(19) Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets

(11) EP 0 853 048 A1

# (12) EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(43) Date of publication:
**15.07.1998 Bulletin 1998/29**

(51) Int. Cl.[6]: **B65D 21/08**, B65D 75/58, B65D 77/00

(21) Application number: **97204060.4**

(22) Date of filing: **22.12.1997**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
**AT BE CH DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU MC NL PT SE**
Designated Extension States:
**AL LT LV MK RO SI**

(30) Priority: **10.01.1997 IT RE970001**

(71) Applicant:
**Royal Prosciutti S.r.l.**
**43038 Sala Baganza (Parma) (IT)**

(72) Inventor: **Merusi, Guido**
**43038 Sala Baganza (Parma) (IT)**

(74) Representative:
**Corradini, Corrado et al**
**Studio Ing. C. CORRADINI & C. S.r.l.**
**4, Via Dante Alighieri**
**42100 Reggio Emilia (IT)**

## (54) Disposable package for rindless deboned raw hams

(57) A disposable package for rindless deboned raw hams, comprising a base (1) and a side wall which consists of at least one ring (2) separable from the base (1) and having the same cross-section as this latter, said components being constructed of a synthetic material suitable for food use.

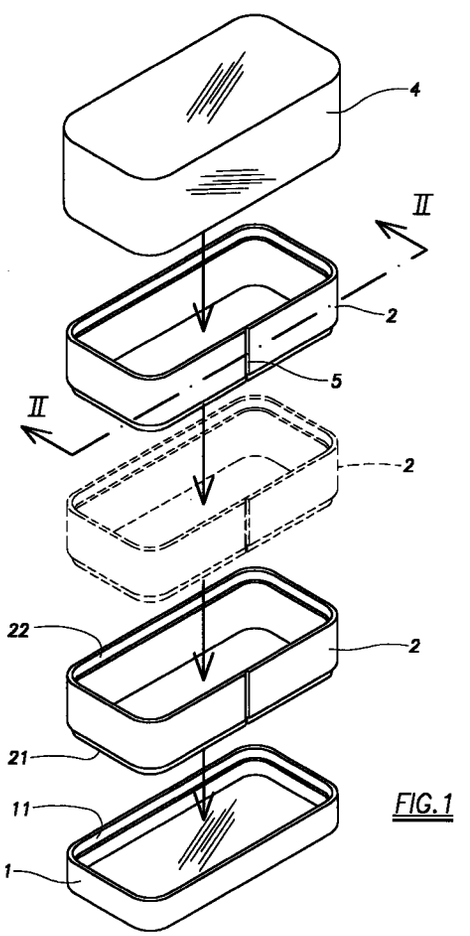


FIG. 1

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## Description

This invention concerns the cured ham industry and in particular the deboned ham sector.

After curing, these products are presented to the consumer as a totally whole structure, ie comprising both the rind and the bone.

This has always made mechanical slicing difficult, which can be achieved only after removing the said parts.

The bone can be removed directly in the factory, by processes comprising at least partly cutting the meat mass, withdrawing the bone, and re-sewing the cut after compressing the ham to perfectly close the space previously occupied by the bone in order to prevent air penetration with resultant degenerative phenomena.

Hams processed in this manner are later sliced mechanically on consumption, after progressive rind removal limited to the portion to be sliced.

The presence of the rind on the remaining ham portion is essential for its proper preservation.

With the most recent cold-forming methods, bone removal gives a virtually perfect result.

However the irregular shape of ham and the need to gradually remove the rind create drawbacks which it has so far not been possible to eliminate.

Said drawbacks include not only a loss of time and operating difficulties, but also the inevitable production of offcuts which cannot be accurately quantifiable and make the cost of the product indeterminable to a certain degree.

As modern cold-forming methods enable the product shape to be modified to a certain extent, it has sometimes been attempted to form hams already without their rind and having a shape of regular cross-section.

Hams shaped in this manner enable slices of constant size to be obtained during the cutting of the ham, and also completely eliminate the difficultly quantifiable offcuts deriving from rind removal on consumption.

