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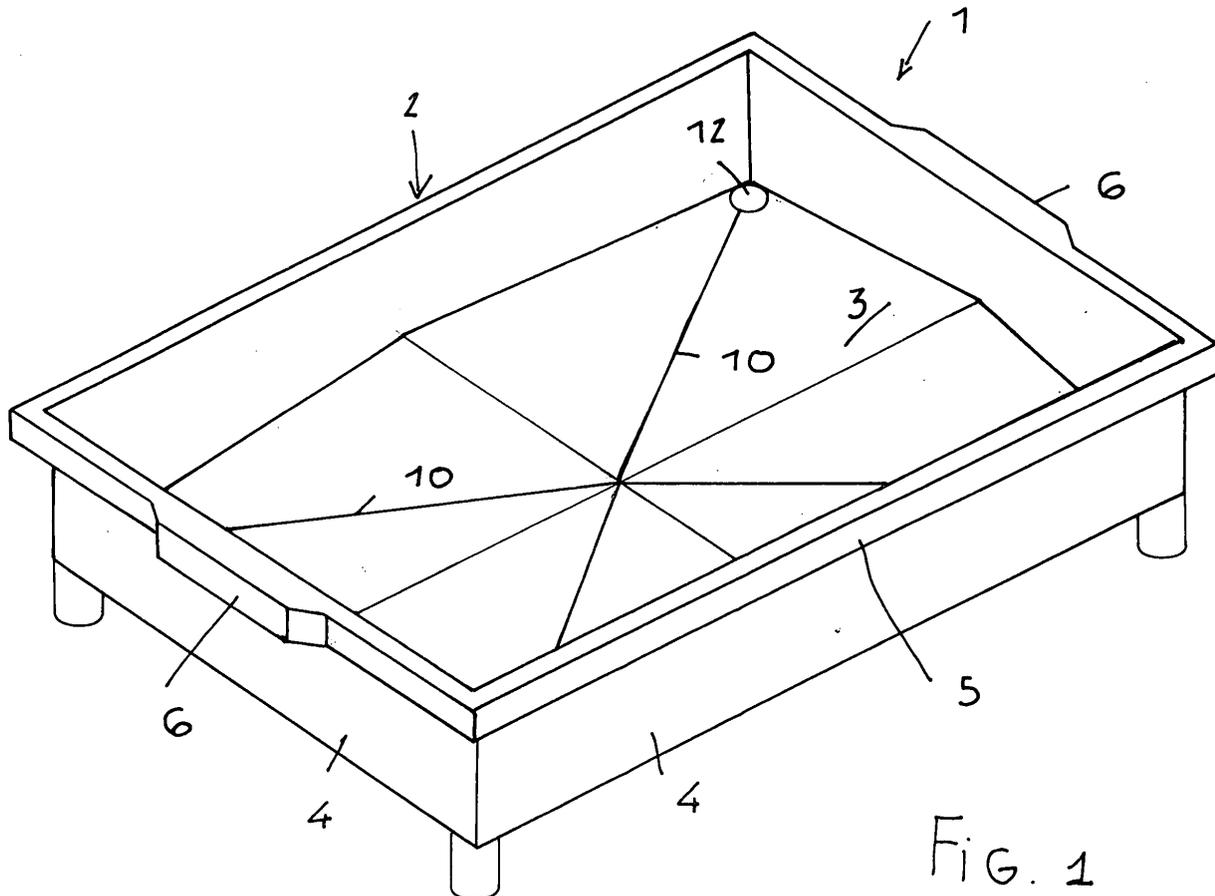
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(54) **Container element for food products, in particular for pasta**

(57) The present invention relates to a container element for food products in general, in particular for alimentary pasta, comprising a case body (2), having a

bottom (3) having slanted portion extending from the center of the container element toward the periphery thereof for draining condensate material.



EP 1 445 212 A1

Description**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

[0001] The present invention relates to a container element for food products in general and, more specifically, for alimentary pasta.

[0002] As is known, in many fields of the food industry, it is necessary to have container elements for arranging therein food products to be preset for subsequent processing operations.

