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(54) **MAIL PACKAGING FOR FOOD**

POSTVERPACKUNG FÜR LEBENSMITTEL

EMBALLAGE D'EXPÉDITION POUR ALIMENTS

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Description

[0001] This invention relates to packaging for fragile goods, in particular food, such as fruit and vegetables.

BACKGROUND

[0002] It is well known for a wide range of goods to be purchased online and delivered by mail. Appropriate packaging is required for such goods to ensure that they are not damaged in transit. In the case of fresh fruit and vegetables it is important that the items are minimally bruised during transit in the mail. Moreover where a selection of fruit and vegetables are ordered online and delivered by mail it is desirable that the different fruits and vegetables are kept separate during transit in order that they maintain an attractive appearance when received by the user and heavier items do not damage more fragile items by movement in the packaging.

[0003] One potential solution is to include within the packaging large amounts of cushioning material to protect the fruit and vegetables. However, this adds to the volume and cost of the packaging and increases the cost of mailing. Moreover, it is desirable for the delivery to be receivable at home by the recipient, which makes low volume packaging that will fit through most letterboxes an attractive opportunity.

[0004] FR2502120A1 relates to packaging box for cheese and formed from a cardboard blank. The box, when assembled comprises two partition members to separate compartments in the box.

[0005] US2955733A relates to a box for use in transporting live poultry, such as chicks. FR1376502A relates to a partitioning box for shipping of fragile and perishable items such as cut flowers, or small animals.

[0006] The present invention, at least in the particular embodiments described herein, seeks to provide packaging for a selection of fruit and vegetables that enables the selection to be delivered by mail and received without significant damage to the contents of the packaging.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0007] In accordance with the present invention when viewed from a first aspect there is provided a packaging box for mailing fruit and vegetables for delivery to the home as claimed in claim 1.

[0008] Thus in accordance with the present invention, the partitioning member not only divides the box body into compartments but also provided structural stability to the box by connecting the lid to the box body in the closed box. In embodiments of the invention this provides enhanced resistance of the box to crushing or bowing. Thus, the partitioning member may form a connection between the lid of the closed box and the base panel of the closed box.

[0009] The partitioning member may be provided to partition the box body lengthways or widthways. In some embodiments, the box body may be partitioned both lengthways and widthways through the use of at least two mutually transverse partitioning members.

[0010] The partitioning member may attach to the lid adhesively. In one embodiment, the partitioning member comprises at least one upper projecting member, and the lid has defined therein at least one upper hole for receiving the upper projecting member, whereby to connect the lid to the partitioning member when the box is closed. Thus, the upper projecting member may be a tab. The tab may extend from the partitioning member. The hole may be provided centrally on the lid.

[0011] In one embodiment, the upper projecting member is a projecting tab configured to be secured adhesively to an outer surface of the lid. In this arrangement, the tab can be secured to the lid when the box has been closed. The tab may be self-adhesive. In one embodiment, the tab is secured to the lid with adhesive tape.

[0012] The tab may extend from the partitioning member. The lower hole may be provided centrally on the base panel.

[0013] The tab may be self-adhesive. In one embodiment, the tab is secured to the lid with adhesive tape.

[0014] In one embodiment, at least one of the lower projecting member and the upper projecting member may be flattened, and at least one of a complementary region of the lid or a complementary region of the base panel may also be flattened. In this way, when the lower projecting member or the upper projecting member are laid flat against an outer surface of the lid or an outer surface of the base panel respectively, the folded over lower projecting member or the folded over upper projecting member do not extend substantially above the profile of the remainder of the outer surface of the lid or the outer surface of the base panel respectively. This provides a packaging box design which is more easily processed by the postal system.

[0015] The partitioning member may form a partition with a substantially triangular cross section. This has the advantage of additional structural stability. For example, the partitioning member may comprise a base member and two wall members which meet at an apex. The wall members may be provided with interengaging projections at the apex. The interengaging projections may comprise the upper projection.

[0016] The partitioning member may form a partition with a substantially rectangular section. This has the advantage of allowing an additional compartment to be provided within the partition itself. For example, the partitioning member may comprise a base member, two wall members and a roof member, such that a wall member joins a side of the base member to a side of the roof member. The roof member may be provided with a cut-out section to allow access to the interior of the partitioning member from a top of the box body. In some embodiments, the partitions themselves can hold small/narrow items like, for example, berries, tomatoes, cherries, mange tout, chillis, or turmeric. This makes for more ef-

ficient use of the space taken up by the partition itself.

[0017] In one embodiment, the partitioning member is optionally foldable to lay flat in the box body. In this way, the user can choose to use one or more partitioning members depending on the selection of fruit and vegetables to be packaged.

[0018] In one embodiment, the lid has defined therein a window and the box further comprises a support shelf arranged between the box body and the lid, the support shelf providing a barrier between the window and the interior of the box body. The support shelf may be configured to engage the upper projecting member whereby to guide the upper projecting member through the upper holes when the lid is closed. The support shelf may be configured to engage the upper projecting member by means of a slot defined in an edge of the support shelf.

[0019] In one embodiment, the support shelf comprises at least one retaining member for retaining a document in position on the support shelf relative to the window. The retaining member may be cut from the material of the support shelf, for example in the form of a tongue.

[0020] In embodiments of the invention, the box is formed from corrugated cardboard. In particular, the box may be formed from a single piece of cardboard.

[0021] The packaging box may be sized to minimise the postage payable for delivery. In addition or alternatively, the packaging box may be dimensioned to fit through most domestic letterboxes. Consequently, the packaging box may have a length of less than 50cm, desirably of at most 45cm. The packaging box may have a width of less than 40cm, desirably of at most 35cm. The packaging box may have a depth of less than 10cm, desirably of at most 8cm, or even less than 4cm.

[0022] In embodiments of the invention, the packaging box may comprise a second box within the packaging box. The second box may be removable from the packaging box. The second box may be insertable into the packaging box. The second box may be a tray. The second box may comprise a closing lid, which closes the box. The closing lid may be configured to provide a support shelf within the packaging box. The partitioning members of the packaging box may be arranged to support the second box when the second box is positioned in the packaging box. At least one of the partitioning members of the packaging box may be arranged to support a side wall of the second box when the second box is positioned in the packaging box. At least one of the side walls of the second box may be configured to support at least one of the partitioning members of the packaging box.

[0023] In some embodiments of the invention, the at least one projecting member of the partitioning members of the packaging box may be configured to pass out of the packaging box through a first hole in the packaging box and subsequently pass back into the packaging box through a second hole in the packaging box. Thus, at least one of the projecting members may be referred to as belt-buckle tabs.