However this procedure creates a further problem deriving from the fact that a rindless ham can be preserved only for a very short time, hence if the user does not slice the whole ham within a few hours, it loses quality.

The object of this invention is to provide a package able to contain a rindless ham of regular shape ready for cutting, and to conveniently preserve it until totally sliced.

Said object is attained by the invention, by virtue of the characteristics stated in the claims.

The merits and the constructional and operational characteristics of the invention will be apparent from the detailed description thereof given hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, which show three preferred embodiments thereof by way of non-limiting example.

Figure 1 is an exploded perspective view of a first embodiment of the invention.

Figure 2 is a section on the line II-II of Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a section on the line III-III of Figure 2.

Figure 4 shows a second embodiment of the invention.

Figure 5 is a section on the line V-V of Figure 4.

Figure 6 is a section on the line VI-VI of Figure 5.

Figure 7 is a partial section through a third embodiment of the invention.

Figure 8 shows the embodiment of Figure 1 during its use.

Figures 1, 2, 3 and 8 show a base 1 of synthetic material suitable for food use, such as polypropylene, having its upper edge shaped as a step 11.

The base 1 has an inner cross-section substantially identical to the cross-section of the meat mass 3 of the ham to be packaged, as will be apparent hereinafter.

Into the base 1 there is inserted a first ring 2 having the same cross-section as the base 1 and its lower edge 21 conjugate with the step 11 of the edge of the base 1, its upper edge 22 having a step identical to the step 11 of the upper edge of the base 1.

In this manner an indefinite series of identical rings 2 inserted one into another can be arranged on the base, to form a container just slightly higher than the meat mass 3 which it is to contain.

On the last ring 2 there is mounted a lid 4 having its inner cross-section identical to the outer cross-section of the ring 2 and hence of the base 1.

All the rings 2 have a weakened portion 5 at which the ring can be easily broken.

To package the meat mass, it is inserted from above into the container formed by the base 1 and rings 2, until it is in line, as shown in Figure 3, with the upper mouth of the container.

The lid 4 is provisionally mounted on the base 1, and the assembly is enclosed under vacuum in a bag 6 of flexible material.

To open the package, the bag 6 is removed and the first ring 2 is broken and removed, after which the meat mass is pushed into contact with the base 1 (see Figure 8).

The mass which projects from that ring below the one which was removed is sliced, until it is necessary to break and remove a second ring, and so on until the meat mass is exhausted.

When slicing is to be interrupted, the lid 4 is mounted on the upper ring, as shown in Figure 8.

The meat mass is completely protected from external agents until the next slicing, just as though it were covered with rind..

Figures 4, 5 and 6 show a second embodiment of the invention in which the base and the side wall of the container form one piece 7, provided with equidistant weakened transverse portions 8 and longitudinal weakened portions 9.

Said weakened portions 8 define rings 200 which can be easily separated from each other and individually broken during the use of the product, as in the case of the preceding rings 2.

The operation and use of this embodiment are the same as for the preceding embodiment.

Figure 7 shows a further embodiment in which the base 100 receives a one-piece side wall 10 formed of a material intended to be cut away simultaneously with the meat mass contained.

This embodiment is particularly advantageous if slicing the entire meat mass once the package is open.

It should also be noted that the invention can be conveniently applied to products other than raw hams and having the same preservation requirement.

## Claims

1. A disposable package for rindless deboned raw hams, characterised by comprising a base and a side wall which consists of at least one ring separable from the base and having the same cross-section as this latter, said components being constructed of a synthetic material suitable for food use.

2. A package as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the edge of the base has a shape conjugate with the shape of one of the edges of the at least one ring, the other edge of the ring having a shape identical to the shape of the edge of the base.

3. A package as claimed in claim 1, characterised by comprising a lid having its inner cross-section equal to the outer cross-section of the base and of the at least one ring.

4. A package as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the at least one ring has a weakened portion parallel to the ring axis.

5. A package as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the at least one ring forms one piece with the base, and has at least one weakened portion forming an endless closed line parallel to the base.

6. A package as claimed in claim 1, characterised by being enclosed under vacuum in a bag formed from a sheet of synthetic material suitable for food use.