[0003] For example, in the case of fresh alimentary pasta, the pasta bolus must be held in a rest condition for a given time period, thereby providing a natural rising operation.

[0004] In conventional alimentary pasta processing arrangements, the pasta material to be processed is arranged on trays or containers-vessels, which are arranged in refrigerating cells for a time necessary to control the rising of the pasta product.

[0005] During this time period, condensate material drains on the pasta product, which can cause fermentation problems and, consequently, modify the organoleptic characteristics of the pasta material.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] Accordingly, the aim of the present invention is to overcome the above mentioned problem, by providing a container element for food products in general, and more specifically for alimentary pasta, allowing to eliminate any condensate materials, thereby holding the alimentary pasta bolus under optimum rising conditions, without any risks of generating undesired fermentations.

[0007] Within the scope of the above mentioned aim, a main object of the present invention is to provide such a container element, in which it is further possible to properly carry out the pasta rising step, i.e. in which condensate materials are automatically eliminated.

[0008] Another object of the present invention is to provide such a container element which, owing to its specifically designed constructional features, is very reliable and safe in operation.

[0009] Yet another object of the present invention is to provide such a container element which is very competitive from a mere economic standpoint.

[0010] According to one aspect of the present invention, the above mentioned aim and objects, as well as yet other objects, which will become more apparent hereinafter, are achieved by a container element for food products in general and, in particular, for alimentary pasta, characterized in that said container element comprises a case body having a bottom including sloping portions, inclined from a central part toward a periphery of said container element, for draining any condensate material therefrom.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] Further characteristics and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent hereinafter from the following detailed disclosure of a container element for food products in general and, in particular, for alimentary pasta, which is illustrated, by way of an indicative, but not limitative, example, in the accompanying drawings, where:

Figure 1 is a schematic perspective view illustrating the container element according to the invention; Figure 2 is a top plan view illustrating the container element;

Figure 3 is a schematic cross-sectional view, on an enlarged scale, substantially taken along the section line III-III of figure 2;

Figure 4 is a further cross-sectional view, substantially taken along the section line IV-IV of figure 2, illustrating the container element according to the present invention; and

Figure 5 illustrates the subject container element, to which alimentary pasta boluses have been applied.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0012] With reference to the number references of the above mentioned figures, the container element for food products in general and, in particular, for alimentary pasta, according to the present invention, which has been generally indicated by the reference number 1, comprises a case body 2, having a case bottom 3, which, according to a main feature of the present invention, comprises a plurality of sloping portions, which are inclined from the center toward the periphery of the container element.

[0013] More specifically, the case body 2 comprises side walls 4 which, at the top portions thereof end with a turned edge 5 which, at its small sides, comprises handle or gripping elements 6.

[0014] The sloping portions, in particular, are constituted by substantially triangular regions which, from the center, are inclined toward draining lines 10, merging, at the corners, toward draining portions 12.

[0015] Said draining portions 12 are practically constituted by cylindrical cup elements, in which possible condensate material originated from the pasta bolus 20 resting on the bottom is drained.

[0016] Thus, with the disclosed arrangement, said condensate material is naturally conveyed toward the peripheral regions and is collected in the cup elements 12, without damaging possible underlying casing bodies.

[0017] Thus, it should be apparent that said condensate material will be collected and held by the mentioned cup-like elements.

[0018] Said cup-like elements comprise cylindrical ele-

ments and also operate as centering elements for stacking thereon a plurality of case bodies of like container elements.

[0019] From the above disclosure it should be apparent that the invention fully achieves the intended aim and objects. 5

[0020] In fact, the invention provides a container element allowing to automatically drain possible condensate materials, without generating problems, since said condensate material is collected and held in said cup-like elements, thereby allowing alimentary pasta to be properly risen. 10

[0021] In practicing the invention, the used materials, though the best results have been achieved by using plastic materials for food applications, as well as the contingent size and shapes, can be any, depending on requirements. 15

