hourly was confirmed by examining the frequency of
358 hourly precipitation. Fig 11 shows the annual frequency of hourly precipitation events
359 with precipitation of 1 mm or more in the first 30 years, and the climate difference
360 values between the first and second 30 years in ERA5 and MLDS_20CR. Regarding the
361 spatial distribution of frequency over the first 30 years, MLDS_20CR estimated the
362 same regional distribution characteristics as ERA5, and although there was a tendency
363 for it to be slightly underestimated in the tropical regions of Africa, it showed a high
364 correlation of 0.98. However, the correlation coefficient for climate change with ERA5
365 was 0.30, which is a small correlation, and the amount of change by region did not
366 match. The 99th percentile values of 1-hour precipitation (shaded areas indicate areas
367 where the change in interannual variability is significant at the 95% confidence interval)
368 are shown in Fig 12. In the spatial distribution of the first 30 years, the distribution

369 characteristics of heavy rainfall were well estimated, and the correlation with ERA5
370 (0.92) was also high. In contrast, the correlation coefficient of climate change with
371 ERA5 was 0.03, indicating there was almost no correlation, and the amount of change
372 did not match. The frequency of temperatures below 0 °C has a substantial impact on
373 water resources through snow accumulation and melting. Fig 13 shows the spatial
374 distribution of the frequency of hourly temperatures below 0 °C (throughout the year).
375 For the spatial distribution of the frequency over the first 30 years, MLDS_20CR
376 estimated nearly the same regional distribution characteristics as ERA5 and showed a
377 high correlation (0.99) with ERA5. However, its correlation with climate change was
378 relatively low (0.73). The extent of climate change varies greatly in some regions,
379 particularly in the coastal areas of the Arctic and alpine regions. Fig 14 shows the 99th
380 percentile values of the hourly temperatures in the first 30 years, and the climate
381 differences between the first and last 30 years in ERA5 and MLDS_20CR.
382 MLDS_20CR estimated nearly the same regional distribution characteristics as ERA5
383 and showed a high correlation (0.99) with ERA5. In contrast, climate change has a low
384 correlation with ERA5 (correlation coefficient = 0.36).
385

386 **Fig 9. Estimation of climate change characteristics using 20CR.** Annual mean
387 climate difference between the first 30 years (past) and the last 30 years (present). (A)
388 20CR in precipitation (PREC). (B) MLDS-20CR in precipitation (PREC). (C) ERA5 in
389 precipitation (PREC). (D) 20CR in temperature (TEMP2M). (E) MLDS-20CR at
390 temperature (TEMP2M). (F) ERA5 at temperature (TEMP2M). (G) 20CR for
391 downward short-wave radiation (DSWR). (H) MLDS-20CR for downward short-wave
392 radiation (DSWR). (I) ERA5 for downward short-wave radiation (DSWR). Shaded
393 areas indicate significant increases with 95% confidence intervals using Welch's t-test.

394

395 **Fig 10. Relationship between climate change simulated by the climate model and**
396 **the values estimated by this method.** Scatter diagrams of annual mean climate
397 difference values between the first 30 years (past) and the last 30 years (present) of
398 MLDS_20CR for 20CR. (A) Temperature (TEMP2M). (B) Downward long-wave
399 radiation (DLWR). (C) Specific humidity (SHUM). (D) Downward short-wave
400 radiation (DSWR). (E) Surface pressure (SP). (F) Near-surface winds (zonal) at 10 m
401 (U10M). (G) Near-surface winds (meridional) at 10 m (V10M). (H) Precipitation
402 (PREC). MLDS_20CR was upscaled to match the resolution of 20CR.

403

404 **Fig 11. Annual frequency of hourly precipitation events with precipitation of 1 mm**
405 **or more in the first 30 years, and the climate difference values between the first**
406 **and last 30 years in ERA5 and MLDS_20CR.** (A) The frequency in ERA5. (B) The
407 frequency of MLDS_20CR. (C) Frequency scatter diagram for ERA5 and
408 MLDS_20CR. (D) The climate difference values in ERA5. (E) Climate difference
409 values in MLDS_20CR. F) The scatter diagram of climate different values in ERA5 and
410 MLDS_20CR.

411

412 **Fig 12. The 99th percentile values of hourly precipitation in the first 30 years, and**
413 **the climate difference values between the first and last 30 years in ERA5 and**
414 **MLDS_20CR.** (A) The 99th percentile values in ERA5. (B) The 99th percentile values
415 in MLDS_20CR. (C) Scatter diagram of the 99th percentile values of ERA5 and
416 MLDS_20CR. (D) The climate difference values in ERA5. (E) Climate difference
417 values in MLDS_20CR. (F) Scatter diagram of the climate difference values in ERA5
418 and MLDS_20CR. Shaded areas indicate areas where the change in interannual
419 variability was significant at the 95% confidence interval.

420

421 **Fig 13. The spatial distribution of the annual frequency of hourly temperatures**
422 **below 0 °C in the first 30 years, and the climate difference values between the first**
423 **and last 30 years in ERA5 and MLDS_20CR.** (A) The frequency in ERA5. (B) The
424 frequency of MLDS_20CR. (C) Frequency scatter diagram for ERA5 and
425 MLDS_20CR. (D) The climate difference values in ERA5. (E) The climate difference
426 values in MLDS_20CR. (F) Scatter diagram of the climate difference values in ERA5
427 and MLDS_20CR. Shaded areas indicate areas where the change in interannual
428 variability is significant at the 95% confidence interval.

429

430 **Fig 14. The 99th percentile values of hourly temperatures in the first 30 years, and**
431 **the climate difference values between the first and last 30 years in ERA5 and**
432 **MLDS_20CR.** (A) The 99th percentile values in ERA5. (B) The 99th percentile values
433 in MLDS_20CR. (C) Scatter diagram of the 99th percentile values of ERA5 and
434 MLDS_20CR. (D) The climate difference values in ERA5. (E) Climate difference
435 values in MLDS_20CR. (F) Scatter diagram of climate different values in ERA5 and
436 MLDS_20CR. Shaded areas indicate areas where the change in interannual variability is
437 significant at the 95% confidence interval.

438

439 **Applicability to future climate change predictions**

440 SSP126 is one of the most optimistic global warmings scenarios and predicts that
441 the rise in temperature from pre-industrial levels will be limited to approximately 1.5-
442 1.7 °C. Without the ability to properly extrapolate future projections, even for scenarios
443 with small temperature increases, it would be to apply this method to future climate
444 change scenarios. In this study, a scenario with a relatively gradual increase in
445 temperature was selected and verified whether it was applicable to future projections.
446 The characteristics of the spatial distributions of the 30-year mean from 1985 to 2014 in
447 the MLDS_MIROC historical data corresponded well with ERA5 and corrected the
448 biases in the MIROC historical data (S9, S10, and S11 Figs). The spatial distributions of
449 climate change for the eight variables in MIROC and MLDS_MIROC historical (1985–
450 2014) and SSP126 (2071–2100) are shown in Fig 15 and S12 and S13 Figs. Except for
451 precipitation, MLDS_MIROC quantitatively corresponded well with the changes in
452 MIROC, with correlation coefficients greater than 0.89. For precipitation, the
453 correlation coefficient was somewhat high at 0.58; however, the amount of change was
454 generally small, and the areas where significant changes occurred were sparse.
455

456 **Fig 15. Relationship between climate change predicted by the climate model and**
457 **the values estimated by this method.** Annual mean climate difference between the
458 present 30 y (historical scenario) from 1985 to 2014 and the future 30 y (SSP126
459 scenario) from 2071 to 2100. (A) MIROC for precipitation (PREC). (B)
460 MLDS_MIROC for PREC. (C) Scatter diagram of PREC in MIROC and
461 MLDS_MIROC, (D) MIROC for temperature (TEMP2M). (E) MLDS_MIROC for
462 TEMP2M. (F) Scatter diagram of TEMP2M in MIROC and MLDS_MIROC, (G)
463 MIROC for downward shortwave radiation (DSWR). (H) MLDS_MIROC for DSWR.
464 (I) Scatter diagram of DSWR in MIROC and MLDS_MIROC. Shaded areas indicate
465 significant increases with 95% confidence intervals using Welch's t-test.
466 MLDS_MIROC was upscaled to match the resolution of MIROC.
467

468 **Correspondence of estimated values of each variable to**
469 **weather events**

470 In this method, each variable is estimated using different explanatory and
471 objective variables. Therefore, it was necessary to investigate whether a relationship
472 exists between these variables over time. Fig. 16 shows the time series of the eight
473 variables in 20CR, MLDS_20CR, and ERA5 for a specific location in July 1985. In

474 Japan, July is the month when the rainy season changes to a dry period, and changes in
475 the climatic characteristics of the eight variables are also noticeable. For time changes
476 other than precipitation, a high correlation (> 0.74) is shown with ERA5. Each element
477 changed in response to the difference between the rainy and dry periods and was
478 consistent with the weather patterns. In 20CR, the effects of terrain (altitude) due to low
479 resolution can be observed (especially in pressure); however, this is corrected by this
480 downscaling method, and the data become closer to ERA5. The correlation between
481 precipitation and ERA5 is low (0.37). Slight differences in the location and timing of
482 the disturbance passage were observed between ERA5 and 20CR, causing large local
483 differences in the temporal variation of precipitation.

484

485 **Fig 16. Temporal variations at a specific point (136E, 36N) in July 1985. (A)**
486 Precipitation (PREC). (B) Temperature (TEMP2M). (C) Specific humidity (SHUM).
487 (D) Near-surface wind at 10 m (zonal) (U10M). (E) Surface pressure (SP). (F) Near-
488 surface wind at 10 m (meridional) (V10M). (G) Downward longwave radiation
489 (DLWR). (H) Downward shortwave radiation (DSWR). R is the correlation coefficient
490 between MLDS_20CR and ERA5.

491

492 **Comparison with quantile mapping method**

493 Quantile mapping is a commonly used downscaling technique. In general, this
494 strongly depends on the characteristics of the model output data. Therefore, if the
495 meteorological characteristics at the downscaled grid points differ significantly between
496 the observations and the model output, the QM estimates may differ significantly from
497 the observations. Applying QM alone does not adequately correct bias in the spatial
498 distribution of precipitation [38]. S14 Fig shows the temporal variation in temperature
499 in July 1985 for QM only, ERA5, 20CR, and MLDS_20CR at a specific grid point.
500 While MLDS_20CR had almost the same temporal variation characteristics as ERA5,
501 the reproducibility of diurnal variation decreased in QM, and the variation
502 characteristics were closer to those of 20CR than to ERA5. MLDS_20CR is an hourly
503 estimate, whereas QM is a three-hourly estimate, therefore, the reproducibility of daily
504 changes is inevitably low. Furthermore, if the proportion of the ocean area is large at the
505 model grid point, the diurnal variation in the QM estimate may be smaller owing to its
506 influence. In contrast, MLDS_20CR can estimate variation characteristics that reflect
507 local influences, such as diurnal variation.

508

509 **Discussion**

510 To investigate the applicability of this method to climate change, downscaling
511 and bias correction of eight climate model variables (precipitation, temperature, surface
512 pressure, surface wind, specific humidity, downward shortwave radiation, and longwave
513 radiation) used as inputs to a hydrological model was performed. The estimates had
514 almost the same spatial distribution characteristics as the ERA5 reanalysis. This
515 indicates that the weather pattern characteristics of each variable simulated by the
516 climate model are consistent with the ERA5 reanalysis and that the classifier trained
517 using the ERA5 reanalysis can be applied to climate model output. If the climate model
518 has a bias in large-scale circulation (e.g., a large north–south shift in the storm track), it
519 may cause a large error in precipitation frequency in the region, which may have a
520 considerable impact on the precipitation amount. These biases in climate models also
521 affect precipitation characteristics estimated using this method, leading to large
522 discrepancies between estimates and observations. Therefore, this method is applicable
523 only if the large-scale circulation characteristics reproduced by climate models do not
524 deviate significantly from observations. This method reproduced the hourly frequency
525 and extreme value distribution of precipitation, indicating that precipitation events were
526 effectively downscaled in space and time. This method can also reproduce the spatial
527 distribution of the frequency of temperatures below 0°C, except in special cases,

528 making it useful for evaluating water resources such as snow accumulation and
529 snowmelt. To reproduce past climate changes, the method reproduced the same climate
530 change patterns as the reanalysis values and climate models, except for precipitation.
531 This indicates that various hourly spatial patterns during the current cold and warm
532 seasons also apply to past weather patterns. Compared to ERA5, the climate change
533 characteristics were well reproduced over a wide area, but the amount of climate change
534 at each grid point was not as consistent as expected (S6 Fig). This is likely because the
535 extent of climate change was small, and the difference in the characteristics of the
536 reanalysis data between 20CR and ERA5 was greater than the extent of climate change.
537 The characteristics of the change in precipitation were unclear, and there were few areas
538 where the change was statistically significant. This suggests that the natural variability
539 of precipitation is greater than the influence of global warming and that the differences
540 in the characteristics of the reanalysis data used for downscaling (20CR and ERA5),
541 such as slight differences in storm tracks, significantly affect the distribution pattern of
542 downscaled local precipitation. Climate change in some coastal and alpine regions of
543 the Arctic has underestimated the frequency of subfreezing temperatures and the 99th
544 percentile values. This was assumed to be due to changes in the local environment, such
545 as the disappearance of glaciers. If the local environment changes significantly, it may

546 be difficult to respond in certain cases. In the future, it will be necessary to incorporate
547 the effects of glacier loss into our estimates. By linking machine learning estimates with
548 hydrological models, it may be possible to adjust temperature to reflect the effects of
549 glacier loss.