[0024] The invention extends to a blank for forming a packaging box according to the invention.

[0025] Viewed from a further aspect, the invention provides a method of packaging cut plant matter. The method comprises providing a moisture retaining member adjacent a cut end of cut plant matter, surrounding the cut plant matter and the moisture retaining member by a porous plastics sheet member, wherein the moisture retaining member is formed from a strip of corrugated cardboard. The method further comprises the steps of separating the moisture retaining member from a blank for a packaging box as described above, separating the moisture retaining member from the blank formed from corrugated cardboard, assembling the packaging box and packing the cut plant matter.

[0026] The moisture retaining member may be formed from a rolled strip of corrugated cardboard. The method may include the step of moistening the corrugated cardboard with water.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0027] Embodiments of the invention are further described hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is an illustration of a packaging box according to an embodiment of an aspect of the present invention;

Figure 2 is an illustration of a blank for forming a packaging box according to an embodiment of an aspect of the present invention;

Figure 3 is an illustration of a folding divider for use in a packaging box according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 4 is an illustration of an assembled packaging box according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 5 is an illustration of a constructional features of an assembled packaging box according to a further embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 6 is an illustration of a blank for forming a packaging box according to an embodiment of an aspect of the present invention;

Figure 7 is an illustration of an inside of the packaging box formed from the blank shown in Figure 6;

Figure 8 is a further illustration of the inside of the packaging box formed from the blank shown in Figure 6;

Figure 9 is an illustration of two blanks for forming a

packaging box according to an embodiment of an aspect of the present invention;

Figure 10 is an illustration of an inside of the packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 9;

Figure 11 is a further illustration of the inside of the packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 9;

Figure 12 is an illustration of an assembled packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 9;

Figure 13 is an illustration of two blanks for forming a packaging box according to an embodiment of an aspect of the present invention;

Figure 14 is a series of illustrations of the inside of the packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 13, showing a method of packing cut plant matter in the packaging box;

Figure 15 is a series of illustrations of a top of the packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 13, showing steps in a method of opening the packaging box;

Figure 16 is an illustration of a step in a method of unpacking the contents of an assembled packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 13; and

Figure 17 is a series of illustrations of a packaging member for packing cut plant matter for use in the packaging boxes according to embodiments of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0028] The present disclosure relates to a food packaging box for protecting fruits and vegetables during delivery by mail. The food packaging box is typically formed from a corrugated cardboard blank. Figure 1 shows an illustration of a packaging box according to an embodiment of an aspect of the present invention. The packaging box 100 comprises a box body 114 formed integrally with a closing lid 102. The closing lid 102 is configured to close the packaging box 100 by securing to the box body 114. Side tabs 104 provided on the closing lid 102 are configured to engage with slots at the corners of the box body 114 to locate the closing lid 102 on the box body 114. Additional securing is provided by lid tabs 108 which project from an end edge of the closing lid 102 and are arranged to secure the closing lid 102 to the box body 114 by engagement in slots 110 defined in a front face of the box body 114.

[0029] Within the box body 114, dividers 106 are provided to compartmentalise the box body 114 and allow multiple portions of fruit and vegetables to be separated in the packaging box 100 during mailing. At an upper edge of each divider 106 a tab 118 is provided for engagement in a corresponding hole 116 defined in the closing lid 102. When the closing lid 102 is in position to close the box 100, the tabs 118 and holes 116 engage to hold the dividers 106 upright. The tabs 118 are then folded to lie against the upper surface of the closing lid 102 and secured in position with packaging tape (as shown in Figure 4). The connection between the dividers 106 and the closing lid 102 via the tabs 118 provides the closed box 100 with additional stability to prevent crushing or bowing of the box 100. Moreover, this connection ensures that the compartments defined by the dividers 106 are each closed securely by the closing lid 102, so that the contents of each compartment do not migrate into adjacent compartments during transit.

[0030] A support shelf 112 is provided within the box body 114 and is positioned to rest on the dividers 106 between the dividers 106 and the closing lid 102 in the closed box 100. A corresponding viewing window 120 is defined within the closing lid 102 and allows printed material provided on the support shelf 112 to be viewed even when the packaging box 100 is closed. In some embodiments, an additional piece of paper, printed with an address and other postage information can be provided on the support shelf 112. The viewing window 120 may comprise a clear plastic window to prevent moisture or other contaminants entering the box during mailing. The support shelf 112 is provided with opposed cut-out tongues 126 (see Figure 2) which retain the printed material in position on the support shelf 112. The support shelf 112 locates the printed material in position relative to the viewing window 120 so that pre-printed postage information is viewable through the viewing window 120. This allows the postage information, such as an address and franking mark, to be printed onto the printed material, which may simply be a piece of paper of standard size using a standard printer without the need for adhesive labels. In addition, the support shelf 112 locates the printed material in position in the box body 114 on opening of the box 100 so that the recipient is immediately presented with the information printed thereon. This is important in providing a positive experience for the recipient on opening the box 100. The support shelf 112 also provides a barrier between the fruit or vegetables in the compartments defined by the dividers 106 and the printed material so that the printed material is not stained or moistened by the fruit or vegetables. Again, this is important for the positive experience of the recipient. This has the advantage that standard, rather than waterproof, inks can be used for printing.

[0031] Figure 2 shows an illustration of the packaging box 100 of Figure 1 in the form of a flat blank. The blank 100 is formed from a single piece of fibreboard, also known a corrugated cardboard or "eFlute". In the diagram of Figure 2, solid black lines indicate lines to be cut and solid grey lines indicate crease lines where the flat fibreboard is scored in preparation for later folding during as-

sembly of the packaging box 100. Corresponding reference numerals are used in Figure 2 for the features described previously in relation to Figure 1.

[0032] The blank 100 comprises the closing lid 102, having defined therein fixing holes 116 and viewing windows 120. The closing lid 102 comprises an end flap 128 on which are provided the side tabs 104 and lid tabs 108, which secure the closing lid 102 to the box body 114 when the closing lid 102 is closes the assembled packaging box 100. In the closed position the end flap 128 overlies a side wall of the box body 114 and provides additional structural support thereto.