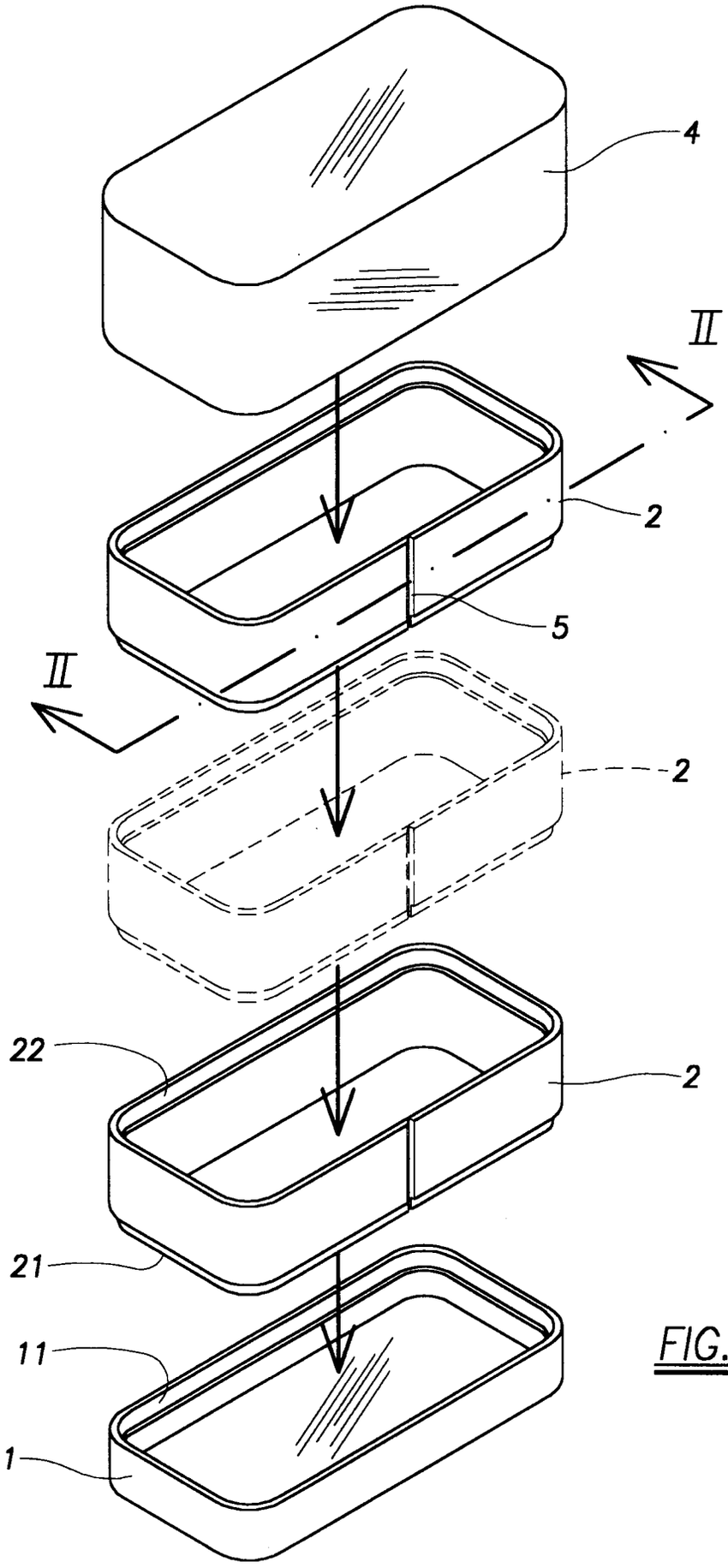



FIG. 1

FIG.2