550 Projections of future climate estimated patterns of climate change are almost
551 identical to those reproduced in the climate model, with the exception of precipitation.
552 Precipitation was relatively more strongly correlated with future climate change than
553 with past climate change. This may be due to clearer sensitivity to global warming.
554 Regarding the so-called extrapolation issue, it is assumed that the extrapolation of this
555 method works properly unless climatic characteristics change significantly, such as
556 glacial disappearance. The correlation between the time variation of each variable and
557 ERA5 was relatively high at 0.71 or more, except for precipitation, and the time
558 variation characteristics corresponded well. On the other hand, with regard to
559 precipitation, even small differences in storm tracks between ERA5 and 20CR can lead
560 to large differences in the local temporal variability of precipitation due to the influence
561 of topography. Therefore, it is necessary to estimate the impacts of natural variability
562 and sensitivity to global warming on precipitation using ensemble experiments. In
563 general, the meteorological variables reproduced by climate models are related through

564 synoptic-scale weather patterns, and by applying this method to estimate the
565 relationship between large-scale and local fields, the relationship between each variable
566 was confirmed, even in downscaling estimations.

567 Several studies have applied machine learning methods to climate change
568 projections [12, 15]. In addition to the extrapolation problem, it may be difficult to
569 apply the patterns learned using weather forecast model outputs and reanalysis data to
570 climate models. This method uses the characteristics of a numerical model that can
571 reproduce phenomena five times or more the grid spacing as explanatory variables,
572 making it relatively versatile and likely to be flexibly applied to any numerical forecast
573 model or climate model. The fact that explanatory variables can be estimated with high
574 accuracy, despite their simplicity, suggests a close relationship between explanatory and
575 objective variables. The advantage of applying deep learning models instead of
576 traditional machine learning models, such as support vector regression (SVR), may be
577 very small because the method is strongly constrained by the simple relationship
578 between the objective and explanatory variables.

579 Climate change downscaling experiments using regional models can sometimes
580 reveal future climate change patterns that are quite different from those predicted by
581 global climate models, making interpretation difficult [7–9]. This could be because

582 high-resolution regional models can reproduce phenomena that are difficult to
583 reproduce using low-resolution global climate models. However, it is also possible that
584 the errors are simply amplified by regional climate models [6]. In contrast, this method
585 can accurately reflect the climate change characteristics of global climate models and
586 does not require consideration of the uncertainties that arise when applying regional
587 models. Therefore, applying this method to highly developed global climate model
588 simulations with greatly improved climate reproducibility will enable local future
589 predictions with reduced model uncertainties and is expected to significantly improve
590 the accuracy of water disaster predictions.

591

592 **Conclusions**

593 To investigate the extrapolation problem when applying machine learning to
594 climate change projections, downscaling and bias correction was performed using 20th
595 century reanalysis data and CMIP6 model data. This method has been demonstrated to
596 enable highly accurate downscaling of atmospheric variables, except for precipitation,
597 to regional details, while retaining the characteristics of climate change in global
598 climate models. The climate change characteristics of precipitation differed from those
599 of the climate model. This is presumably because the influence of natural variability is

600 far greater than that of climate change, making it difficult to accurately reproduce the
601 quantitative characteristics. Although each variable was estimated independently, it was
602 highly correlated with the corresponding reanalysis values, indicating that the variables
603 were interrelated through weather patterns. Therefore, this simple method can also be
604 applied to hydrologically relevant climate model output variables, allowing
605 downscaling and bias correction while accurately reflecting the climate change
606 characteristics predicted by global climate models. On the other hand, the frequency of
607 temperatures below 0 °C and the 99th percentile of temperature values were confirmed
608 to be underestimated, indicating that this method alone has difficulty dealing with cases
609 where temperature fluctuations become large due to extreme changes in regional
610 characteristics, such as the disappearance of glaciers. In the future, this method is
611 planned to be coupled with a hydrological model, improving its adaptability to extreme
612 local characteristics.

613

614 **Acknowledgments**

615 The authors would like to thank ERA5, Integrated Research Program for Advancing
616 Climate Models (TOUGOU Program) CMIP6 simulation data by Global Climate Model
617 MIROC6: CMIP, NOAA-CIRES-DOE 20th Century Reanalysis V3 contains

618 objectively analyzed four-dimensional weather maps and their uncertainty from the
619 early 19th century to the 21st century. (20CR Project).

620

621 **Author Contributions**

622 Conceptualization: Takao Yoshikane and Kei Yoshimura.

623 Formal analysis: Takao Yoshikane.

624 Methodology: Takao Yoshikane.

625 Project administration: Takao Yoshikane.

626 Supervision: Kei Yoshimura.

627 Visualization: Takao Yoshikane.

628 Writing the original draft: Takao Yoshikane.

629 Writing, review and editing: Takao Yoshikane and Kei Yoshimura.

630

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738

739

741 **Supporting information captions**

742

743 **S1 Fig. Annual mean climate values in the first 30 years of temperature**

744 **(TEMP2M), downward longwave radiation (DLWR), and specific humidity**

745 **(SHUM) in 20CR.** The first 30 years range from 1955 to 1984. 20CR, MLDS_20CR,

746 and ERA5 are 20th century reanalysis data, values estimated using 20CR data, and

747 ERA5 reanalysis data, respectively.

748

749 **S2 Fig. The same figure as S1 Fig. except for downward shortwave radiation**

750 **(DSWR), surface pressure (SP), near-surface wind at 10 m (zonal) (U10M),**

751 **respectively.**

752

753 **S3 Fig. The same figure as S1 Fig. except for near-surface wind at 10 m**

754 **(meridional) (V10M) and precipitation (PREC), respectively.**

755

756 **S4 Fig. The 99th percentile values of hourly downward longwave radiation**

757 **DLWR), specific humidity (SHUM), and downward shortwave radiation (DSWR)**

758 **in the first 30 years, and the climate different values between the first and last 30**

759 **years in ERA5 and MLDS_20CR.** The left, center, and right figures show the 99th

760 percentile values in ERA5, the 99th percentile values in MLDS_20CR, and a scatter

761 diagram of the 99th percentile values in ERA5 and MLDS_20CR, with correlation

762 coefficient values (R) and RMSEs.

763

764 **S5 Fig. The same figure as S4 Fig. except for surface pressure (SP) and wind at 10**

765 **m (zonal and meridional) (U10M and V10M), respectively.**

766

767 **S6 Fig. Estimation of climate change characteristics using this method.** Annual

768 mean climate difference values between the first 30 years (past) and the last 30 years

769 (present) of downward longwave radiation (DLWR), specific humidity (SHUM), and

770 surface pressure (SP) in 20CR, MLDS_20CR, and ERA5, respectively. Shaded areas

771 indicate significant increases with 95% confidence intervals using Welch's t-test.

772

773 **S7 Fig. The same figure as S6 Fig. except for wind at 10 m (zonal and meridional)**

774 **(U10M and V10M), respectively.**

775

776 **S8 Fig. Relationship between climate change simulated by the climate model and**

777 **the values estimated by this method.** Scatter diagrams of annual mean climate

778 difference values between the first 30 years (past) and the last 30 years (present) of

779 MLDS_20CR for ERA5. Temperature (TEMP2M), downward longwave radiation

780 (DLWR), specific humidity (SHUM), downward shortwave radiation (DSWR), surface

781 pressure (SP), near-surface winds (zonal) at 10 m (U10M), near-surface winds

782 (meridional) at 10 m (V10M), and precipitation (PREC). The ERA5 and MLDS_20CR

783 were upscaled to match the resolution of 20CR. The redder the color, the higher the

784 distribution density.

785

786 **S9 Fig. Annual mean climate values in the 30 years of temperature (TEMP2M),**

787 **downward longwave radiation (DLWR), and specific humidity (SHUM) in**

788 **MIROC from 1985 to 2014.**

789

790 **S10 Fig. The same figure as S9 Fig. except for downward shortwave radiation**

791 **(DSWR), surface pressure (SP), and near-surface wind at 10 m (zonal) (U10M),**

792 **respectively.**

793

794 **S11 Fig. The same figure as S9 Fig. except for near-surface wind at 10 m**

795 **(meridional) (V10M) and precipitation (PREC), respectively.**

796

797 **S12 Fig. Estimation of future climate change characteristics using CMIP6-MIROC**

798 **data.** Annual mean climate difference between the present 30 years (historical; 1985 to

799 2014) and future 30 years (SSP126; 2071–2100) of downward longwave radiation

800 (DLWR), specific humidity (SHUM), and surface pressure (SP) in MIROC and

801 MLDS_MIROC. Shaded areas indicate significant increases with 95% confidence

802 intervals using Welch's t-test. Scatter diagrams of MIROC and MLDS_MIROC with

803 correlation coefficient values (R) and RMSEs are shown on the right side of the figure.

804

805 **S13 Fig. The same figure as S12 Fig. except for wind at 10 m (zonal and**

806 **meridional) (U10M and V10M), respectively.**

807

808 **S14 Fig. Comparison with quantile mapping method.** Time series of each variable at

809 a specific grid point (130°E, 33°N) in July 1985. The blue, gray, orange, and red lines

810 represent MLDS_20CR, ERA5, 20CR, and quantile mapping (QM), respectively.

811

812 **S1 Table. Hyperparameters used in SVR (gamma, C, epsilon) and scale factors for**