[0033] At its edge opposite the end flap 128, the closing lid 102 is connected by a fold line to the box body 114. The box body 114 comprises a base section 121, having defined therein bottom locating holes 122. Between the base section 121 and the closing lid 102 the box body 114 comprises a first end wall 124 connected to the base section 121 by a fold line. A second end wall 125 is provided on the opposite side of the base section 121 to the first end wall 124 and is connected to the base section 121 by a fold line. The box body 114 further comprises side walls 130 at each side of the base section 121 which are connected thereto by respective fold lines. Along the fold lines which join the end walls 124, 125 and the end walls 130 to the base section 121, spaced retaining slots 132 are provided for receiving corresponding projections 134 provided at the extremities of the side walls 130 and the second end wall 125. Each of the side walls 130 and the second end wall 125 is provided with a fold line along its centre which allows the wall to be folded in half so that the projections 134 can engage the retaining slots 132 and hold the wall in position. In this way, the walls are of double thickness. The first end wall 124 and the second end wall 125 are provided at their sides proximate the side walls 130 with side tabs 136 connected to the walls 124, 125 by fold lines. In the assembled box 100, the side walls 130 fold over the side tabs 136 to maintain the walls in an upright position.

[0034] The dividers 106 extend from the second end wall 125 and connect the second end wall 125 to a reinforcing wall 124a which provides the second thickness for the double thickness of the first end wall 124. The support shelf 112 extends from the reinforcing wall 124a and is connected thereto by a fold line.

[0035] The dividers 106 are each provided with bottom tabs 138 which are received by the retaining holes 122 in the base section 121 in the assembled box 100. Like the tabs 118 which engage the holes 116 in the closing lid 102, the bottom tabs 138 having passed through the retaining holes 122 can be folded over and secured in position with packaging tape on the underside of the assembled box 100. In this way, in the assembled box 100, the dividers 106 and the associated tabs 118, 138 connect the base section 121 to the closing lid 102 providing rigidity to the box structure and preventing crushing or bowing of the box 100.

[0036] To assemble the packaging box 100 from the blank, the dividers 106 are first folded up as will be described with reference to Figure 3. The divider section is then folded down against the base section 121 and the end walls 130 are folded over to form a divided box ready to receive portions of fruit and vegetables. The box is closed by folding the closing lid 102 over the compartmentalised packaging box.

[0037] Figure 3 shows an illustration of a folding divider for use in a packaging box according to one embodiment of the present invention. A triangular-section divider 106 is formed from a first divider wall 106a and a second divider wall 106b. A divider base section 106c is connects the first divider wall 106a to the second divider wall 106b via fold lines. To connect a top end of the first divider wall 106a to a top end of the second divider wall 106b, a securing tab 118 engages with retaining projections 140 provided respectively on the first divider wall 106a and the second divider wall 106b or vice versa. For connection to the base section 121, lower securing tabs 138 are provided for engagement with the holes 122 defined in the base section 121.

[0038] It should be noted that in the embodiments of Figures 2 and 5 and 1 and 3 the configuration of the tabs 118 is slightly different. In Figure 2, a tab 118 is provided on each of the first and second divider walls 106a, 106b and the two tabs interengage with a slight overlap to retain the divider walls 106a, 106b in position. One or both of the interengaged tabs 118 pass through the hole 106 in the closing lid 102. In Figure 3, the retaining projections 140 receive the tab 118 which then passes through the hole in the closing lid 102.

[0039] Similarly, in Figure 2, each divider 106 is provided with only one lower securing tab 138, whereas in Figure 3, two lower securing tabs are provided on each divider 106.

[0040] Figure 4 shows an illustration of an assembled packaging box 100 according to one embodiment of the present invention. The closing lid 102 of the packaging box 100 is additionally secured to the packaging box 100 by folding the securing tab 118 over against the closing lid 102. The securing tabs 118 are held in place against the closing lid 102 by tape 144, as previously described.

[0041] In some embodiments, the securing tabs 118 may be flattened by for example, an embossing, stamping or rolling process. By additionally providing a recessed region in the top surface of the closing lid 102, by, for example, a further embossing process, the securing tabs 118 can be folded down and accommodated in the recess of the closing lid 102, such that the folded down securing tabs 118 are flush with the top surface of the non-recessed parts of the closing lid 102. It will be appreciated that this principle may also be applied in substantially the same way to the lower securing tabs 138 and the underside of the base section 121.

[0042] Figure 5 shows an embodiment of the invention which differs from the embodiment of Figures 1 and 2 in that in this embodiment the support shelf 112 is extended and provided with slots at its outer edges for receiving

the tabs 118. This not only retains the supporting shelf 112 in position but also assists in positioning the tabs 118 prior to the closing lid 102 being closed so that the tabs 118 are easily located in the holes 116.

[0043] Figure 6 is an illustration of a blank for forming a packaging box according to an embodiment of an aspect of the present invention. The blank is substantially as described with reference to the embodiment of Figure 2, with the hereinafter described differences. The box body 114 of the assembled box contains four compartments, formed from two dividers 152 and a lateral divider 154. The dividers 152 run in the same direction as the dividers 106 as described in previous embodiments, but differ in their design, as will be described hereinafter. The lateral divider 154 runs substantially perpendicular to the dividers 152, and is arranged to subdivide a compartment formed between the two dividers 152. In contrast to the dividers 106, each of the dividers 152 and lateral divider 154 is configured to have a substantially rectangular cross-section. The dividers 152 extend from the second end wall 125 and connect the second end wall 125 to the reinforcing wall 124a which provides the second thickness for the double thickness of the first end wall 124. The dividers 152 are each connected to the second end wall 125 and the reinforcing wall 124a by the divider base section 152d. The divider base section 152d is connected to the outer side wall 152c, which is connected to the divider top section 152b, itself connected to the inner side wall 152a. The inner side wall 152a, the divider top section 152b and the outer side wall 152c are configured to be foldable around the divider base section 152d such that a free end of the inner side wall 152a meets the divider base section 152d to form a divider 152 having a substantially rectangular cross section. The inner side wall 152a is provided with a bottom tab 156 and an upper tab 158. During assembly of the packaging box 100, each bottom tab 156 is arranged to pass through one of the bottom locating holes 122. Similarly, each upper tab 158 is arranged to pass through one of the corresponding holes 116.

[0044] Each divider base section 152d is mutually connected by a lateral divider base section 154b. The lateral divider base section 154b is connected at a first edge to a lateral divider front wall 154a and connected at an opposing second edge to a lateral divider rear wall 154c. The first edge and second edge are both perforated connections, allowing either or both of the lateral divider front wall 154a and the lateral divider rear wall 154c to be removed from the lateral divider base section 154b. The lateral divider front wall 154a is provided with a divider retaining tab 162, arranged to engage in a divider retaining slot 160 defined in the inner side wall 152a. When assembled, this ensures that the lateral divider front wall 154a remains substantially perpendicular to the lateral divider base section 154b. Similar provisions are provided in the lateral divider rear wall 154c. The lateral divider rear wall 154c is also provided with a bottom tab 156 and an upper tab 158, configured to engage with the bottom locating holes 122 and the corresponding holes 116 respectively, substantially as described in relation to the same tabs on the inner side wall 152a.

