Dr. Vince Fritz was appointed Director of Operations at University of Minnesota North Central Research and Outreach Center (NCROC) in June 2013.

Fritz began his career with the University of Minnesota in 1985 when he was hired as Assistant Professor of Horticultural Science at Southern Research and Outreach Center in Waseca. He has a BS in Entomology, an MS in Horticulture, and a PhD in Horticulture, from Michigan State University.

Fritz’s main focus is on the development of vegetable crop management systems specifically designed to increase phytonutrient concentrations and enhance the human health benefit. Other areas of focus include season extension in vegetable and spice crop production that include the use of high tunnels.

“My main goal in the coming year is to increase public awareness about NCROC’s research and education programs and the showcase our relevance of what we do to what people do in their everyday lives, as well as infrastructural investments will also help to increase our presence in the community,” Fritz said.

“NCROC, as part of a statewide Research and Outreach Center system, is engaged in research and education programs that directly impact both agricultural and natural resource industries that are unique to the region of the state. In addition, our work is often based on the climate and soil types specific to the region. Among the many programs we conduct are forest management/genetics, beef reproductive physiology and cow/calf production systems, agronomic production systems that include small grains, pasture management, corn and soybean systems, wild rice genetics and production, horticultural crop production/variety development in fruit, vegetables and ornamentals for northern climates, and tourism.”

This past summer, NCROC welcomed Dr. Mike Falkowski. He is a faculty member whose expertise is in remote sensing that quantifies and identifies composition of ecosystems for the development of sustainable forest management systems. Although he just recently arrived at the University of Minnesota, he already has some outstanding plans for future research and education programs. “We are excited about the future contributions Dr. Falkowski will make to the forestry industry in northern Minnesota.” Fritz commented.

“We are also excited about the pending arrival of a new Horticultural Entomologist,” Fritz said. Some of the main areas of focus will be on insect pest management in horticultural cropping systems (to include season extension strategies) and invasive species that will threaten the long-term sustainability of
several commercially produced horticultural crops. Another exciting opportunity associated with this position will be a new effort at NCROC in distance education and e-learning.

NCROC routinely partners with ICC in providing work-study opportunities for their students where they get first-hand experience in natural resource and agricultural industry related research projects. Collectively, the students do a great service to NCROC by contributing to the research mission as we look forward to providing them with an experiential learning opportunity. Graduate students are usually advised or co-advised by a faculty member at NCROC. Their areas of study can span from forestry to animal science to horticulture and wild rice. Graduate students come from all over the country, and world. While their backgrounds can vary greatly, they all have one thing in common at that is to work and study with world class faculty that will set the course for their professional future. “NCROC takes great pride in the role we play in this process.” Fritz said.

The University of Minnesota North Central Research and Outreach Center was established in 1896. It is part of a statewide network of research and outreach centers. Its charter and vision back then is the same today – to conduct broad based, research and education programs in natural resources and agricultural systems that have direct impact on stakeholders and citizens of the region, state, nation, and world. Fritz stated, “Through the forging of strong partnerships with local, county, and state government officials, and University of Minnesota Extension, we are able to deliver state-of-the-art, real-time research based information to a vast array of consumers.”