813 **each variable.**

814

815

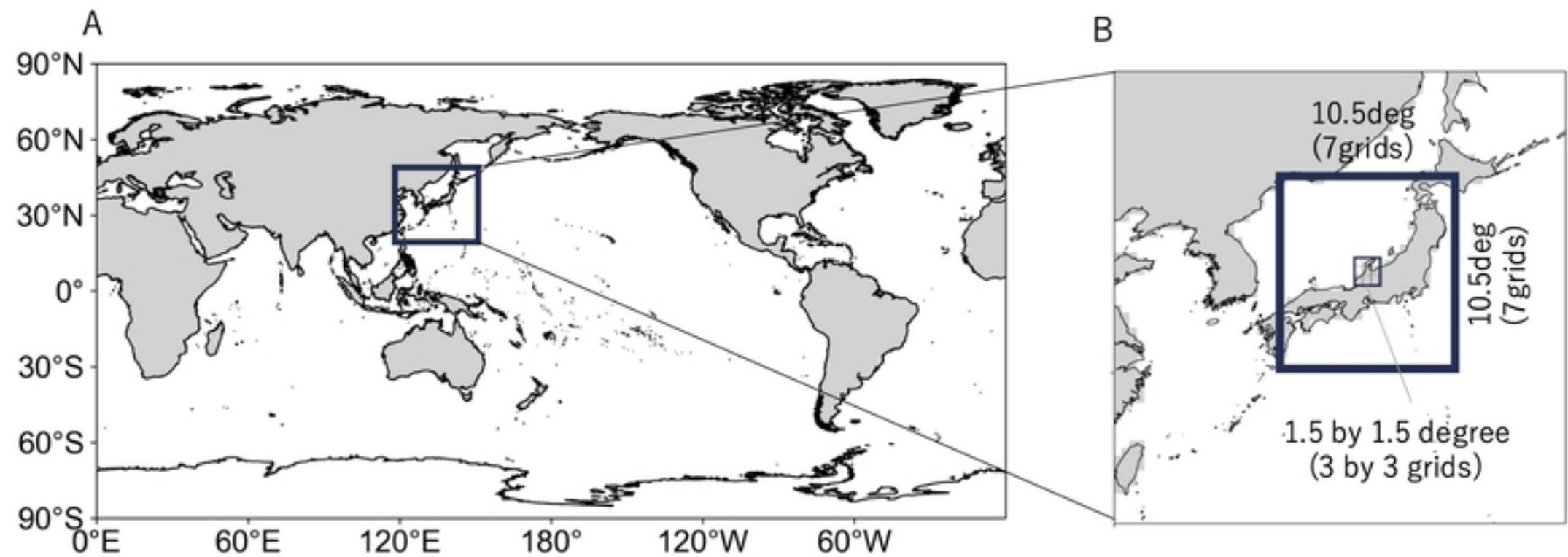
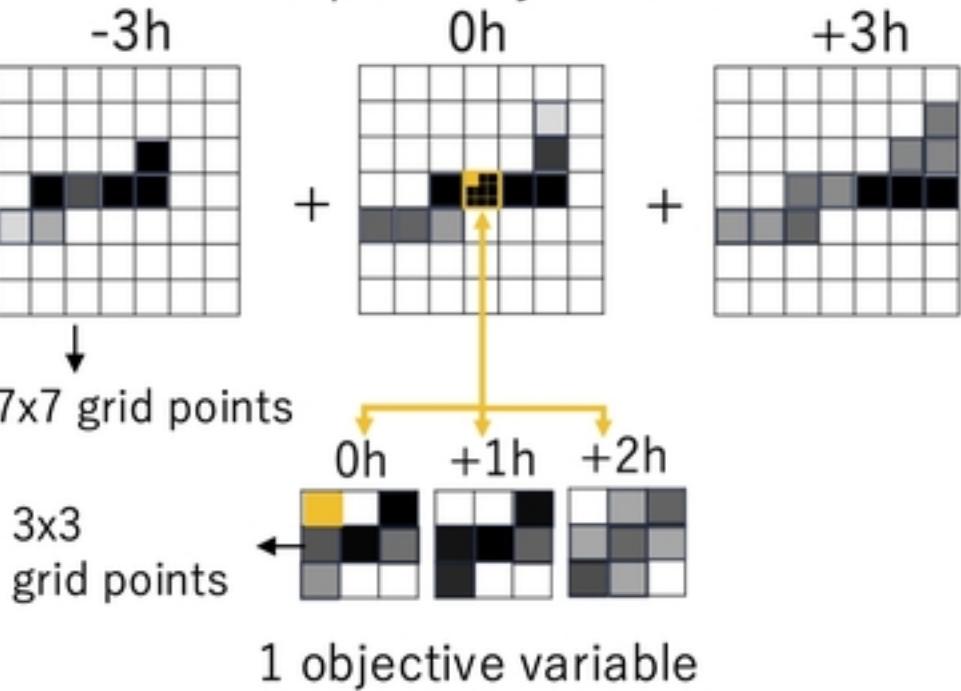


Fig1

Training process

147 explanatory variables

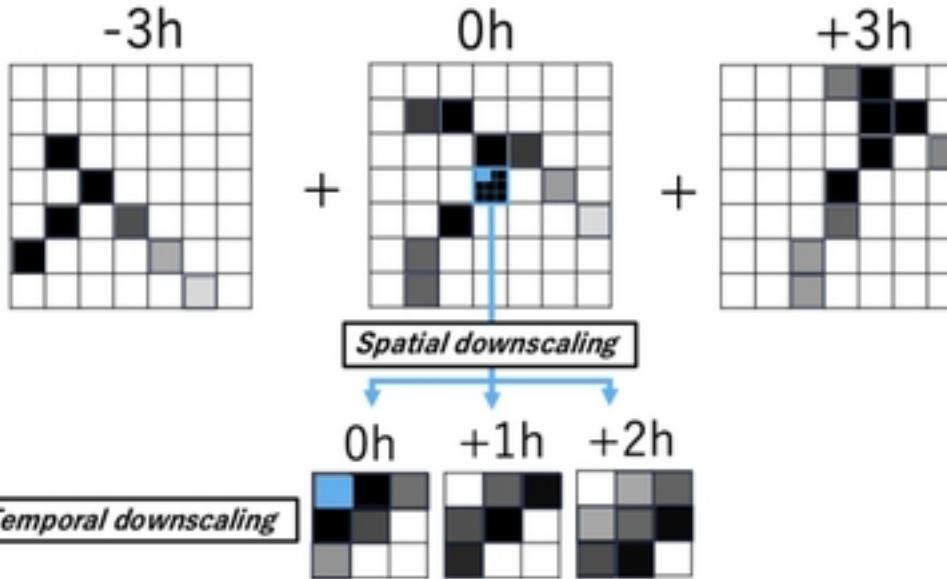


Classifiers

Created 27 classifiers
for each grid with the coarse mesh
and the temporal downscaling

inference process

Input data (Climate model)



output data (Estimation)

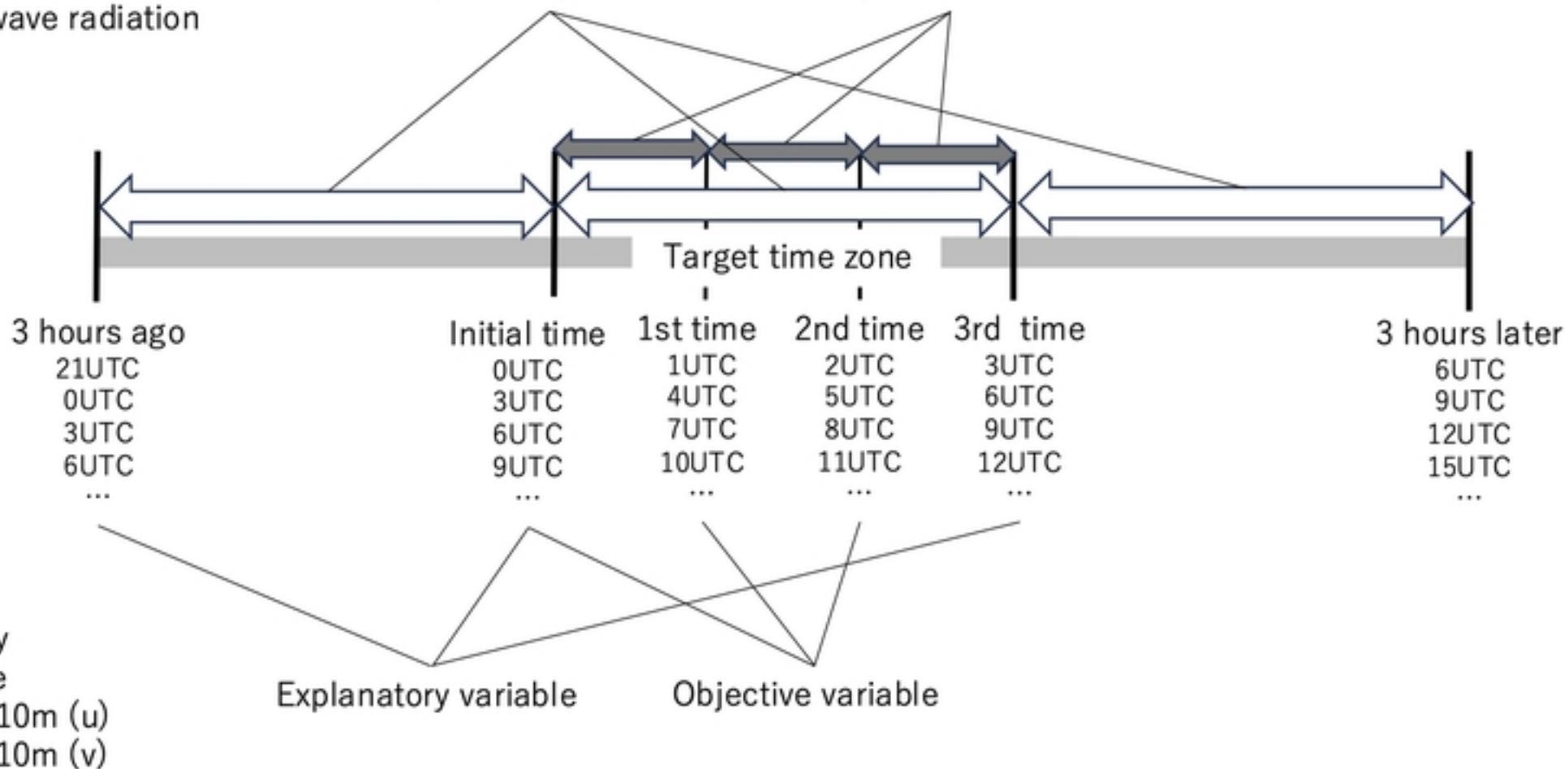
Precipitation

Downward Shortwave radiation

Downward longwave radiation

Explanatory variable

Objective variable



Temperature

Specific humidity

Surface pressure

Surface wind at 10m (u)

Surface wind at 10m (v)

