

### **Cochrane Family Farm Glentask, Bushmills**

Alastair Cochrane and wife Phyllis farm 230ha at Glentask, in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, overlooking the stunning North Antrim coastline between Portrush and Bushmills. With their sons, Conor and Alexander, joining them in the business the herd has recently expanded to 400 milking cows. The herd is self-contained breeding their own replacements which calve down at 24 months to maintain a tight autumn calving pattern. This allows the farm to optimise milk price through the bonuses available for winter milk and producing high value milk components.

Their grass-based system is typical of many in Northern Ireland with the autumn calving herd grazed during the summer. A small area of cereals is grown for whole crop to provide an alternative forage and facilitate reseeding. The Cochranes aim to make quality grass silage with first cut taken in early May with two further cuts taken at 6–7-week intervals.

Performance is well above average for the region. Milk yield is 9100 litres/cow at 4.30% BF and 3.40% Protein. A feed rate of 0.30 kg/l equates to milk from forage of 2900 litres/cow. Originally a Holstein herd, the cows are now crossed to Montbeliarde to improve health, fertility and milk quality.