[0045] As will be appreciated, perforated lines may be provided on the dividers 152 or the lateral divider 154 to allow all or part of the divider to be removed to accommodate different numbers and layouts of compartments.

[0046] The packaging box 100 is also provided with a support shelf 112 for use substantially as described in relation to previously described embodiments. The support shelf 112 has defined therein tab locating slots 148, configured to be engaged by the upper tabs 158 during assembly of the packaging box 100. The tab locating slots 148 ensure that the upper tabs 158 remain substantially vertical when the closing lid 102 is closed over the box body 114 so that the upper tabs 158 can easily pass through the corresponding holes 116. The support shelf 112 is also provided with three dovetail slots 146, arranged to engage with protrusions provided at an end of the lateral divider front wall 154a during assembly of the packaging box 100. The dovetail slots 146 are configured to retain the lateral divider front wall 154a in an upright position, even when a part of the divider 152 containing the divider retaining slot 160 has been removed.

[0047] Compared with previously described embodiments, it will be appreciated that all of the dividers 152, 154 now have a substantially rectangular cross section when assembled. This may be desirable in some embodiments to allow the storage of additional items in the small compartments formed within the partitions.

[0048] Figure 7 is an illustration of an inside of the packaging box formed from the blank shown in Figure 6. The packaging box 100 is shown in a part assembled configuration, with four compartments defined by the configuration of two vertical partitions 152 joined centrally by a lateral partition 154. Each of the partitions 152, 154 also has an open central region to allow the storage of further portions of fruit or vegetables.

[0049] Figure 8 is a further illustration of the inside of the packaging box formed from the blank shown in Figure 6. The support shelf 112 is closed over one of the partitions through engagement by the upper tabs 158. A letter (not shown) provided on a top surface of the support shelf 112 can be located against the upper tabs 158.

[0050] Figure 9 is an illustration of two blanks for forming a packaging box according to an embodiment of an aspect of the present invention. The design and assembly of the packaging box 100 as shown in Figure 9 is substantially as described in relation to the embodiment of Figure 6 apart from the hereinafter described features. The closing lid 102 has defined therein a pair of top belt-buckle holes 164. The base section 121 has defined therein a pair of bottom belt-buckle holes 166. The base section 121 is connected to a strengthening support section 168. The second end wall 125 is provided between the base section 121 and the strengthening support section 168. The connection between the strengthening support section 168 and the second end wall 125 is a perfo-

rated connection, allowing the strengthening support section 168 to be folded in the reverse direction compared with the direction of fold required in, for example, the fold between the base section 121 and the second end wall 125. The strengthening support section 168 is provided with a pair of fold-up partitions 170 extending from opposite sides of the strengthening support section 168. The strengthening support section 168 is further connected to an outer box horizontal portion 172. The connection between the strengthening support section 168 and the outer box horizontal portion 172 is again a perforated connection allowing the outer box horizontal portion 172 to be folded in the reverse direction, as described above. The outer box horizontal portion 172 extends in a direction transverse to the connection with the strengthening support section 168. Each transverse end of the outer box horizontal portion 172 is connected to an outer box vertical partition 174, each of which is further connected to a first end wall strengthening piece 176. Each first end wall strengthening piece 176 is itself further connected to a locking tab 178.

[0051] The strengthening support section 168 is provided with a top belt-buckle tab 180 and a bottom belt-buckle tab 182, each extending from opposite ends of the strengthening support section 168. A bottom locating tab 184 and a top locating tab 186 extend from opposite sides of each outer box vertical partition 174.

[0052] The packaging box 100 is also designed to make use of a box insert 190 formed from a second blank. The box insert 190 comprises a box insert floor section 192. The box insert floor section 192 is connected to four box insert side walls 196. A box insert lid 194 is connected to one of the box insert side walls 196 and is arranged to close the assembled box insert 190. The box insert floor section 192 is provided with a box insert lower locating hole 198. The box insert lid 194 is provided with a box insert upper locating hole 200.

[0053] Figure 10 is an illustration of an inside of the packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 9. During assembly or use of the packaging box 100, the box insert 190 is designed to be assembled into a box as shown in Figure 10. The box is sized to fit within a series of partitions provided by this particular embodiment of the packaging box 100. In particular, the outer box horizontal partition 172 is configured to provide a retaining function to prevent the box insert 192 sliding down the packaging box 100 when in position. The outer box horizontal partition 172 is held in place in the semi-assembled configuration illustrated in Figure 10 by the interaction of the bottom belt-buckle tab 182 threading through the bottom belt-buckle holes 166. When the closing lid 102 is closed over the packaging box 100, the top belt-buckle tab 180 is arranged to thread out and back inside the closing lid 102 through the pair of top belt-buckle holes 164. The box insert 190 is further held in place by the outer box vertical partitions 174. The outer box vertical partitions 174 are located in the correct position through the engagement of the bottom locating tabs 184 and top locating tabs 186 with the bottom locating holes 122 and the holes 116 respectively. The locking tabs 178 are arranged to be held in place within the folded end walls 130 during assembly of the packaging box 100. The fold-up partitions 170 on the strengthening support section 168 are arranged to fold up if required to further partition the packaging box 100. The fold-up partitions 170 can be used to stop any fruits or vegetables rolling or sliding in the otherwise relatively large cavity.

[0054] Figure 11 is a further illustration of the inside of the packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 9. As shown here, the tip of the bottom belt-buckle tab 182 is configured to engage with the box insert lower locating hole 198 when the box insert 190 is positioned in the remainder of the packaging box 100. As will be appreciated, the top belt-buckle tab 180 is configured to engage in substantially the same way with the box insert upper locating hole 200 when the box insert lid 194 and the closing lid 102 are both closed.

[0055] When the packaging box 100 is received, the box insert 190 can be easily removed from the opened packaging box 100 by lifting out of place. This can be useful where the box insert 190 contains perishable items, for example tomatoes, which need to be stored in the fridge. The box insert 190 is also small enough to fit in a handbag, rucksack, or case for taking fruit and vegetables as snacks, or for example, for lunch away from home.

[0056] The box insert floor section 192 acts in combination with the base section 121 to provide an extra layer of cardboard between the contents of the box insert 190 and the outside of the packaging box 100. Similarly, the box insert lid 194 and the closing lid 102 provide a total of two layers of cardboard between the contents of the box insert 190 and the outside of the packaging box 100. Therefore, extra cushioning may be provided to provide extra protection to any delicate fruits or vegetables packed in the box insert 190. Furthermore, the extra layer of cardboard provides for extra absorption of any liquid coming from damaged fruit or vegetables, for example, if the parcel is undelivered and has to wait at the post office.