Explanatory variable

Objective variable

Fig3

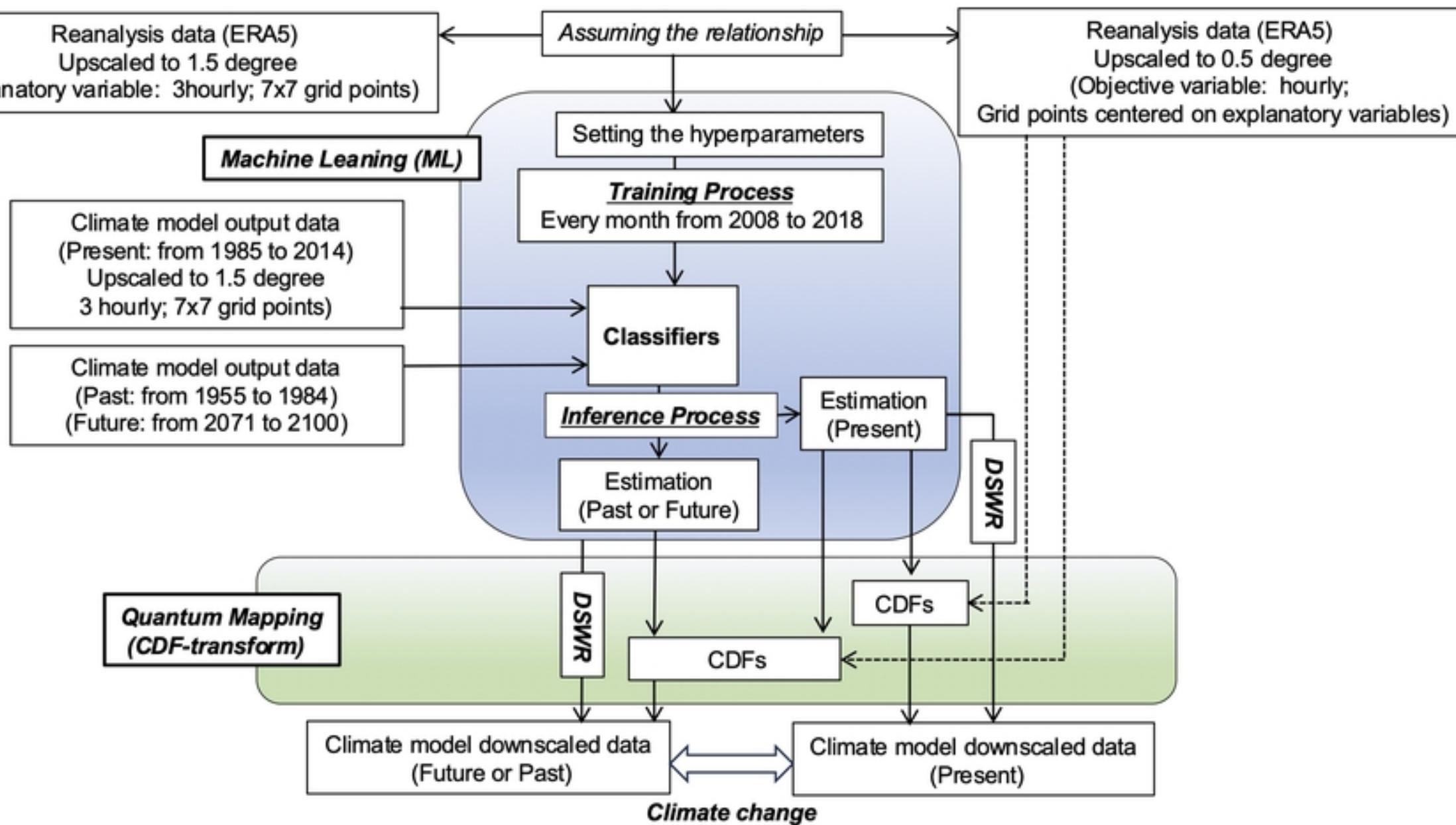


Fig4

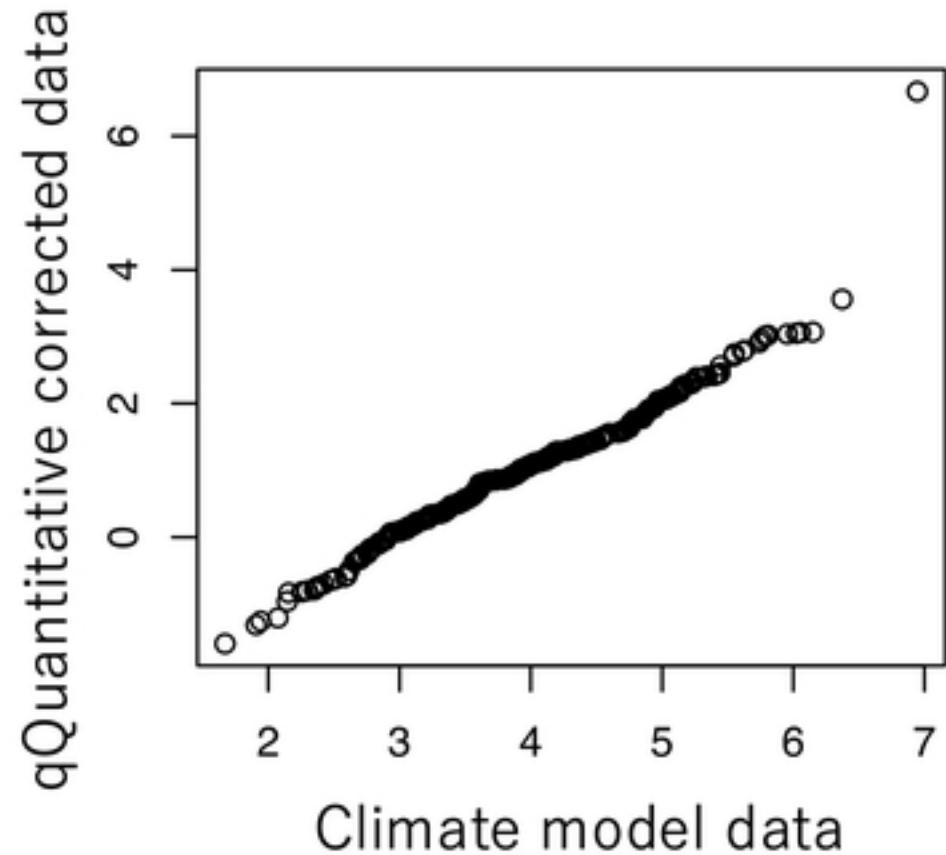
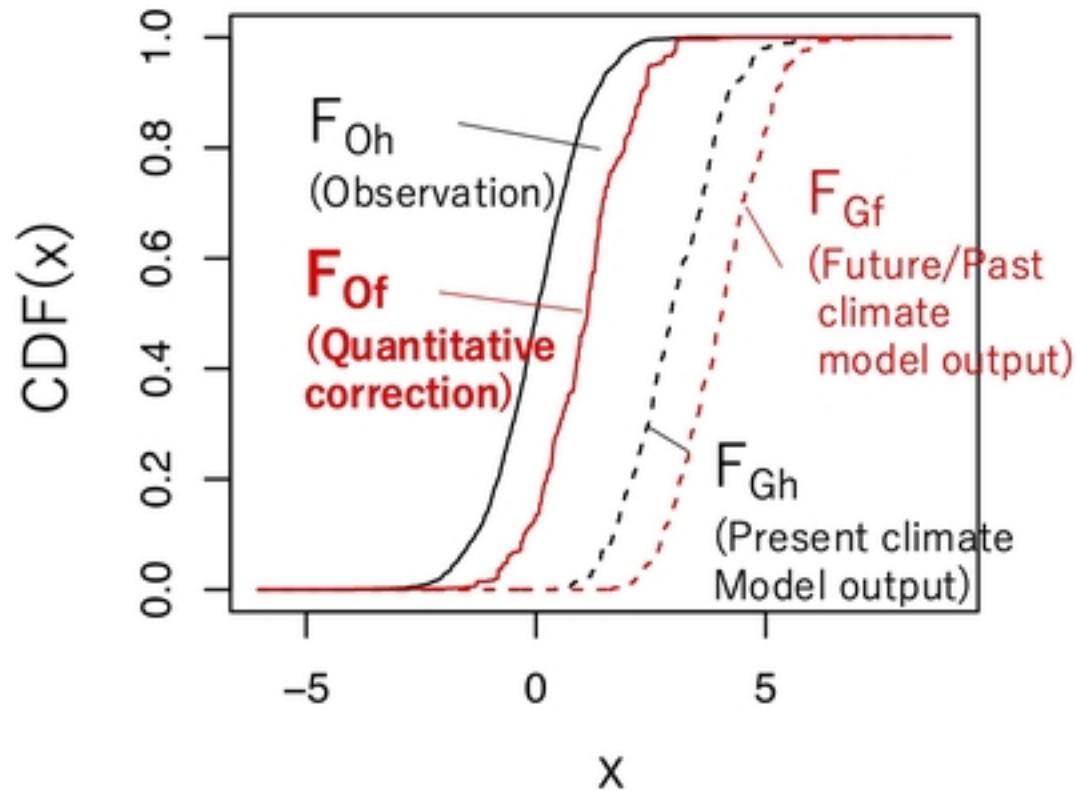


