

## Dairy daring

Zach Relph  
23 May 2019  
The Countryman

The owners of a \$20 million dairy processing facility in the South West, backed by mining mogul **Gina Rinehart**, say their robotic rotary is revolutionising the milk industry's automation and innovation.

Mat and Sue Daubney's automatic milking rotary at Bannister Downs Dairy in Northcliffe has been steadily increasing the family's dairy production since it was commissioned last September.

The robotic platform has the capacity to milk up to 90 cows an hour, with cows voluntarily walking to the dairy when wanting to be milked.

The system, built by Swedish farming machinery company DeLaval, was showcased to the State's dairy fraternity last Thursday when the Daubneys hosted Western Dairy's 20th annual Dairy Innovation Day.

While production figures remain confidential, dairy growth is tipped exceed 20 million litres yearly.

Speaking at the event, Mr Daubney said the rotary had benefited Bannister Downs' staff and the herd of about 1700 milking cows since it was installed.

"The technology is really good and provides a really good system to milk cows who are more comfortable and happy," he said.

"A hidden benefit and one that we didn't see at the time ... is that it is less onerous on the people as well.

"The machine isn't about replacing people, it is about allowing people to be more productive with their time."

Mr Daubney, a third-generation dairy farmer, and Mrs Daubney took over the long-established family business in 1998 before opting to process their own milk in 2006 in an effort to boost returns.

In late 2014, the Daubneys struck a deal and entered a partnership with iron ore billionaire Mrs Rinehart with a vision to develop Bannister Downs' processing plant.

Nowadays, Bannister Downs hosts about 4000 head of Holstein Friesians across its 4800ha landholding, including young stock, dry stock and heifers.

The property's pasture is mostly ryegrass, both annual and perennial, with balansa clover.

Mrs Daubney said the family placed high importance on maintaining quality to promote healthy consumption.

She also said Bannister Downs was transparent about its production system to educate consumers on dairy through its cafe area where customers can watch the production process.

"It is very hard to believe that so many people don't know where milk comes from — a lot of people have no idea," Mrs Daubney said.

"Dairy farmers are on the forefront (of innovation), but many people don't realise."