[0057] Figure 12 is an illustration of an assembled packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 9. As described in relation to other embodiments, a tape roll 202 can be used to dispense tape for use in flattening the top locating tabs 186 against the closing lid 102 and holding the tabs in place. The tape can also be used to secure the top belt-buckle tab 180 in place. One of the reasons for using a top belt-buckle tab 180 instead of a folding tab of the form seen in the top locating tabs 186 is that a tab which folds in a direction transverse to the direction in which the tape is applied is not naturally flattened by the process of applying the tape, as is the case with the top locating tabs 186. Therefore, the top belt-buckle tab 180 is particularly advantageous because the tab is held in place against the closing lid 102 ready for taping.

[0058] As will be appreciated, the box insert lid 194 also acts in a similar way to the support shelf 112 used in other embodiments in that the box insert lid 194 can prevent a piece of paper provided between the box insert lid 194 and the closing lid 102, and viewable through the viewing window 120, from becoming wet due to liquids from fruits and vegetables packaged in the packaging box 100 or the box insert 190.

[0059] Although each of the top belt-buckle tab 180 and bottom belt-buckle tab 182 are illustrated going out of the assembled packaging box 100 through one locating hole 184, 186 and coming back into the assembled packaging box 100 through the other locating hole 184, 186, it will be appreciated that this direction may be swapped by changing the position of the holes 184, 186 on the packaging box, or changing the shape of the partition sections.

[0060] Figure 13 is an illustration of two blanks for forming a packaging box according to an embodiment of an aspect of the present invention. The packaging box 100 is substantially as described in relation to Figure 9 apart from the hereinafter described differences. The lid 102 has defined therein three pairs of lid slots 202. The three pairs of lid slots 202 are arranged in line along a length of the lid 102. The base section 121 has defined therein three pairs of base slots 204. The three pairs of base slots 204 are arranged in line along a length of the base section 121 and arranged to line up with the lid slots 202 when the packaging box 100 is assembled. A connecting portion 212 connects the outer box horizontal portion 172 to a front compartment rear portion 222, connected to a front compartment top 220 and the second end wall 125. A zip strip in the form of a tear strip 210 is provided between the connecting portion 212 and the front compartment rear portion 222. A finger hole 214 is defined within the front compartment rear portion 222 at a boundary with the tear strip 210. Two viewing holes 216 are defined within the front compartment top portion 220 and the front compartment rear portion 222 to enable viewing of the contents of the front compartment when the box 100 is fully assembled. The two viewing holes 216 are located away from the centre of the front compartment top portion 220 and the front compartment rear portion 222 to retain the structural strength of the centre of the front compartment rear portion 222 and the front compartment top portion 220 in the assembled packaging box 100. Three upper tabs 206 and three lower tabs 208 are provided on the outer box horizontal portion 172. The three upper tabs 206 are arranged to engage with the lid slots 202 when the box 100 is fully assembled to hold a centre portion of the lid 102 closed on the outer box horizontal portion 172. The three lower tabs 208 are arranged to engage with the base slots 204 when the box 100 is assembled to connect the centre portion of the lid 102 to a centre portion of the base section 121 via the outer box horizontal portion 172 which partitions the box 100. A tear tab 218 is provided within one of the side walls 130. The tear tab 218 is frangibly connected to the box 100. In a similar way to the description associated with Figure 9, the packaging box 100 also comprises a box insert 190, which is substantially as described previously, although it will be appreciated that the orientation and size of the lower locating holes 198 and the upper locating holes 200 are modified to ensure the holes 198, 200 line up with the returning portion of the lower tabs 208 and the upper tabs 206. During assembly of the packaging box 100, each of the three lower tabs 208 and the three upper tabs 206 are configured to pass outside the box 100 through a one of the pair of base slots 204 and a one of the pair of lid slots 202 respectively. A portion of each of the three lower tabs 208 and the three upper tabs 206 is also configured to pass back into the packaging box 100 through the other of the pair of base slots 204 and a one of the pair of lid slots 202 respectively, thereby securing the outer box horizontal portion 172 in place within the assembled packaging box 100.

[0061] Figure 14 is a series of illustrations of the inside of the packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 13, showing a method of packing cut plant matter in the packaging box. The cut plant matter may be, for example, herbs or beans. Step A shows a packaging box 100 assembled, with the lid 102 open, and without any produce in the box 100. A front compartment of the packaging box 100 is provided in a first, closed stable configuration. The front compartment top portion 220 and the front compartment rear portion 222 can each be seen in a closed configuration. In this position, the front compartment provides a structural function in the packaging box 100 and prevents the box 100 from bending. Step B shows a finger being inserted through the finger hole 214 provided in the front compartment rear portion 222. Steps C, D and E show the front compartment being opened up to a fully open configuration shown in Step E. It will be appreciated that both the closed and open configurations are two stable positions in an over-centre mechanism. Tabs visible in steps D and E, folded at each end of the front compartment rear portion 222 provide a further structural support to prevent buckling when the front compartment is in the closed configuration. Step F shows a bundle of cut plant matter prepared for insertion into the front compartment. The packing of the cut plant matter bundle will be explained in more detail below in relation to Figure 17. Step G shows the cut plant matter bundle inserted through a side of the front compartment, so that the bundle of cut plant matter sits behind the front compartment rear portion 222. As can be seen in Step H, the front compartment is then closed again by applying pressure onto the front compartment rear portion 222. Step I shows the front compartment fully closed, with the cut plant matter bundle visible through the viewing hole 216.

[0062] Although the present application refers to cut plant matter being inserted into the front compartment, it will be appreciated that any delicate food products may be inserted into the front compartment. The front compartment provides a protective compartment which can

be used to prevent damage to delicate foods. For example, the front compartment may be used to hold fragile leaf vegetables.

[0063] Figure 15 is a series of illustrations of a top of the packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 13, showing steps in a method of opening the packaging box. The box 100 has been taped substantially as described with reference to Figure 12 above, with the tape covering the exposed portions of each of the upper tabs 206. The tape finishes on the tear tab 218. To open the box 100, the tape must be removed. A customer can pull the tear tab 218 which is frangibly provided within the side wall 130 of the box 100. The tear tab 218 is configured to be detachable from the packaging box 100, but remains attached to the tape. Therefore, the tear tab 218 is usable as a handle for removing the tape from the top of the packed packaging box, releasing the upper tabs 206 and allowing a customer quick and easy access to the contents of the box. In some embodiments, the upper tabs 206 may also be frangibly connected to the outer box horizontal portion 172, such that the upper tabs 206 also come away when the tape is removed.