Fig5

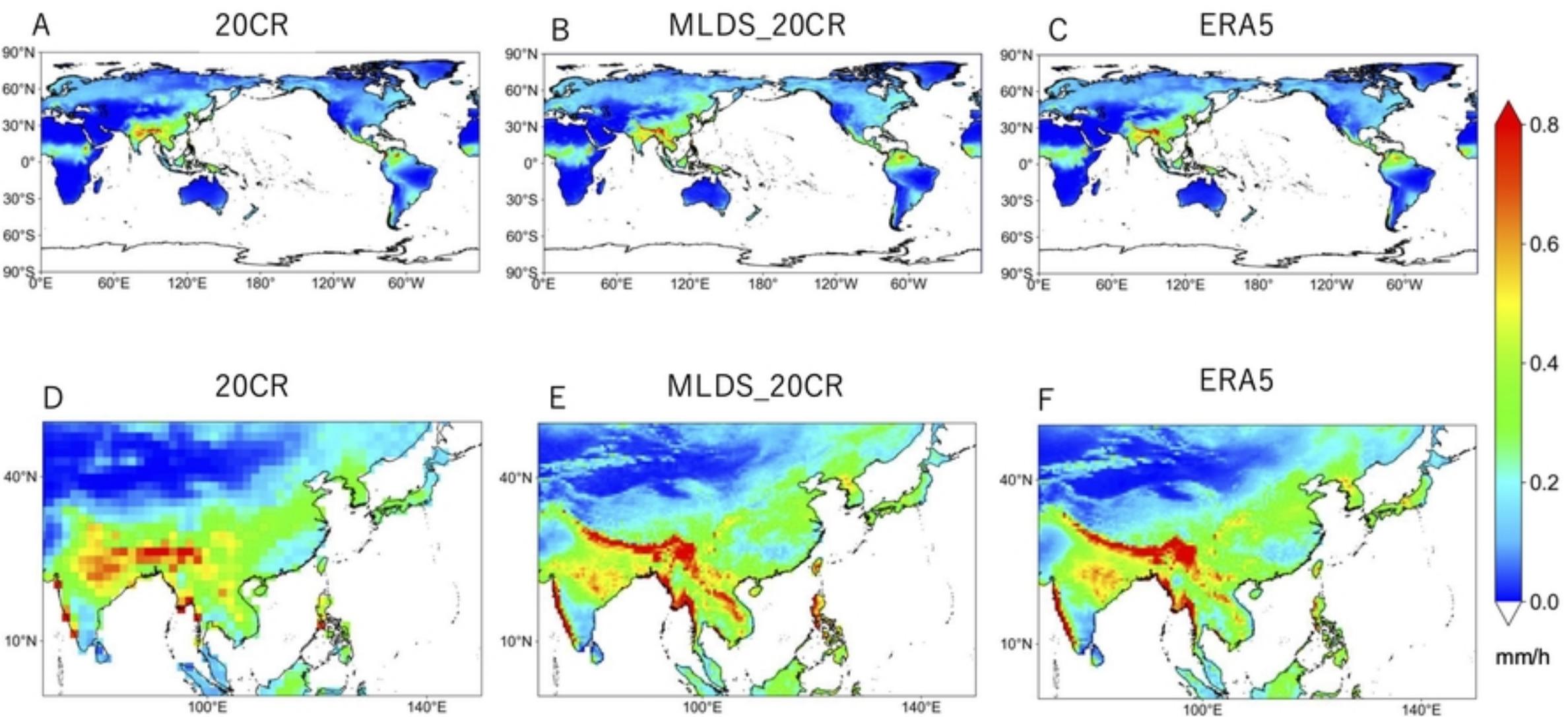


Fig6

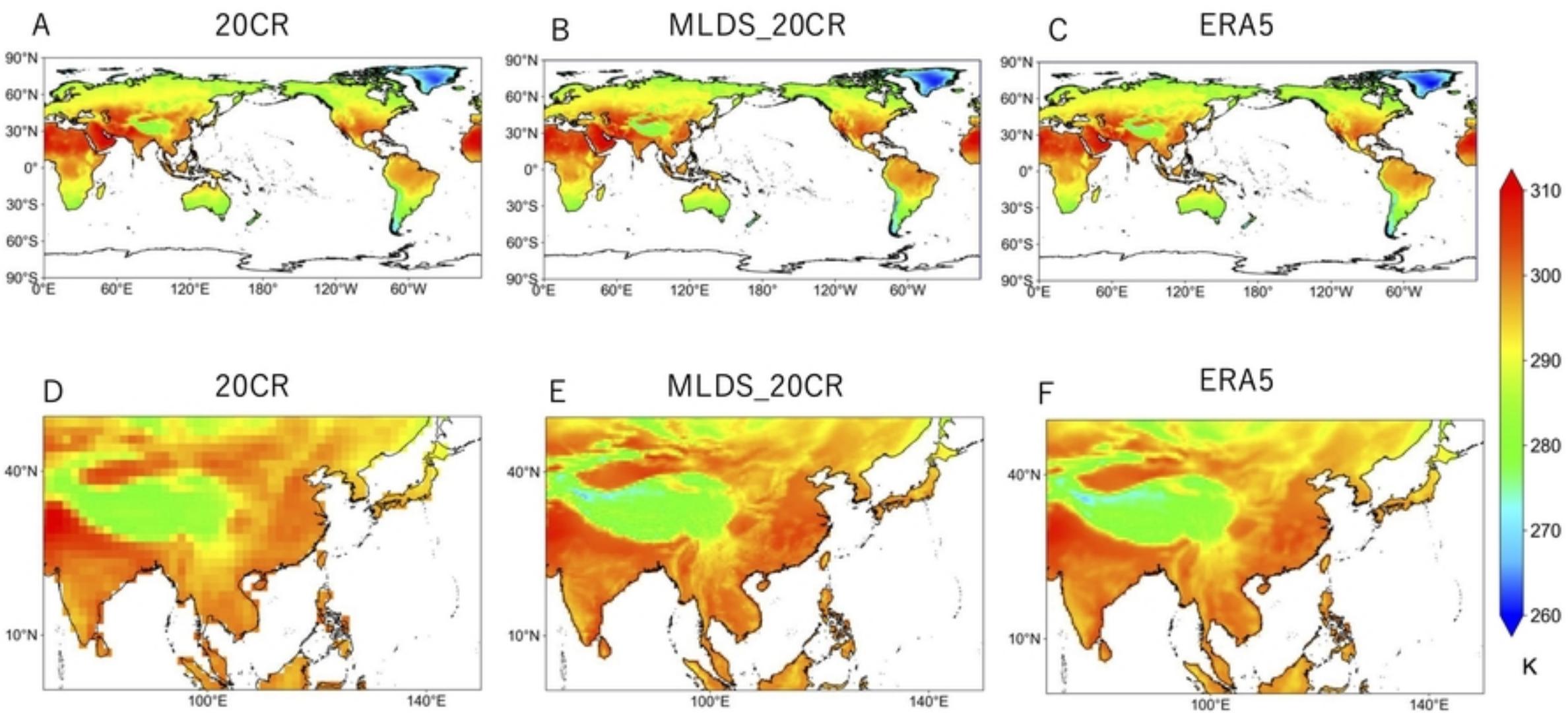
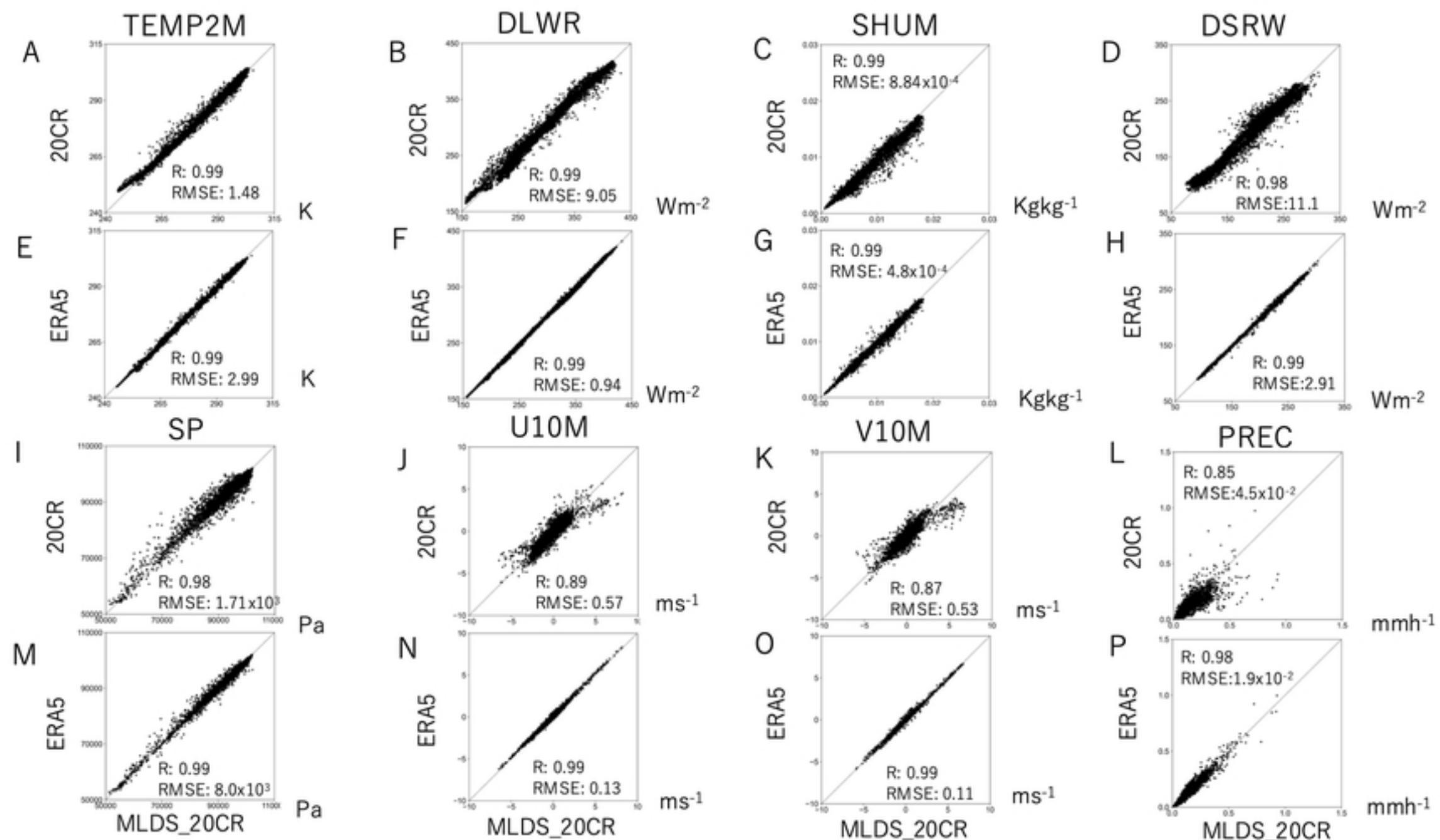


Fig7



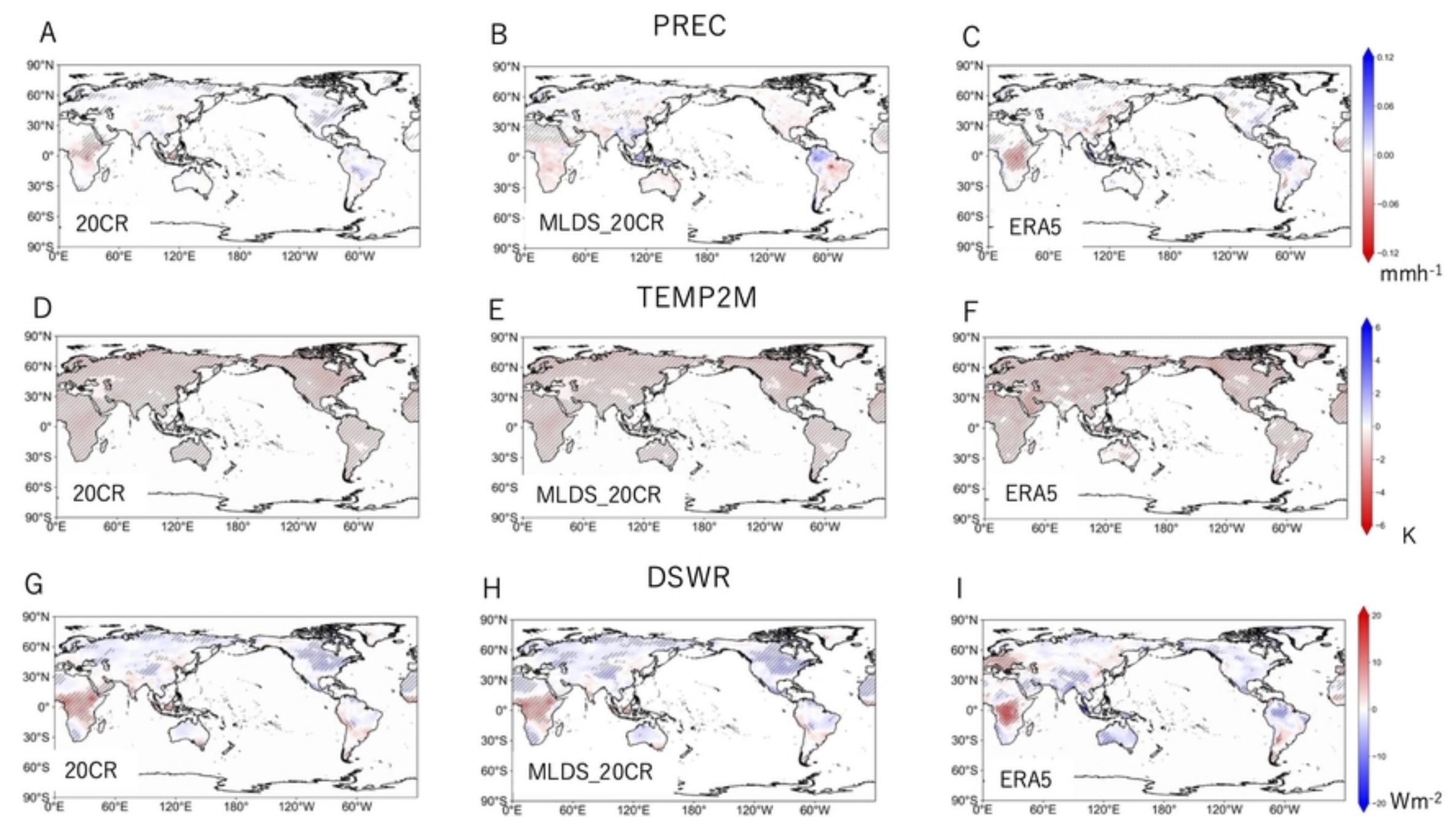


Fig9

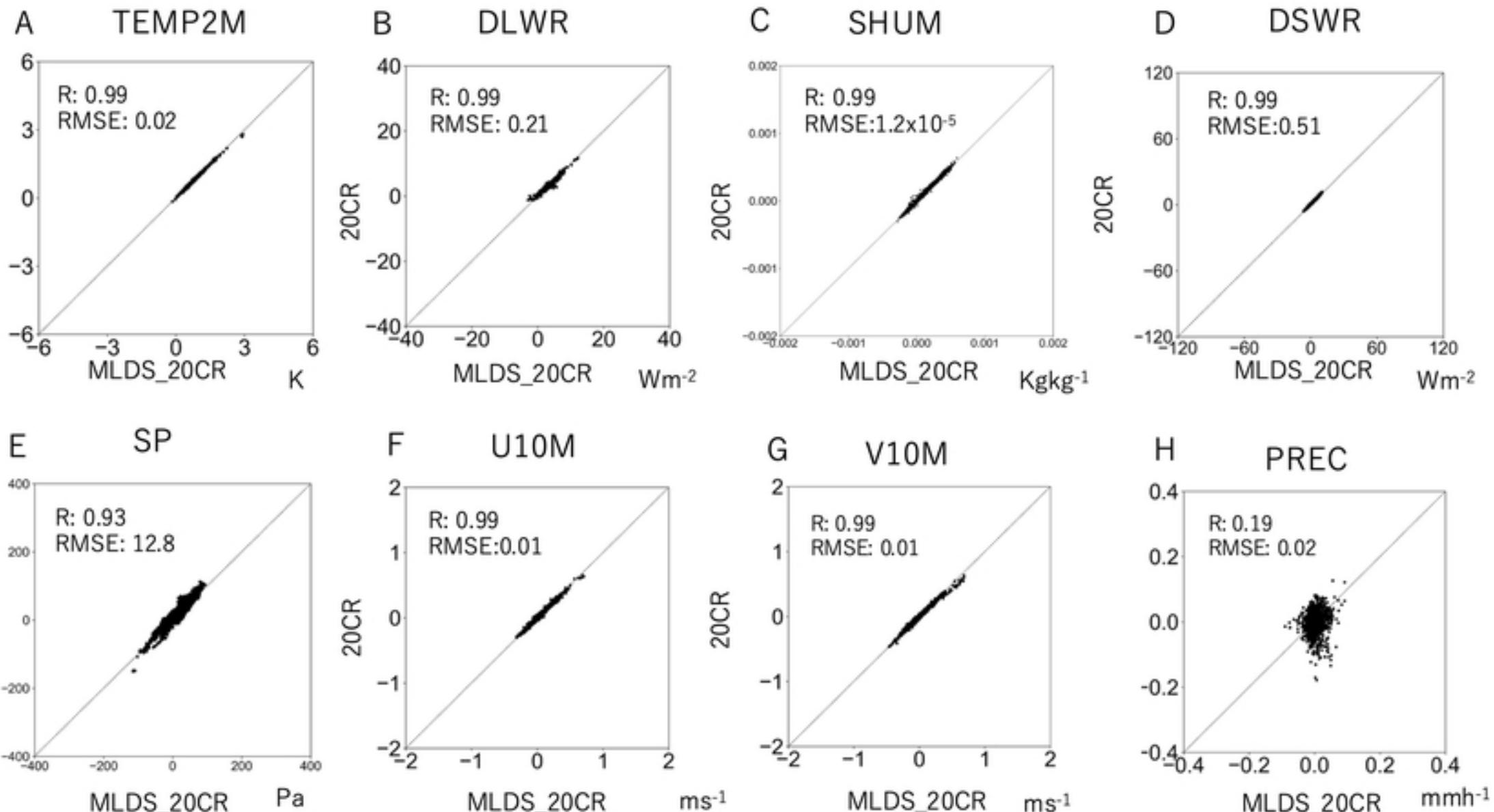
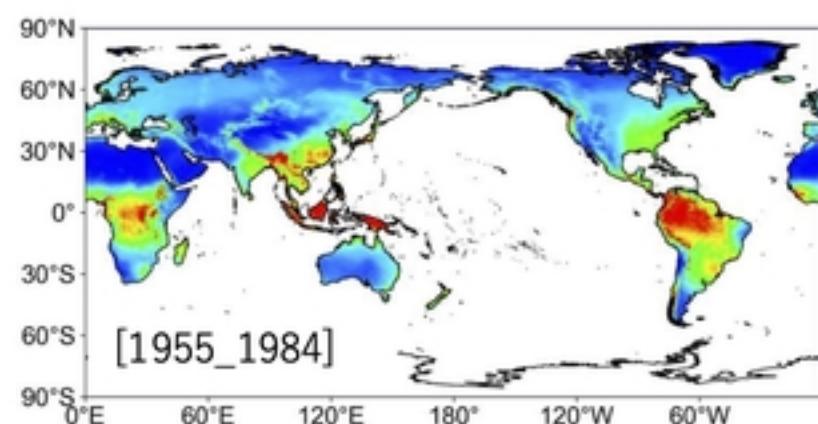
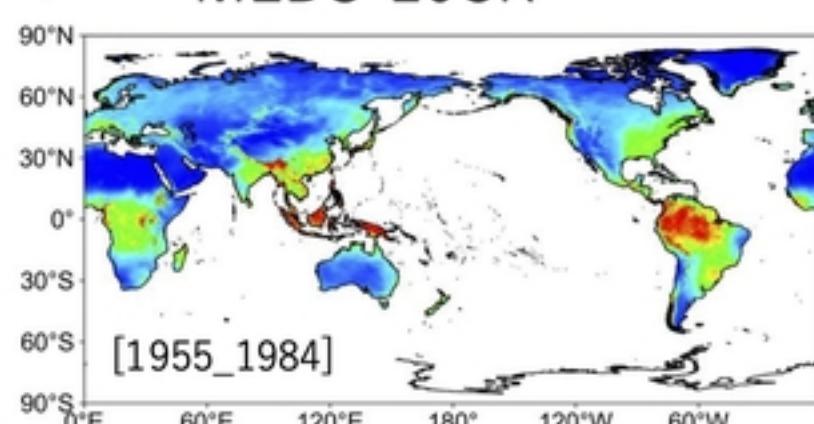


