

We thank the reviewer again for reviewing this manuscript, and the positive comments in this review.

The following sentence has been removed.

However, due to the long timescales considered (1978 - 2000) for both the modelled and empirical data, the average surface soil moisture will be closely related to deeper moisture.

The following paper is now cited.

Koster, R.D., Z. Guo, R. Yang, P.A. Dirmeyer, K. Mitchell, M. J. Puma, 2009: On the Nature of Soil Moisture in Land Surface Models. *J. Climate*, **22**, 4322–4335. doi: 10.1175/2009JCLI2832.1