[0064] Figure 16 is an illustration of a step in a method of unpacking the contents of an assembled packaging box formed from the blanks shown in Figure 13. The tear strip 210 is configured to be removable from the packaging box 100 to provide a convenient way to release the front compartment and allow access to any food items stored in the front compartment. As well as making access to the front compartment easier, this also means that any food items still packaged in the box 100 on the connecting portion 212 need not be removed to get access to the front compartment. Although a tear strip 210 has been described, it will be appreciated that other techniques and features can also be used to allow for quick and easy opening of the front compartment. In some embodiments, the tear strip 210 may comprise a string member to aid in easy opening of the front compartment.

[0065] Figure 17 is a series of illustrations of a packaging member for packing cut plant matter for use in the packaging boxes according to embodiments of the present invention. It also illustrates a method of packing a delicate cut plant matter 304, for example a basil plant, for sending by mail. Step A shows a moisture retaining member in the form of a rolled-up strip of corrugated cardboard 302. In this particular embodiment, the rolled-up strip of cardboard 302 is formed from the same blank as that used to form the packaging box 100. The roll of cardboard 302 is saturated with water to provide moisture for the cut plant matter 304 when packaged. The water is typically held within the corrugations in the roll of cardboard 302. A cut end of the cut plant matter 304 is placed adjacent to the saturated roll of cardboard 302. This ensures that the stalks or stems or other cut end of the cut plant matter 304 receives the moisture in preference to the leaves. In this particular embodiment, the saturated roll of cardboard 302 is rolled around the cut end of the cut plant matter 304. A breathable member in the form of a plastics film 306 formed from Biaxially Oriented Polypropylene (BOPP) is placed around the combination of the cut plant matter 304 and the roll of cardboard 302 and wrapped up as shown in steps C and D. In this way, the plastics film 306 surrounds the cut plant matter 304 in order to retain moisture around the plant matter 304. Perforations in the plastics film 306 allow for the level of moisture to be controlled. It has been found that a sheet of approximately 200 x 300 millimetres is sufficient to surround the cut plant matter. The perforations are in a triangular tessellation with each hole 25 millimetres from other holes. Without perforations, moisture would build up and make the plant matter soggy. In some cases, too much moisture will even result in the cut plant matter going mouldy. As shown in Step F, the package of cut plant matter 304 is fastened with a piece of tape at the end of the package where the roll of cardboard 302 is located. An opposite end of the package is left open to allow moisture to escape from an end of the cut plant matter 304 opposite the cut end. Typically, the end of the cut plant matter 304 opposite the cut end is provided with leaves.

[0066] Although the described embodiments show that the box insert 190 is formed from the same material as the rest of the packaging box 100, it will be appreciated that the box insert 190 may instead be formed from a different material, or from the same material having different properties, for example finish, thickness or colour.

[0067] Although the presently described embodiments have featured only one shape of partition in each packaging box 100, it will be appreciated that different partition cross-sectional shapes can be provided in a single packaging box 100.

[0068] The packaging box may be sized to minimise the postage payable for delivery. For example, the packaging box may have a length less than 45cm, a width less than 35cm and a depth less than 8cm in order to meet the requirements of a "small parcel" under UK postage rules. In particular, the packaging box may be dimensioned to fit through a standard letter box. The presently preferred configuration has a width of 18.4cm, a length of 45cm and a depth of 3.8cm. This size has been found to fit through most letterboxes. A smaller version with a width of 18cm, a length of 35cm and a depth of 2.5cm is also feasible and has the advantage that it meets the requirements of a "large letter" under UK postage rules.

[0069] In summary, a packaging box 100 for mailing fruit and vegetables for delivery to the home comprises a box body 114 configured to receive the fruit or vegetables, a lid 102 configured to close the box body to provide a closed box, and at least one partitioning member 106 configured to divide the box body into at least two compartments. The partitioning member 106 is configured for attachment to the lid 102, whereby to connect the lid 102 to the box body 114 when the box is closed.

[0070] Throughout the description and claims of this specification, the words "comprise" and "contain" and

variations of them mean "including but not limited to", and they are not intended to (and do not) exclude other components, integers or steps. Throughout the description and claims of this specification, the singular encompasses the plural unless the context otherwise requires. In particular, where the indefinite article is used, the specification is to be understood as contemplating plurality as well as singularity, unless the context requires otherwise.

[0071] Features, integers or groups described in conjunction with a particular aspect, embodiment or example of the invention are to be understood to be applicable to any other aspect, embodiment or example described herein unless incompatible therewith. All of the features disclosed in this specification (including any accompanying claims, abstract and drawings), and/or all of the steps of any method or process so disclosed, may be combined in any combination, except combinations where at least some of such features and/or steps are mutually exclusive. The invention is not restricted to the details of any foregoing embodiments. The invention extends to any novel one, or any novel combination, of the features disclosed in this specification (including any accompanying claims, abstract and drawings), or to any novel one, or any novel combination, of the steps of any method or process so disclosed.

Claims

1. A packaging box (100) for mailing fruit and vegetables for delivery to the home, the box comprising:

   a box body (114) configured to receive the fruit or vegetables;
   a lid (102) configured to close the box body, whereby to provide a closed box, and
   at least one partitioning member (106) configured to divide the box body into at least two compartments,
   wherein the partitioning member is configured for attachment to the lid, whereby to connect the lid to the box body when the box is closed,
   wherein the box body comprises a base panel (121) and **characterised in that** the at least one partitioning member is configured for attachment to the base panel, whereby to connect the base panel to the lid when the box is closed,
   wherein the partitioning member comprises at least one lower projecting member (138), and the base panel has defined therein at least one lower hole (122) for receiving the lower projecting member, whereby to connect the base panel to the partitioning member when the box is closed, and
   wherein the lower projecting member is a projecting tab (138) secured adhesively to an outer surface of the base panel.

2. A packaging box as claimed in claim 1, wherein the partitioning member comprises at least one upper projecting member (118), and the lid has defined therein at least one upper hole (116) for receiving the upper projecting member, whereby to connect the lid to the partitioning member when the box is closed.

3. A packaging box as claimed in claim 2, wherein the upper projecting member is a projecting tab (116) configured to be secured adhesively to an outer surface of the lid.

4. A packaging box as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the lid has defined therein a window (120) and wherein the box further comprises a support shelf (112) arranged between the box body and the lid, the support shelf providing a barrier between the window and the interior of the box body.