Fig10

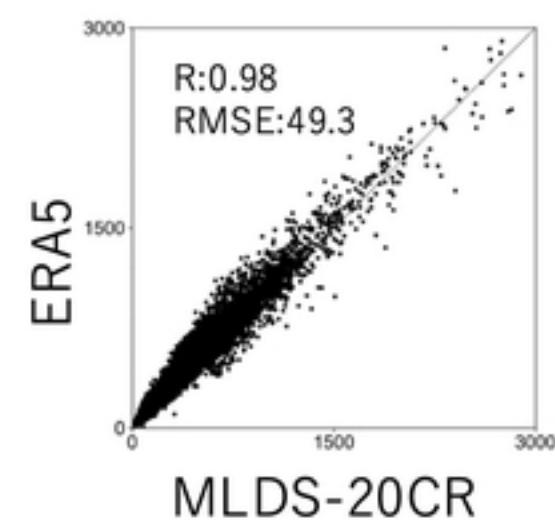
A ERA5



B MLDS-20CR

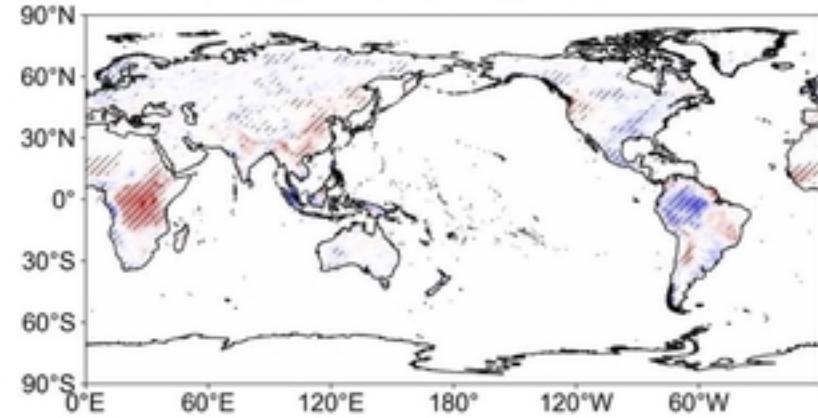


C

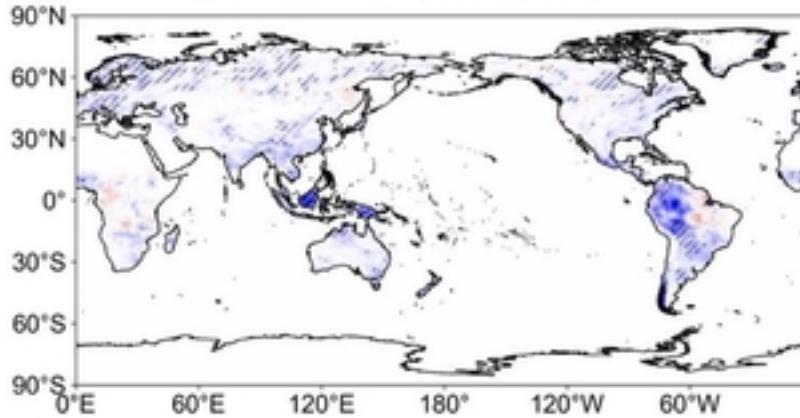


MLDS-20CR

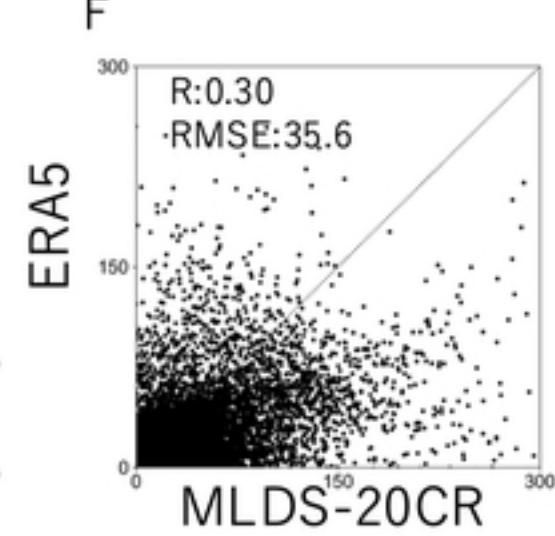
D [1985_2014] - [1955_1984]



E [1985_2014] - [1955_1984]



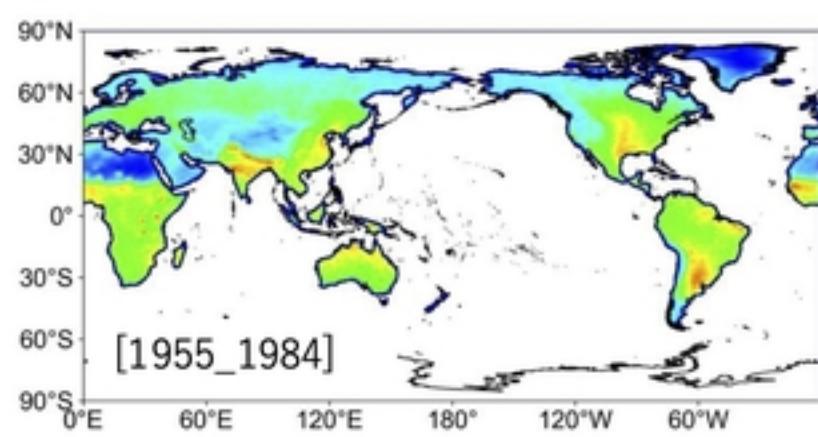
F



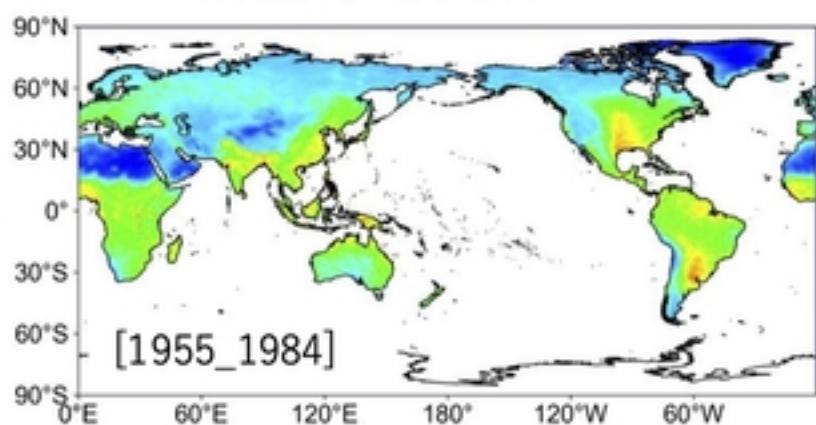
MLDS-20CR

Fig11

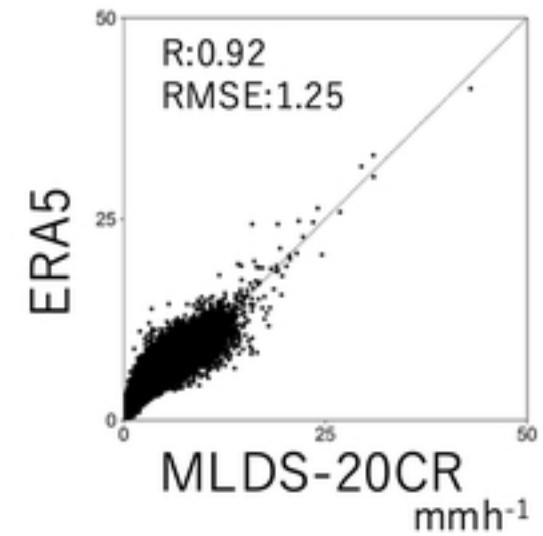
A ERA5



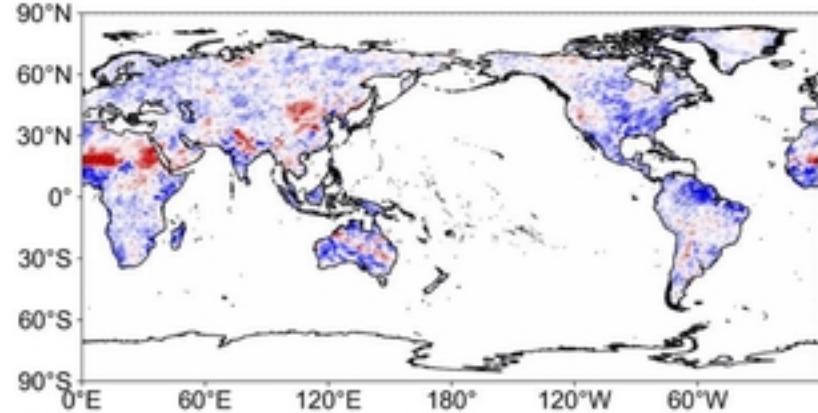
B MLDS-20CR



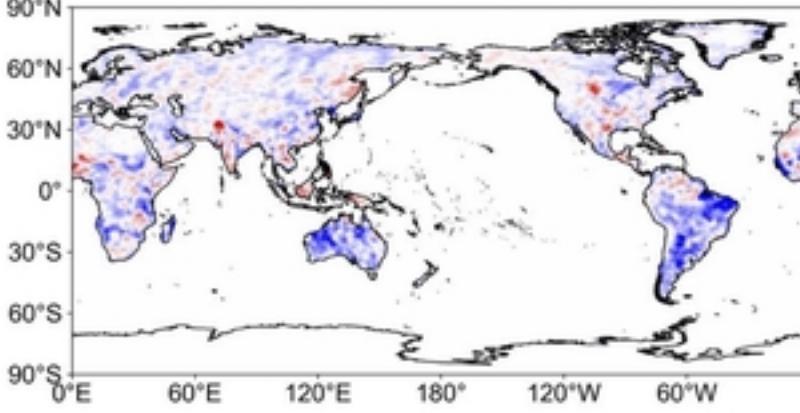
C



D [1985_2014] - [1955_1984]



E [1985_2014] - [1955_1984]



