Responses to the Editor:

Manuscript number: **egusphere-2025-4213**

Title: **Is earlier always better? A comparative assessment of an early-stage response window for rainfall timing in multiyear drought alleviation in China**

We sincerely thank the Editor for the helpful suggestion, which has helped us further improve our manuscript. We have carefully considered the comment and revised the manuscript accordingly. Our response is provided in blue text, while the Editor's comment is presented in black.

Please include a reason in the paper for why the code is available only on request. Please see our submission guidelines ("Software and model code" at https://publications.copernicus.org/for_authors/manuscript_preparation.html#assets).

Response: We sincerely thank you for this helpful suggestion. We have revised the Code availability section to clarify the source of the MATLAB code used to calculate the PDSI series and provide a link to the publicly available GitHub repository **(Page 26, Lines 602 to 604)**.

In addition, we have removed the reference to Gebrechorkos et al. (2025), *Warming accelerates global drought severity*, following the retraction of this article on 2 September 2026. This reference was cited only in the general background discussion and was not central to the rationale, methodology, or findings of our study. Its removal therefore does not affect the scientific basis, main findings, or conclusions of the manuscript.