5. A packaging box as claimed in claim 4 in combination with claim 2 or any preceding claim dependent thereon, wherein the support shelf is configured to engage the upper projecting member whereby to guide the upper projecting member through the upper holes when the lid is closed.

6. A packaging box as claimed in claim 4 or claim 5, wherein the support shelf comprises at least one retaining member (126) for retaining a document in position on the support shelf relative to the window.

7. A packaging box as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the box is formed from corrugated cardboard.

8. A blank for forming a packaging box as claimed in any preceding claim.

9. A method of packaging cut plant matter (304), comprising:

   providing a moisture retaining member (302) adjacent a cut end of cut plant matter; surrounding the cut plant matter and the moisture retaining member by a porous plastics sheet member (306),
   wherein the moisture retaining member is formed from a strip of corrugated cardboard,
   wherein the method further comprises the steps of separating the moisture retaining member from the blank as claimed in claim 8 when dependent on claim 7,
   assembling the packaging box as claimed in claim 7 from the blank as claimed in claim 8,
   packing the cut plant matter in the packaging box.

10. The method of packaging cut plant matter as claimed in claim 9, wherein the moisture retaining member is formed from a rolled strip of corrugated cardboard.

Patentansprüche

1. Verpackungskarton (100) für den Postversand von Obst und Gemüse für eine Zustellung an einen Haushalt, wobei der Karton folgendes umfasst:

einen Kartonkörper (114), der so gestaltet ist, dass er das Obst oder das Gemüse aufnimmt;
einen Deckel (102), der so gestaltet ist, dass er den Kartonkörper verschließt, wodurch ein geschlossener Karton bereitgestellt wird, und
mindestens ein Unterteilungselement (106), das so gestaltet ist, dass es den Kartonkörper in mindestens zwei Kammern unterteilt,
wobei das Unterteilungselement für eine Befestigung an dem Deckel gestaltet ist, um den Deckel dadurch mit dem Kartonkörper zu verbinden, wenn der Karton geschlossen ist,
wobei der Kartonkörper eine Grundplatte (121) umfasst, und **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das mindestens eine Unterteilungselement für eine Befestigung an der Grundplatte gestaltet ist, um die Grundplatte dadurch mit dem Deckel zu verbinden, wenn der Karton geschlossen ist,
wobei das Unterteilungselement mindestens ein unteres vorstehendes Element (138) umfasst, und wobei in der Grundplatte mindestens eine untere Öffnung (122) zur Aufnahme des unteren vorstehenden Elements definiert ist, um die Grundplatte dadurch mit dem Unterteilungselement zu verbinden, wenn der Karton geschlossen ist, und
wobei das untere vorstehende Element ein vorstehender Ansatz (138) ist, der durch eine Klebeverbindung an einer äußeren Oberfläche der Grundplatte gesichert ist.

2. Verpackungskarton nach Anspruch 1, wobei das Unterteilungselement mindestens ein oberes vorstehendes Element (118) umfasst, und wobei in dem Deckel mindestens eine obere Öffnung (116) zur Aufnahme des oberen vorstehenden Elements definiert ist, um dadurch den Deckel mit dem Unterteilungselement zu verbinden, wenn der Karton geschlossen ist.

3. Verpackungskarton nach Anspruch 2, wobei das obere vorstehende Element ein vorstehender Ansatz (116) ist, der so gestaltet ist, dass er durch eine Klebeverbindung an einer äußeren Oberfläche des Deckels befestigt werden kann.

4. Verpackungskarton nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche, wobei in dem Deckel ein Fenster (120) definiert ist, und wobei der Karton ferner ein Stützbrett (112) umfasst, das zwischen dem Kartonkörper und dem Deckel angeordnet ist, wobei das Stützbrett eine Barriere zwischen dem Fenster und dem Inneren des Kartonkörpers bereitstellt.

5. Verpackungskarton nach Anspruch 4 in Kombination mit Anspruch 2 oder einem davon abhängigen vorstehenden Anspruch, wobei das Stützbrett für einen Eingriff mit dem oberen vorstehenden Element gestaltet ist, um dadurch das obere vorstehende Element durch die oberen Öffnungen zu führen, wenn der Deckel geschlossen wird.

6. Verpackungskarton nach Anspruch 4 oder Anspruch 5, wobei das Stützbrett mindestens ein Halteelement (126) zum Halten eines Dokuments an einer Position an dem Stützbrett im Verhältnis zu dem Fenster umfasst.

7. Verpackungskarton nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche, wobei der Karton aus Wellpappe besteht.

8. Rohling zur Gestaltung eines Verpackungskartons nach einem der vorstehenden Ansprüche.

9. Verfahren zur Verpackung von geschnittenem Pflanzenmaterial, wobei das Verfahren folgendes umfasst:

Bereitstellen eines Feuchtigkeit speichernden Elements (302) angrenzend an des Schnittende des geschnittenen Pflanzenmaterials;
Umgeben des geschnittenen Pflanzenmaterials und des Feuchtigkeit speichernden Elements mit einem porösen Plastikfolienelement (306),
wobei das Feuchtigkeit speichernde Element aus einem Streifen Wellpappe gebildet wird,
wobei das Verfahren ferner die folgenden Schritte umfasst:

Trennen des Feuchtigkeit speichernden Elements von dem Rohling nach Anspruch 8 in Abhängigkeit von Anspruch 7,
Zusammenbauen des Verpackungskartons nach Anspruch 7 aus dem Rohling nach Anspruch 8,
Verpacken des geschnittenen Pflanzenmaterials in dem Verpackungskarton.

10. Verfahren zur Verpackung von geschnittenem Pflanzenmaterial nach Anspruch 9, wobei das Feuchtigkeit speichernde Element aus einem aufgerollten Streifen Wellpappe gebildet wird.

Revendications

1. Boîte d'emballage (100) pour expédier des fruits et légumes à livrer à domicile, la boîte comprenant :

   un corps de boîte (114) conçu pour recevoir les fruits ou légumes ;
   un couvercle (102) conçu pour fermer le corps de boîte, afin de fournir une boîte fermée, et
   au moins un élément de séparation (106) conçu pour diviser le corps de boîte en au moins deux compartiments,
   l'élément de séparation étant conçu pour être fixé au couvercle, ce qui permet de raccorder le couvercle au corps de boîte lorsque la boîte est fermée,
   le corps de boîte comprenant un panneau de base (121) et étant **caractérisé en ce que** l'au moins un élément de séparation est conçu pour être fixé au panneau de base, ce qui permet de raccorder le panneau de base au couvercle lorsque la boîte est fermée,
   l'élément de séparation comprenant au moins un élément saillant inférieur (138), et le panneau de base ayant défini en son sein au moins un trou inférieur (122) pour recevoir l'élément saillant inférieur, ce qui permet de raccorder le panneau de base à l'élément de séparation lorsque la boîte est fermée, et
   l'élément saillant inférieur étant une patte saillante (138) fixée de manière adhésive à une surface extérieure du panneau de base.