F

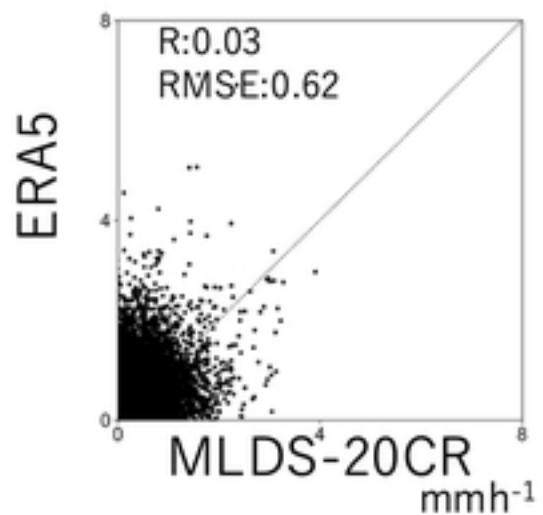
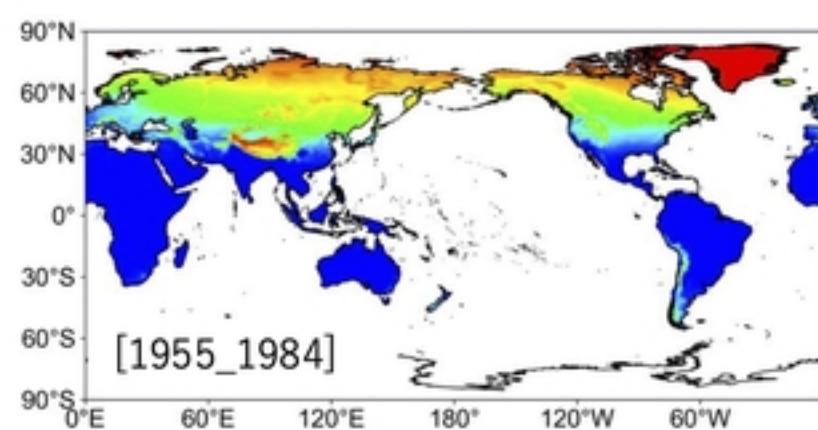
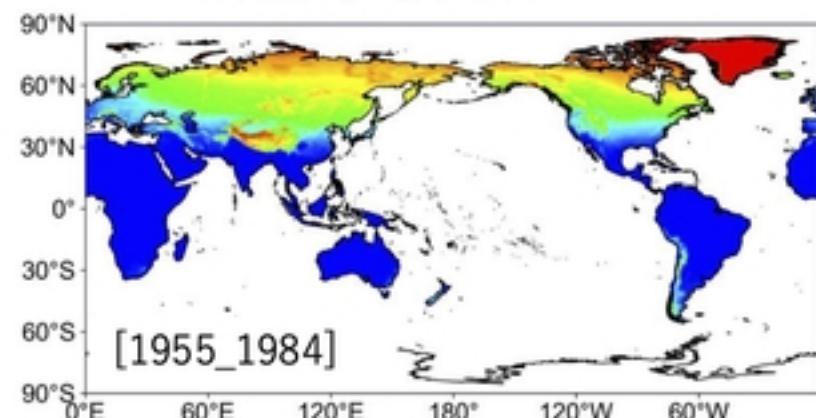


Fig12

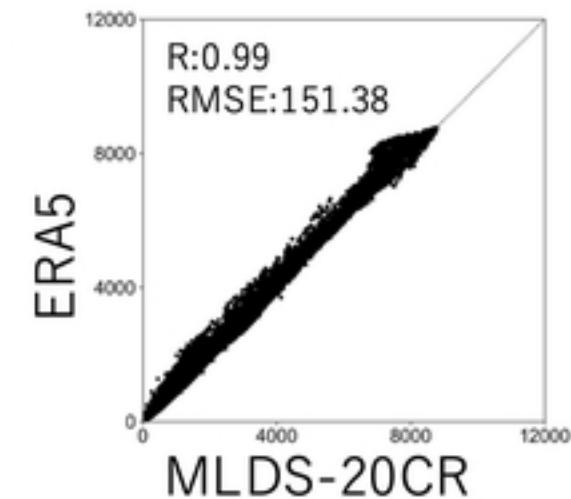
A ERA5



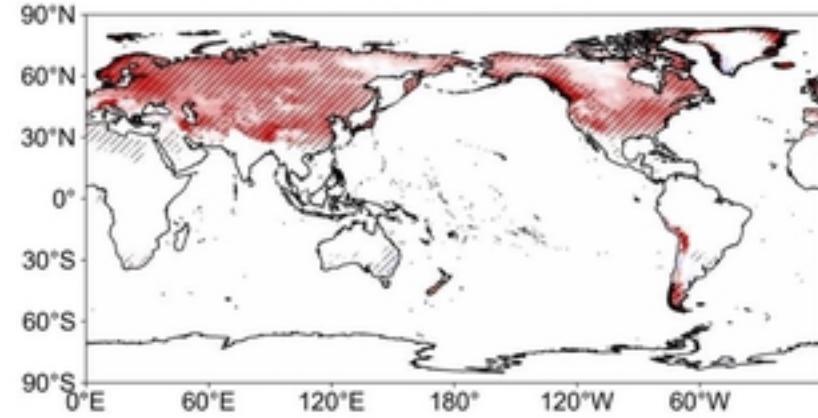
B MLDS-20CR



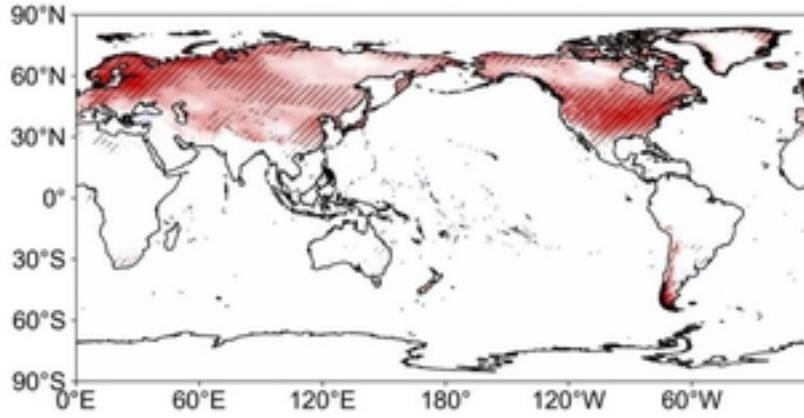
C



D [1985_2014] - [1955_1984]



E [1985_2014] - [1955_1984]



F

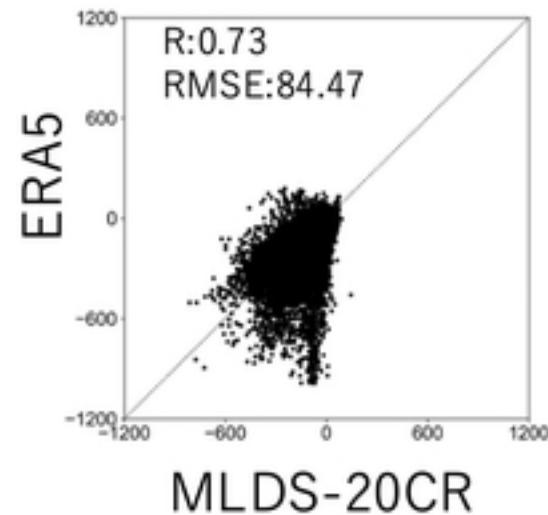


Fig13

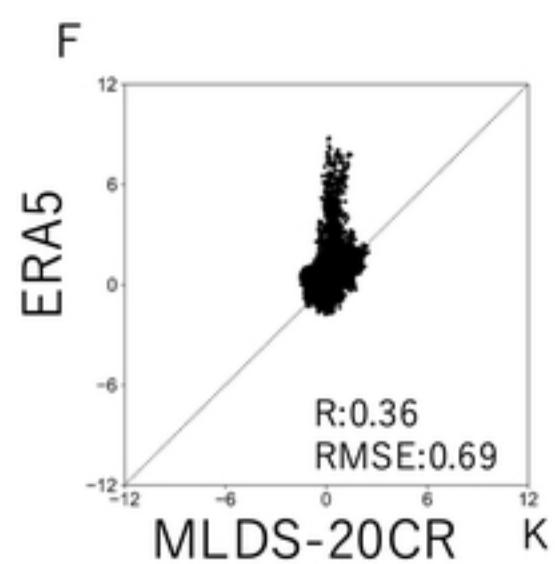
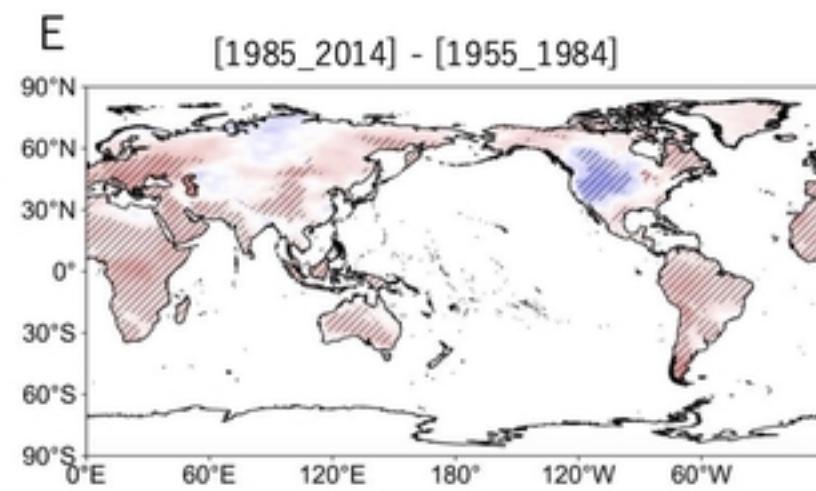
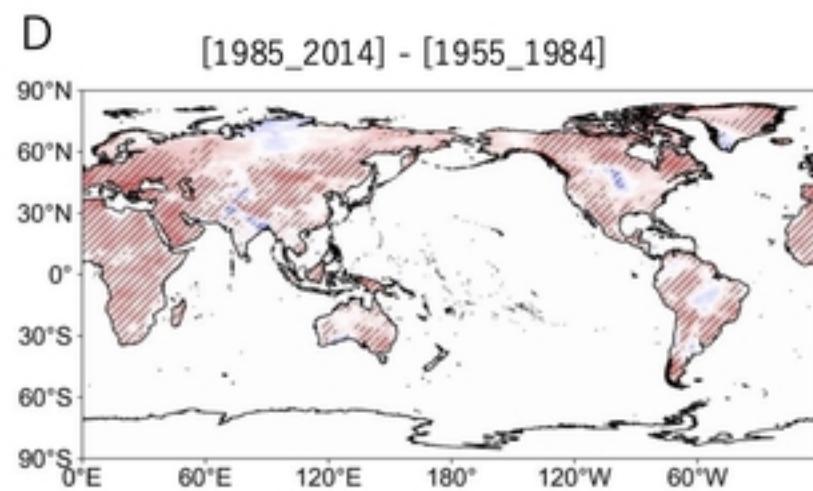
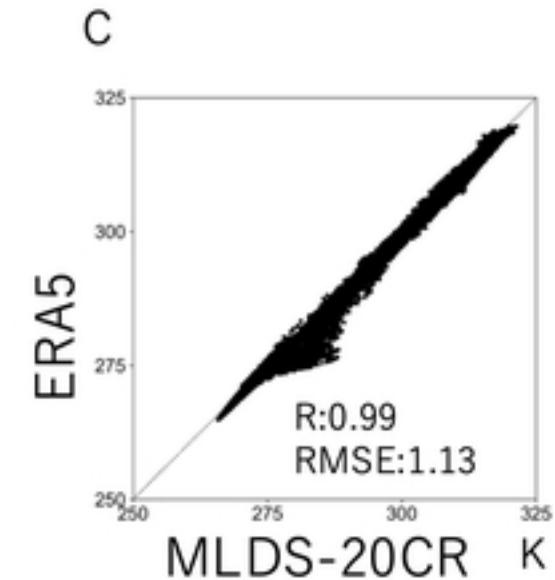
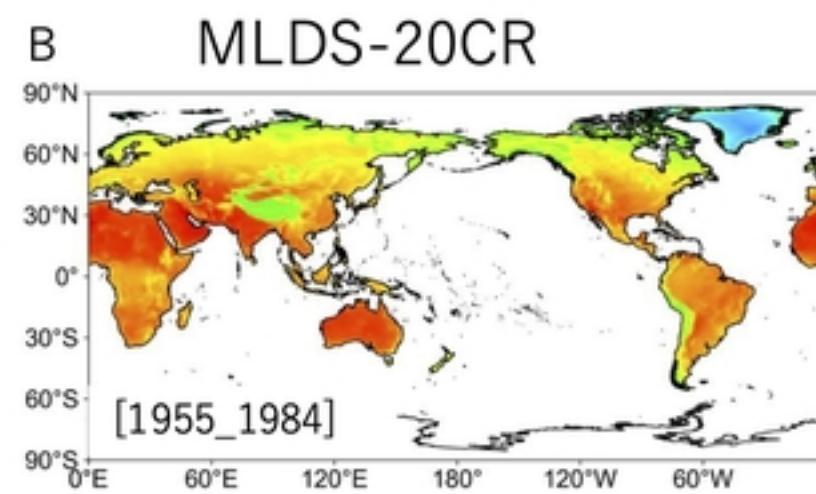
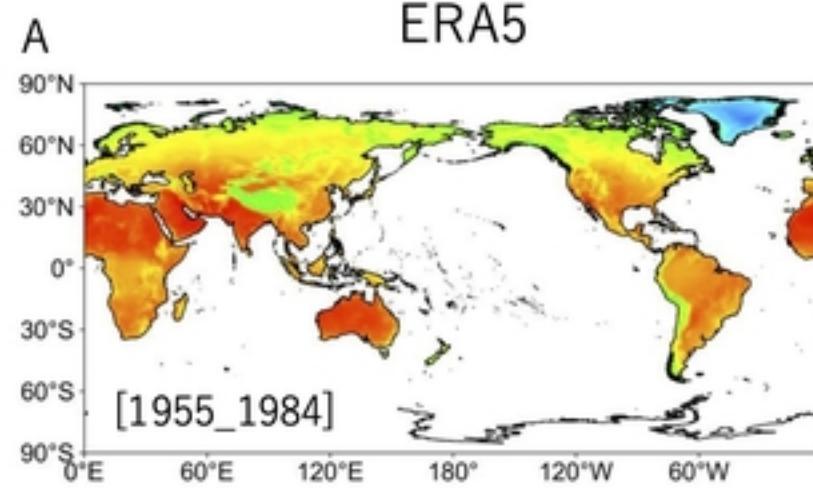