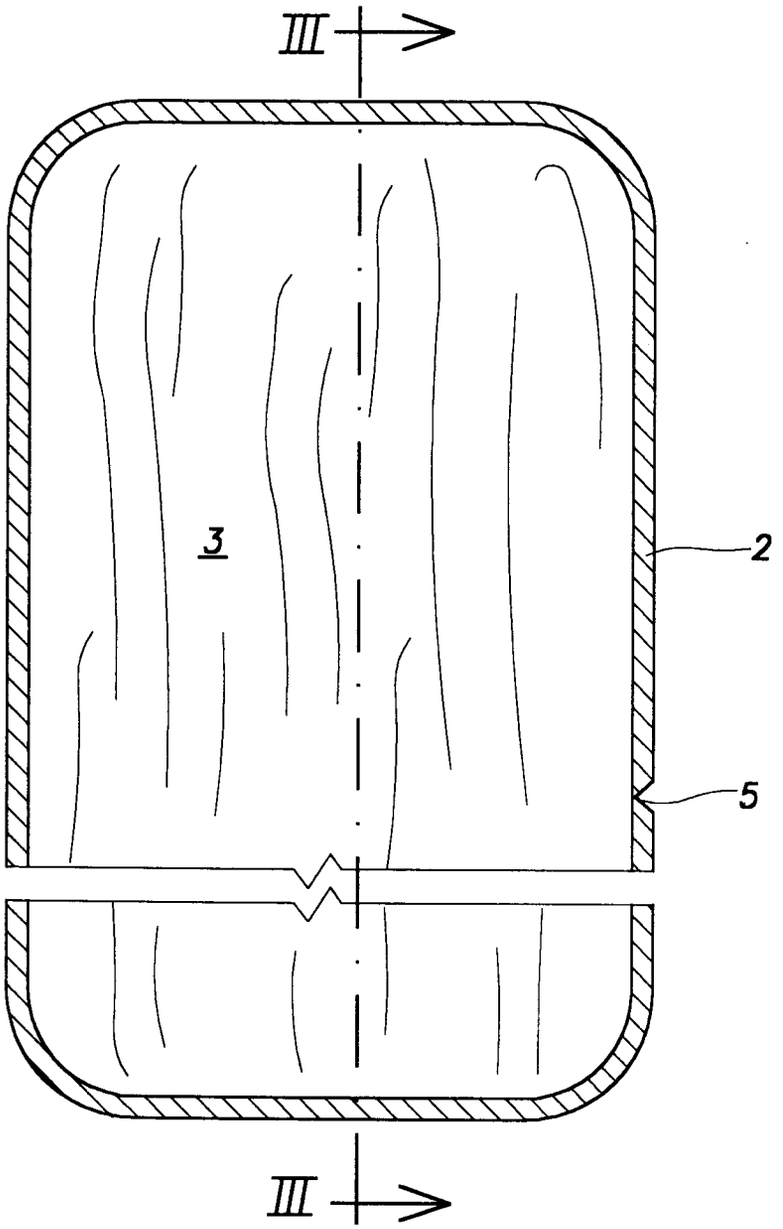
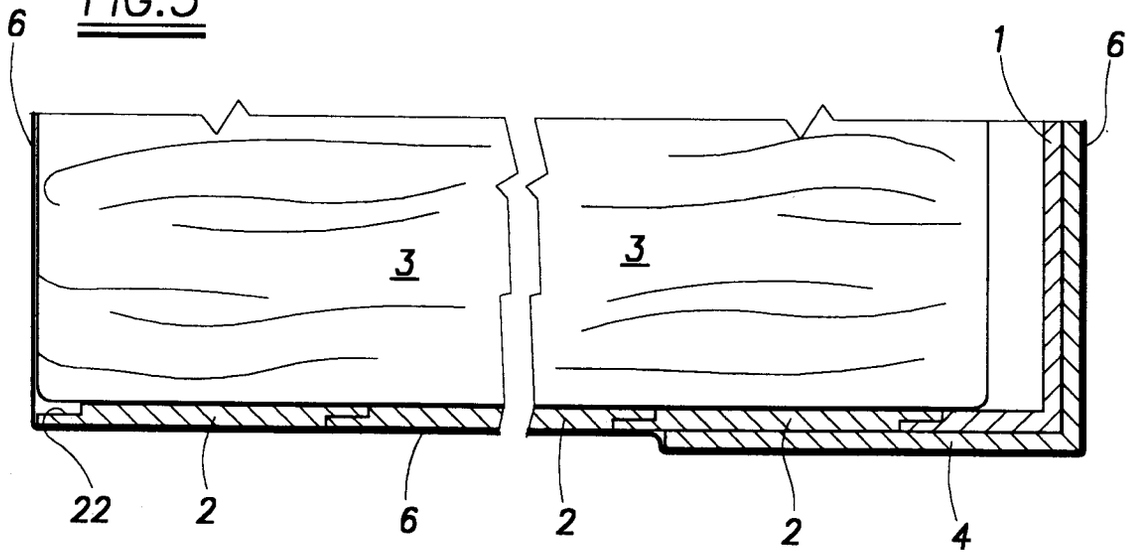