Claims 20

1. A container element for food products in general and, in particular, for alimentary pasta, **characterized in that** said container element comprises a case body having a bottom including sloping portions, inclined from a central part toward a periphery of said container element, for draining any condensate material therefrom. 25
2. A container element, according to the preceding claim, **characterized in that** said case body has side walls which, at a top thereof, end with a turned edge. 30
3. A container element, according to the preceding claims, **characterized in that** said turned edge defines, at two opposite sides thereof, a gripping element. 35
4. A container element, according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** said sloping portions have a substantially triangular configuration and converge toward a lower level point, arranged at corner portions of said case body. 40
5. A container element, according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** said case body comprises, at the corner portions thereof, a plurality of condensate material collecting cup elements. 45
6. A container element, according to one or more of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** said condensate material collecting cup elements are adapted to also operate as centering elements for stacking a plurality of case bodies onto one another. 50

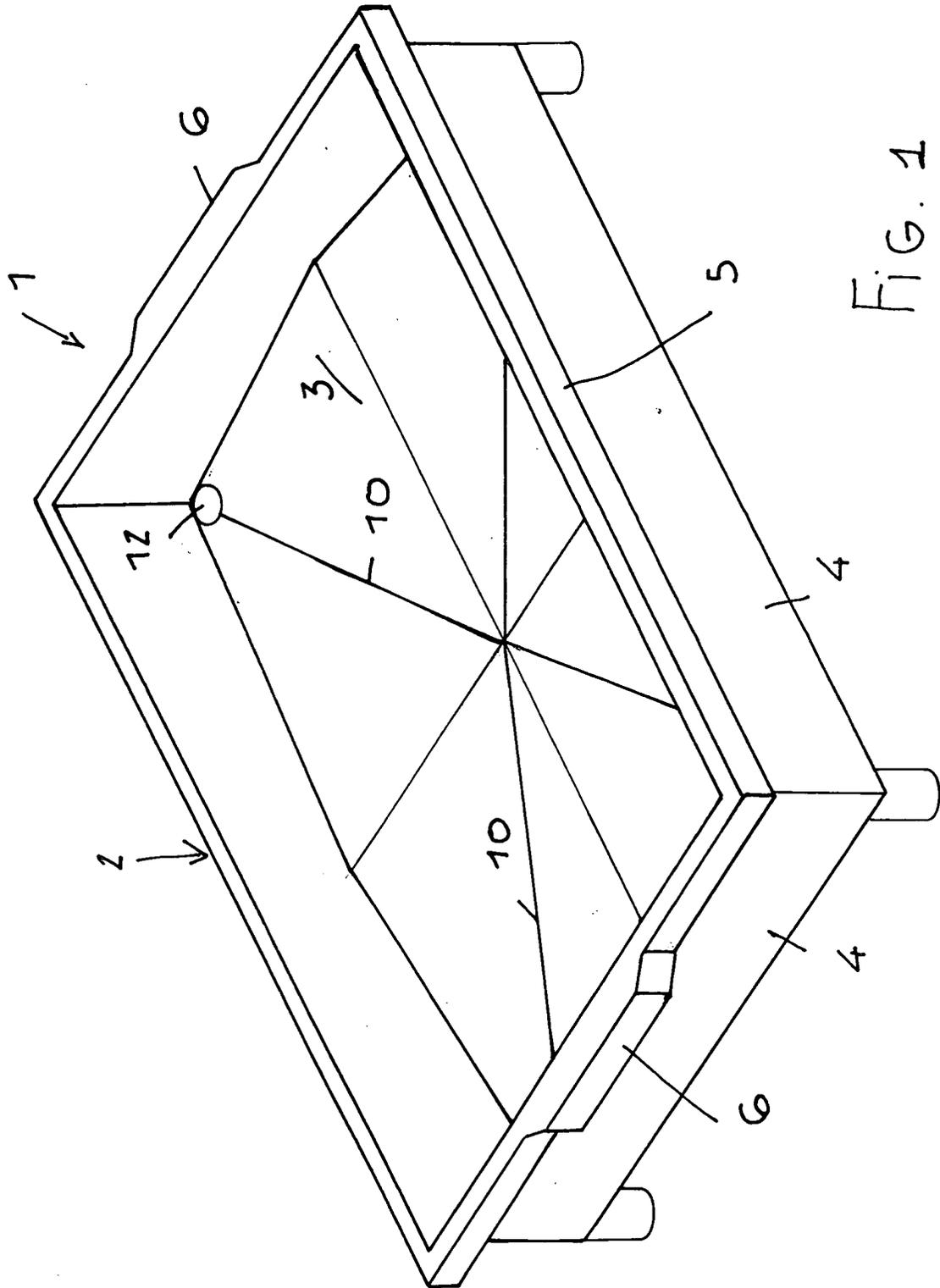


FIG. 1

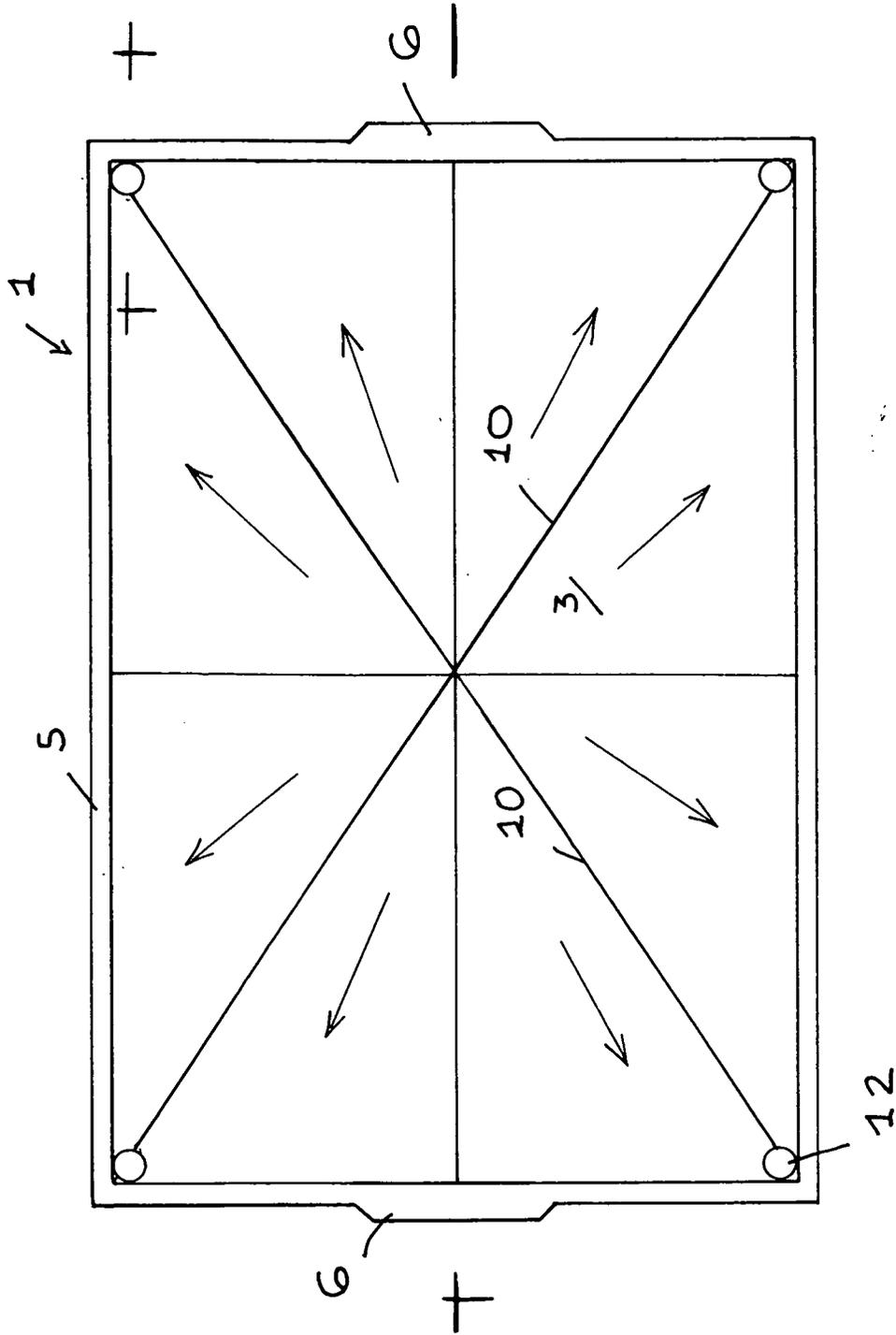


FIG. 2

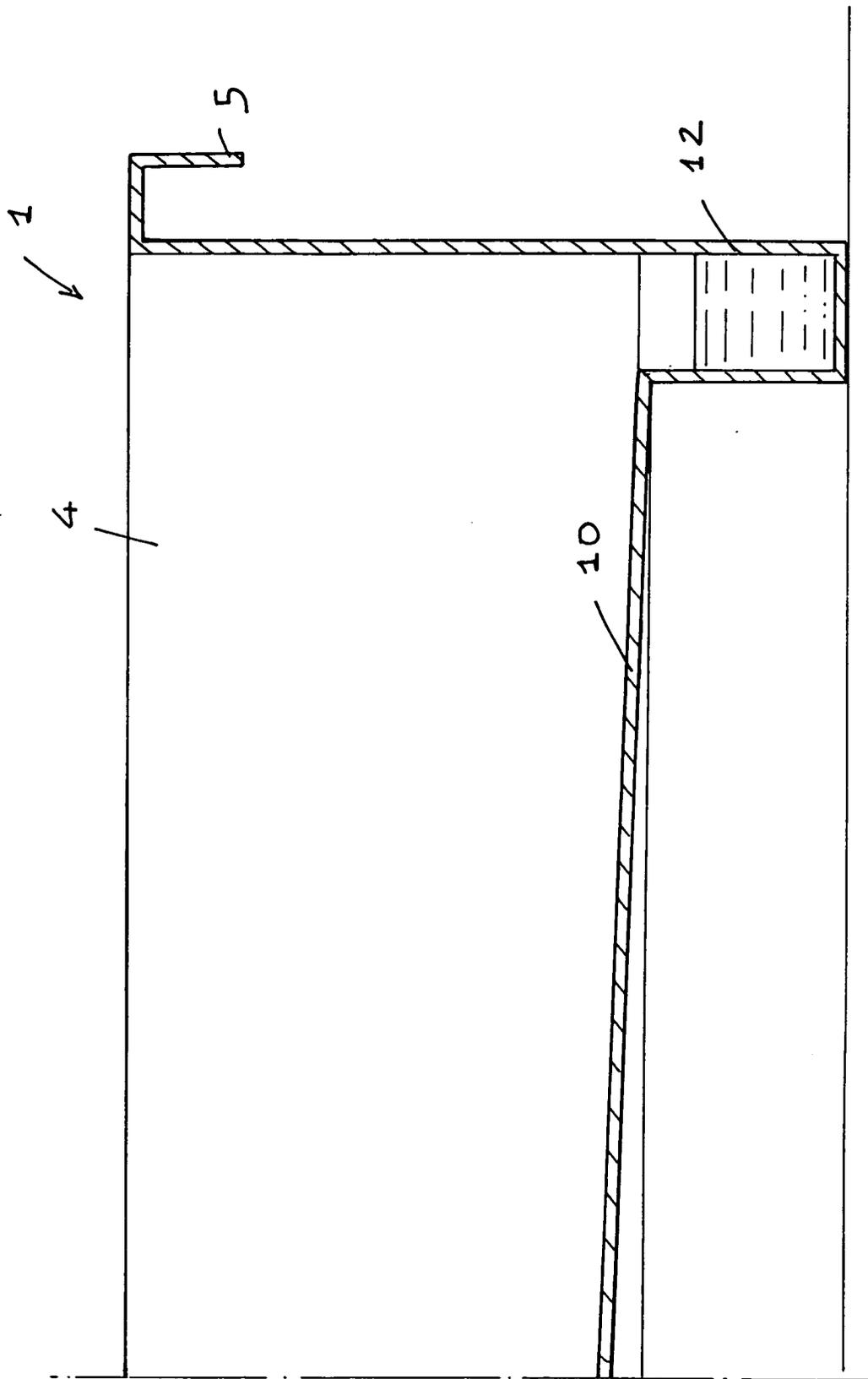


FIG. 3

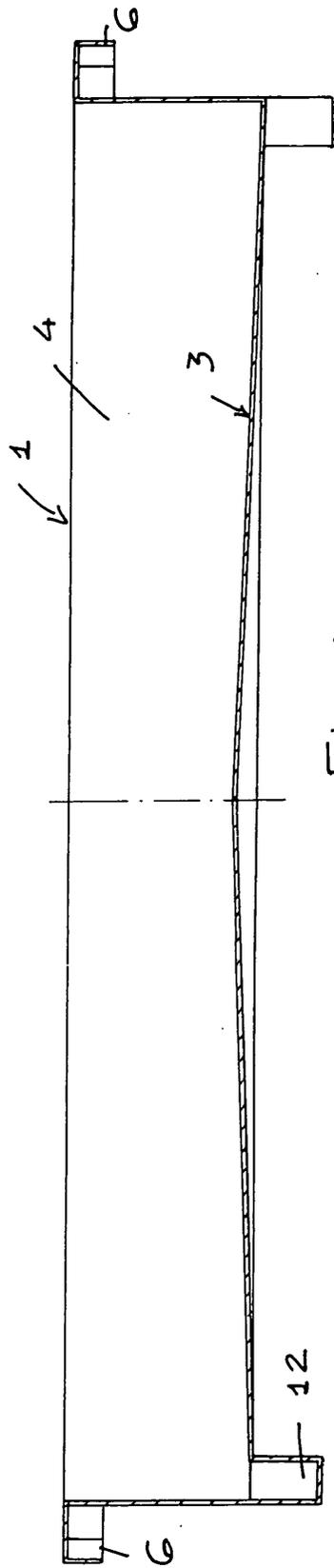


FIG. 4

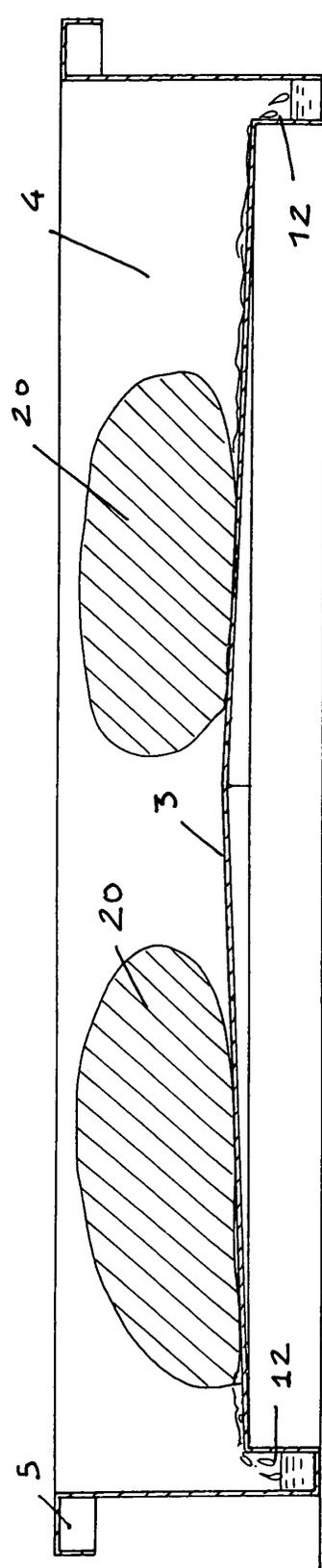


FIG. 5



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 04 00 2541

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.7)
X	DE 24 33 734 A (REINDERS & CO) 22 January 1976 (1976-01-22) * page 4, paragraph 1 - page 7, paragraph 1; figures 1-4 *	1-6	B65D81/26
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.Cl.7)
			B65D
Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner	
MUNICH	1 April 2004	Derrien, Y	
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	
X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document			

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 04 00 2541

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on the European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

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