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What climate measures must prove

Three-minute briefing

A water authority deciding what to fund next year can use new regional warming evidence to revisit design assumptions. Choosing between a pump and greater storage also takes local information about demand, reliability and recurring costs. Five recent publications show how much of a public decision climate evidence can support, and which questions remain with the institution making it.

Tong Li and colleagues combined observations with climate-model simulations across the regions used in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report. By 2025, attributed regional warming was about 90–94% of the regional warming expected at a global average of 1.5°C. The comparison makes a case for examining local exposure now. The local service record still determines which investment can reduce losses.

The World Health Organization models about 1.6 million deaths averted annually under global scale-up of six climate and health actions. The actions range from warnings and water services to household energy and fuel pricing. An authority funding heat warnings still needs to establish who receives them and what people can do in the time the warning provides.

The Global Carbon Budget projects fossil CO_2 emissions to decline 0.4% in 2026, with uncertainty spanning a fall and a rise. The combined estimate, including land-use change, rises from 42.8 to 43.3 billion tonnes. Some of the projected fossil decline reflects disruption to oil use. Longer records will help establish how much of the change can persist through investment in cleaner equipment, generation and transport.

A study of carbon removal proposes measuring the shortfall in storage at a specified date and confidence level. The modelled shortfall exceeds 70% in one California forest example at 95% confidence over 200 years. The result depends on the case and assumptions. For a public buyer, the contract still has to say who carries the cost of replacement if storage falls short.

A perspective on the 2005–2025 SERVIR initiative describes how agencies put satellite observations to use. Kenya's drought authority incorporated seasonal water mapping into its work. The authority for Lake Atitlán in Guatemala used satellite-assisted algal bloom monitoring in public communications. The examples document institutional uptake and help explain the importance of local staff, operating routines and maintenance after initial funding.

These studies point to different standards of proof for different decisions. An infrastructure plan needs local service evidence. A health programme needs reach and uptake. A carbon purchase needs a defined term and credible remedies. The responsible authority has to show how the measure relates to the service people receive or the liability they may inherit.

Read the complete edition and source notes