FIG.3



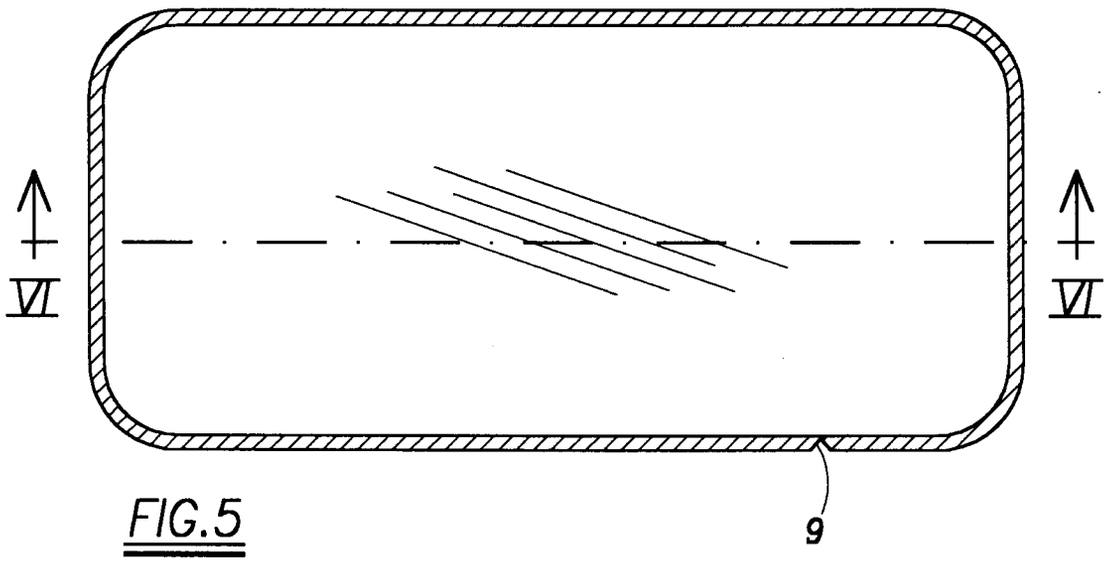



FIG.5

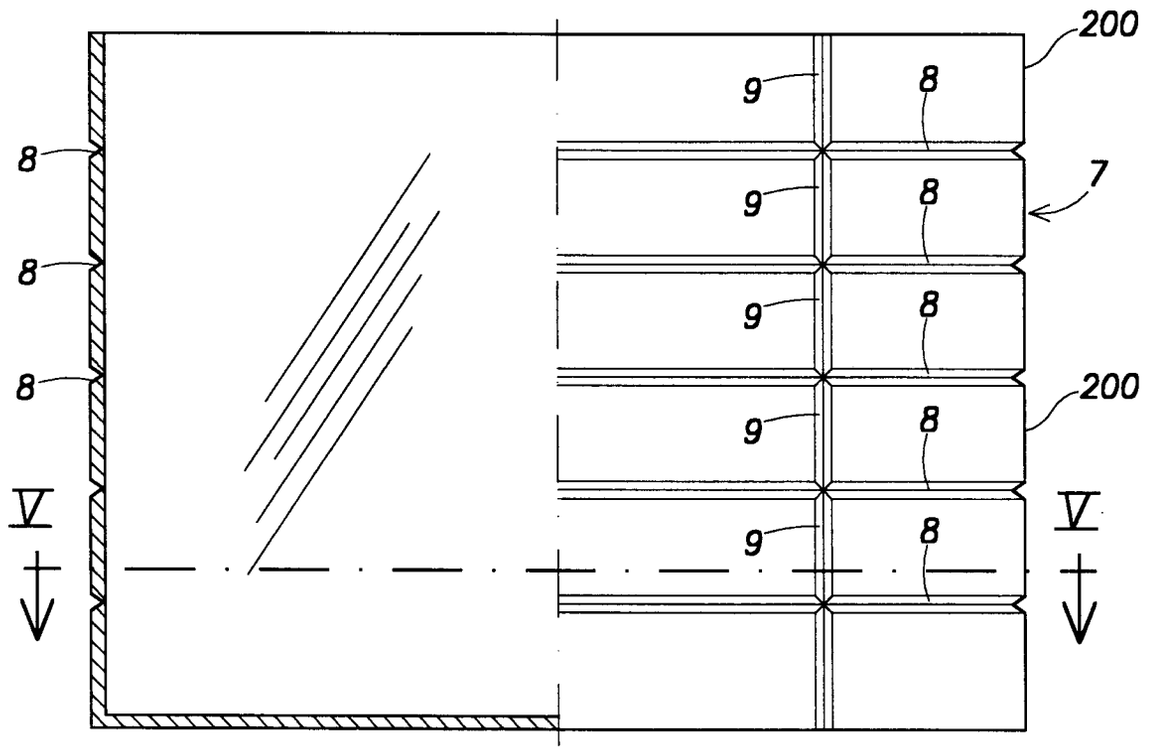



FIG.4

FIG.6

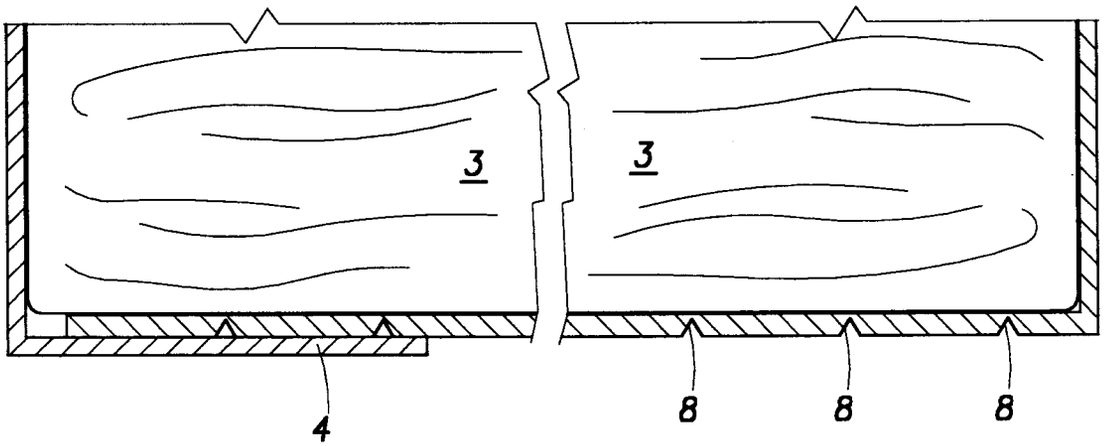



FIG.7

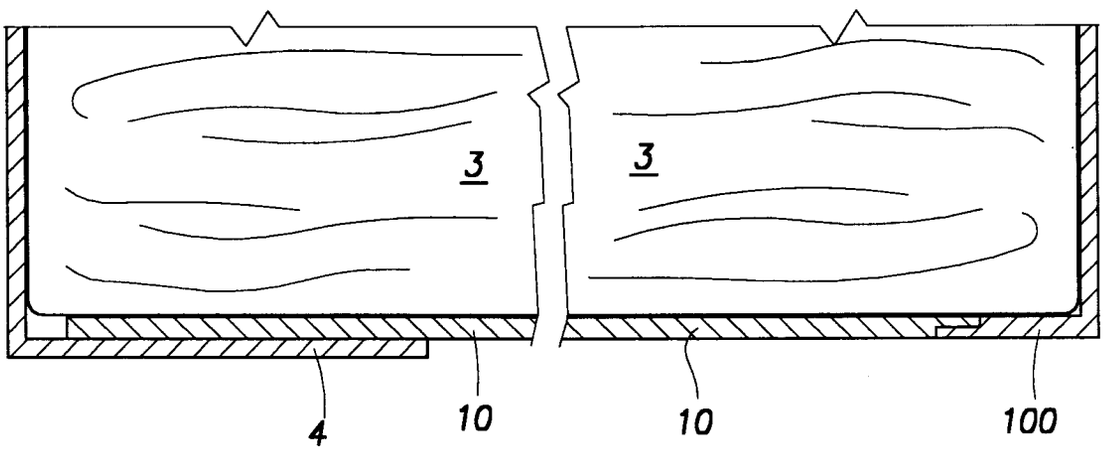
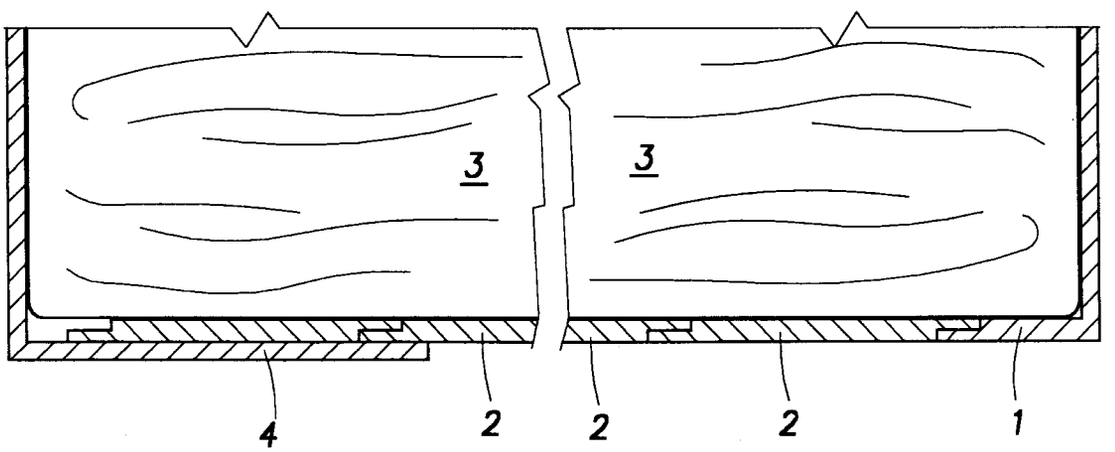



FIG.8



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# EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 97 20 4060

## DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

| Category | Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages | Relevant to claim | CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.6) |
