New Zealand’s Electronic Navigation Ltd (ENL) has signed a distribution agreement that will see its Wide Angle Sonar Seafloor Profiler (WASSP) distributed by Furuno Electric Co., Ltd into UK/Ireland, USA, China, Spain, South Korea and Japan.

Having WASSP distributed into these key markets by Furuno, will see a significant increase in sales over the coming years.

ENL’s CEO Gareth Hodson says the agreement is a strategic partnership designed to increase WASSP sales in selected markets, while other international WASSP dealers continue to distribute the product into other key regions.

“This is a positive step for ENL in the continual development of our WASSP product. Bringing Furuno onboard as a distributor will further enhance our current global sales network,” says Mr Hodson.

“Furuno has a stronghold on the commercial fishing market and it will prove a great way to expose WASSP to their customers. We are very much focussed on growing as a manufacturer and continuing with our multi million dollar investment into R&D with WASSP.”

Designed and manufactured at ENL’s headquarters in Westhaven, Auckland, the WASSP technology has been exported globally since 2006 and has sold more than 250 units.

WASSP allows commercial fishing boats to map the seafloor and see more information in the water column using its wide sonar coverage.

The WASSP multibeam sonar accurately profiles the water column and seafloor highlighting reefs, wrecks, fish schools, seafloor hardness changes and foreign objects in the water column or on the seafloor. The information is presented in user-friendly displays, all controlled via a mouse and stored on computer hard drive for future use.

“The primary objective of the WASSP Multibeam Sonar is to enhance the skipper’s knowledge of his fishing environment, leading to improved catch rates, reduced gear damage and more productive sea time,” says Mr Hodson.

WASSP has a wide range of applications for commercial fishing, including crayfish and lobster fishing, crab fishing, trawling, seining, shellfish dredging and long-line fishing.
“WASSP is proving beneficial to many differing applications in the commercial fisheries industry, fisherman are able to be shown more accurate information more quickly, due to WASSP’s wide angle multi beam technology which essentially comprises of 112 individual beams, spread out through 120 degrees and gathers a lot lot more information, than anything previously developed.” says Mr Hodson.

“This is very unique technology. It's all designed, developed and manufactured here in New Zealand by our extensive R&D team who specialise in acoustic technology.”

The quadrupling of WASSP sales will see ENL recruiting more specialised staff to meet the demand in production at their Westhaven, Auckland head office.

“This partnership between ENL and Furuno in relation to WASSP will be beneficial to both parties, in terms of Furuno’s customers in the global market and course assisting ENL and WASSP to penetrate further into international markets,” says Hiroyuki Mori, Senior Managing Director & Divisional General Manager, Marine Electronics Product Division, Furuno Electric Co, Ltd.

“ENL is very unique in what they do. Not only do they distribute world class electronics products on a very professional level, but they have a brilliant understanding of what the market needs - and are able to develop this world class innovative technology right the heart of Auckland,” says Mr Mori.

Mr Mori says that WASSP enhances Furuno’s already proven deep-sea fishing technology.

“We consider the synergy of marketing WASSP alongside our Furuno product to be very beneficial to both companies and believe that it will be a very complimentary combination.”

“Our belief that WASSP will be a superior supplement to our original Furuno product line up. We have a lot of through and through Furuno customers around the world and we would like to offer them valuable equipment like WASSP for their fishing operations.”

A WASSP unit was trialled by Furuno during March 2010 in Japan on a Purse Seiner (Mackerel fishing boat); the result was the best season ever for the skipper – a catch increase.

“The WASSP unit allowed the skipper to to identify which way the schools of fishing were moving and to adapt his techniques. In the long run, saving him money in fuel and time while increasing his catch.”

The first order of WASSP product for February-April 2011, the single largest order in the history of WASSP, has already been placed by Furuno and ENL expects to make the first deliveries early in the New Year.