Fig14

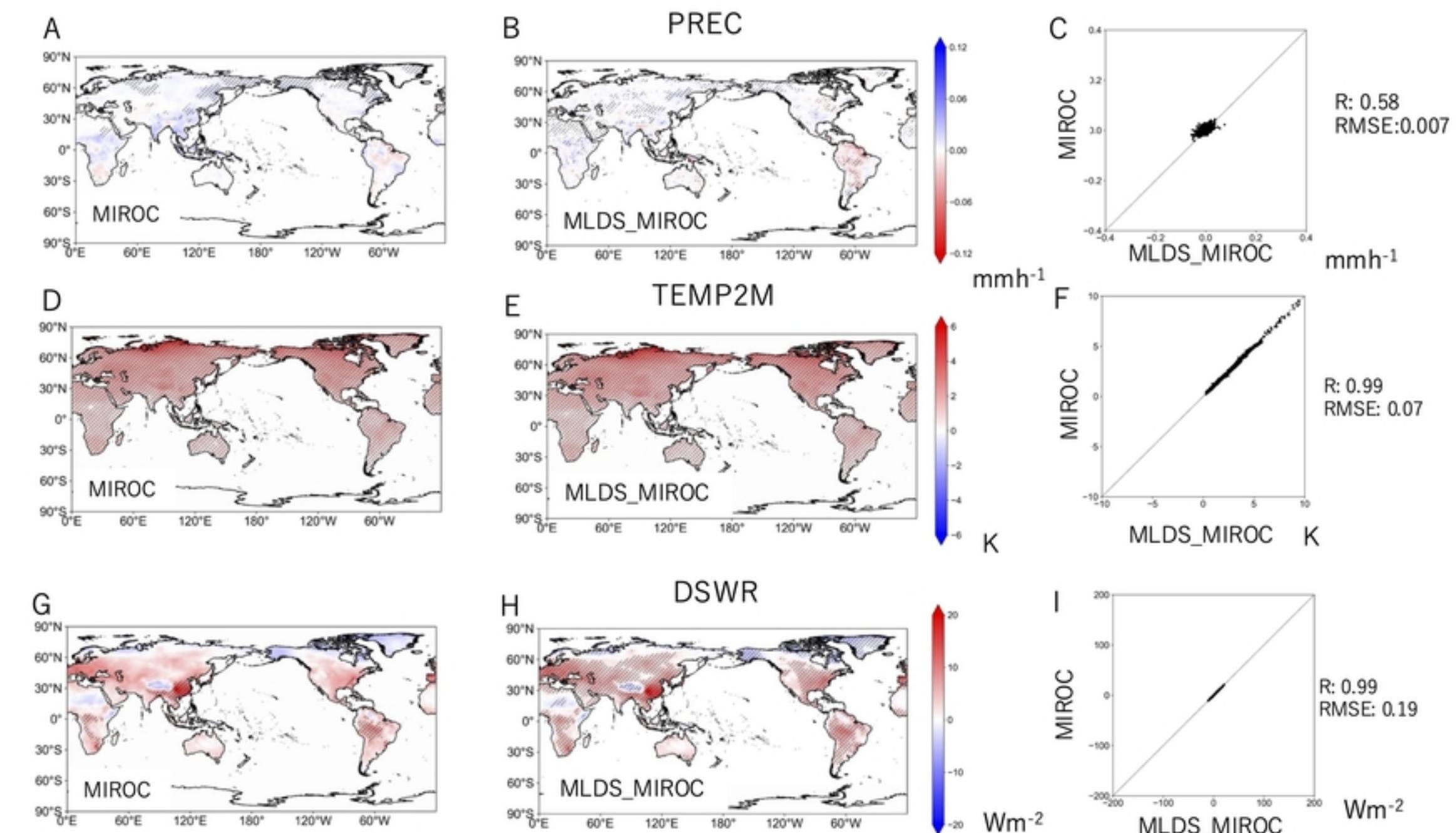


Fig15

— 20CR
— MLDS_20CR
— ERA5

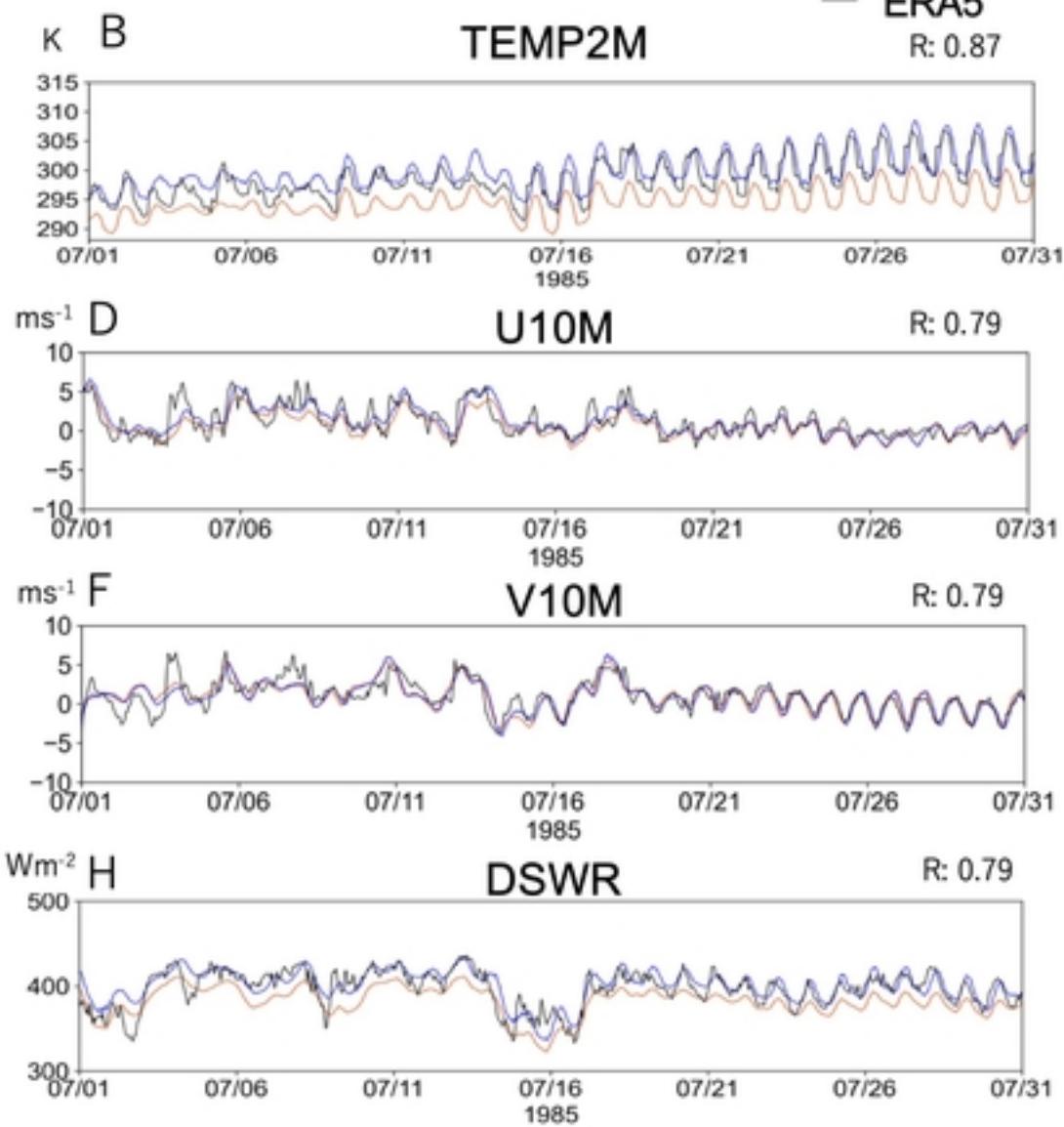
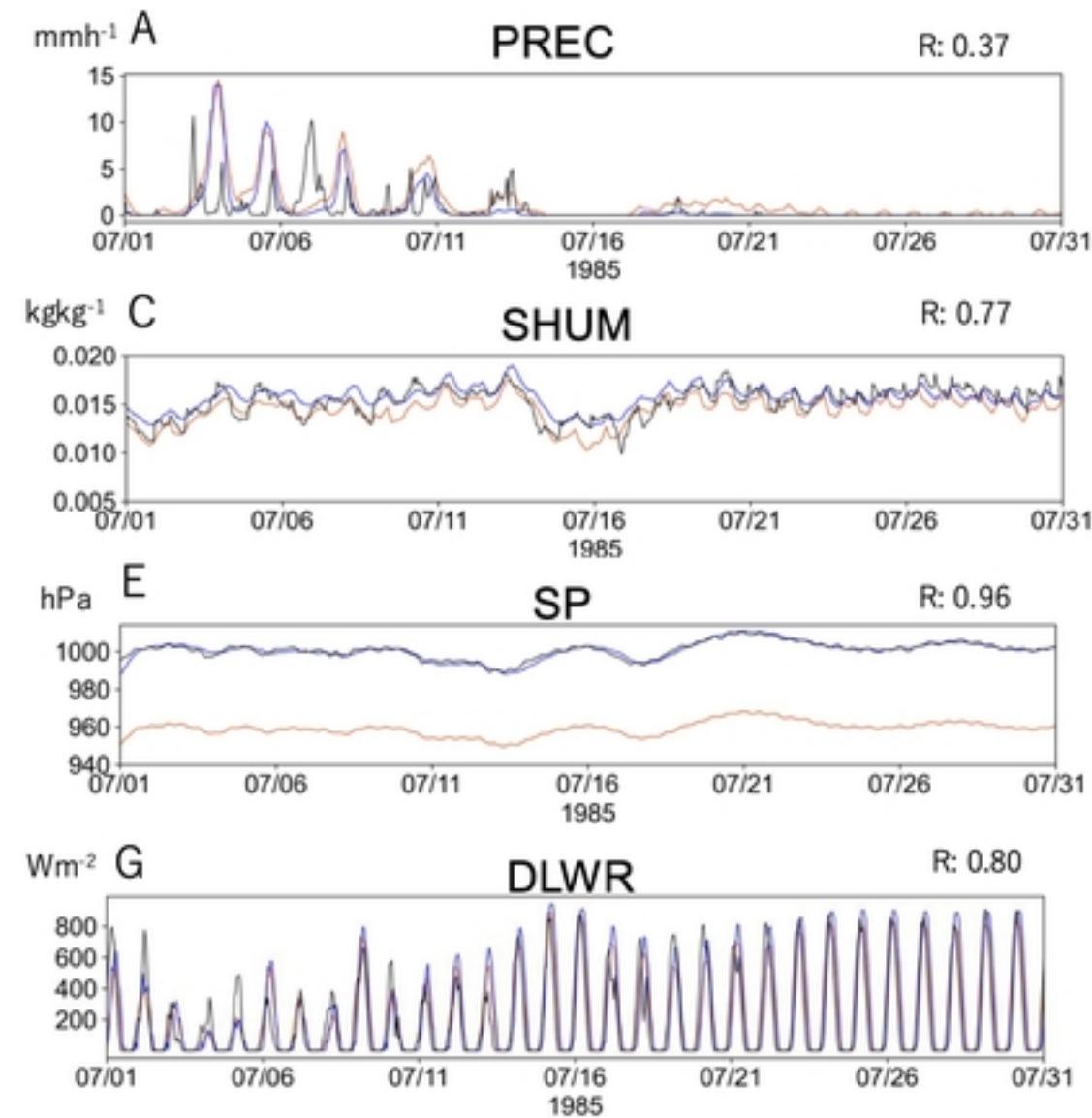


Fig16