|---|---|---|---|
| X<br>Y | FR 2 190 682 A (PAULY)<br>* page 2, line 18 - page 3, line 33; figures 1-3 * | 1-3<br>4,5 | B65D21/08<br>B65D75/58<br>B65D77/00 |
| X | FR 2 219 884 A (PONSY)<br>* figures 1-3 * | 1 | |
| Y<br>A | US 5 467 887 A (WEAVER)<br>* column 5, line 9 - line 37; figures 8-11 *<br>* | 4,5<br>1,3 | |
| A | US 2 852 179 A (BIELER)<br>* column 1, line 52 - column 3, line 19; figures 1-3 * | 1,3-5 | |
| A | US 3 967 773 A (KAUFMANN)<br>* figures 1-4 * | 1 | |
| A | US 5 042 666 A (DOLENC)<br>* figures 1-3 * | 1 | |
| A | GB 2 262 155 A (PINKERTON)<br>* claims 1,2; figures 1-3 * | 6 | TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.6)<br>B65D |
| A | US 4 919 949 A (MILTZ)<br>* column 3, line 18 - column 6, line 68; figures 1A-3 * | 1 | |

The present search report has been drawn up for all claims

| Place of search | Date of completion of the search | Examiner |
|---|---|---|
| THE HAGUE | 14 April 1998 | Berrington, N |

CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS

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EPO FORM 1503 03.82 (P04C01)