2. Boîte d'emballage selon la revendication 1, l'élément de séparation comprenant au moins un élément saillant supérieur (118), et le couvercle ayant défini en son sein au moins un trou supérieur (116) pour recevoir l'élément saillant supérieur, ce qui permet de raccorder le couvercle à l'élément de séparation lorsque la boîte est fermée.

3. Boîte d'emballage selon la revendication 2, l'élément saillant supérieur étant une patte saillante (116) conçue pour être fixée de manière adhésive à une surface extérieure du couvercle.

4. Boîte d'emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, le couvercle ayant défini en son sein une fenêtre (120) et la boîte comprenant en outre une tablette de support (112) disposée entre le corps de boîte et le couvercle, la tablette de support fournissant une barrière entre la fenêtre et l'intérieur du corps de boîte.

5. Boîte d'emballage selon la revendication 4 en combinaison avec la revendication 2 ou toute revendication précédente dépendant de celle-ci, la tablette de support étant conçue pour venir en prise avec l'élément saillant supérieur ce qui permet de guider l'élément saillant supérieur à travers les trous supérieurs lorsque le couvercle est fermé.

6. Boîte d'emballage selon la revendication 4 ou la revendication 5, la tablette de support comprenant au moins un élément de retenue (126) pour maintenir un document en position sur la tablette de support par rapport à la fenêtre.

7. Boîte d'emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, la boîte étant formée à partir de carton ondulé.

8. Découpe pour former une boîte d'emballage selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes.

9. Procédé d'emballage de matière végétale coupée (304), comprenant les étapes consistant à :

   fournir un élément de rétention d'humidité (302) adjacent à une extrémité coupée de matière végétale coupée ;
   entourer la matière végétale coupée et l'élément de rétention d'humidité par un élément en feuille de plastique poreux (306),
   l'élément de rétention d'humidité étant formé à partir d'une bande de carton ondulé,
   le procédé comprenant en outre les étapes consistant à séparer l'élément de rétention d'humidité de la découpe selon la revendication 8 lorsqu'elle dépend de la revendication 7, à assembler la boîte d'emballage selon la revendication 7 à partir de la découpe selon la revendication 8, à emballer la matière végétale coupée dans la boîte d'emballage.

10. Procédé d'emballage de matière végétale coupée selon la revendication 9, l'élément de rétention d'humidité étant formé d'une bande laminée en carton ondulé.

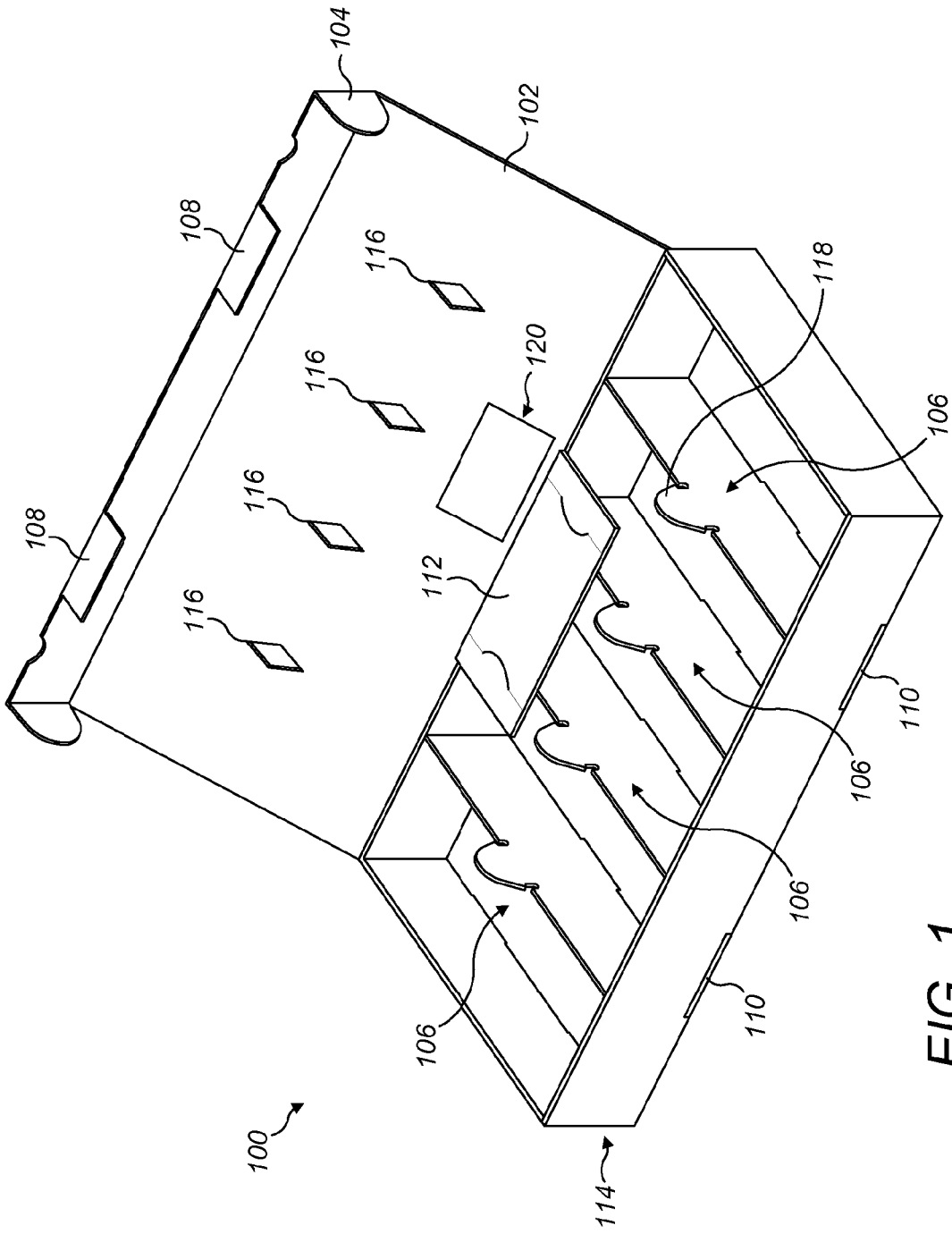
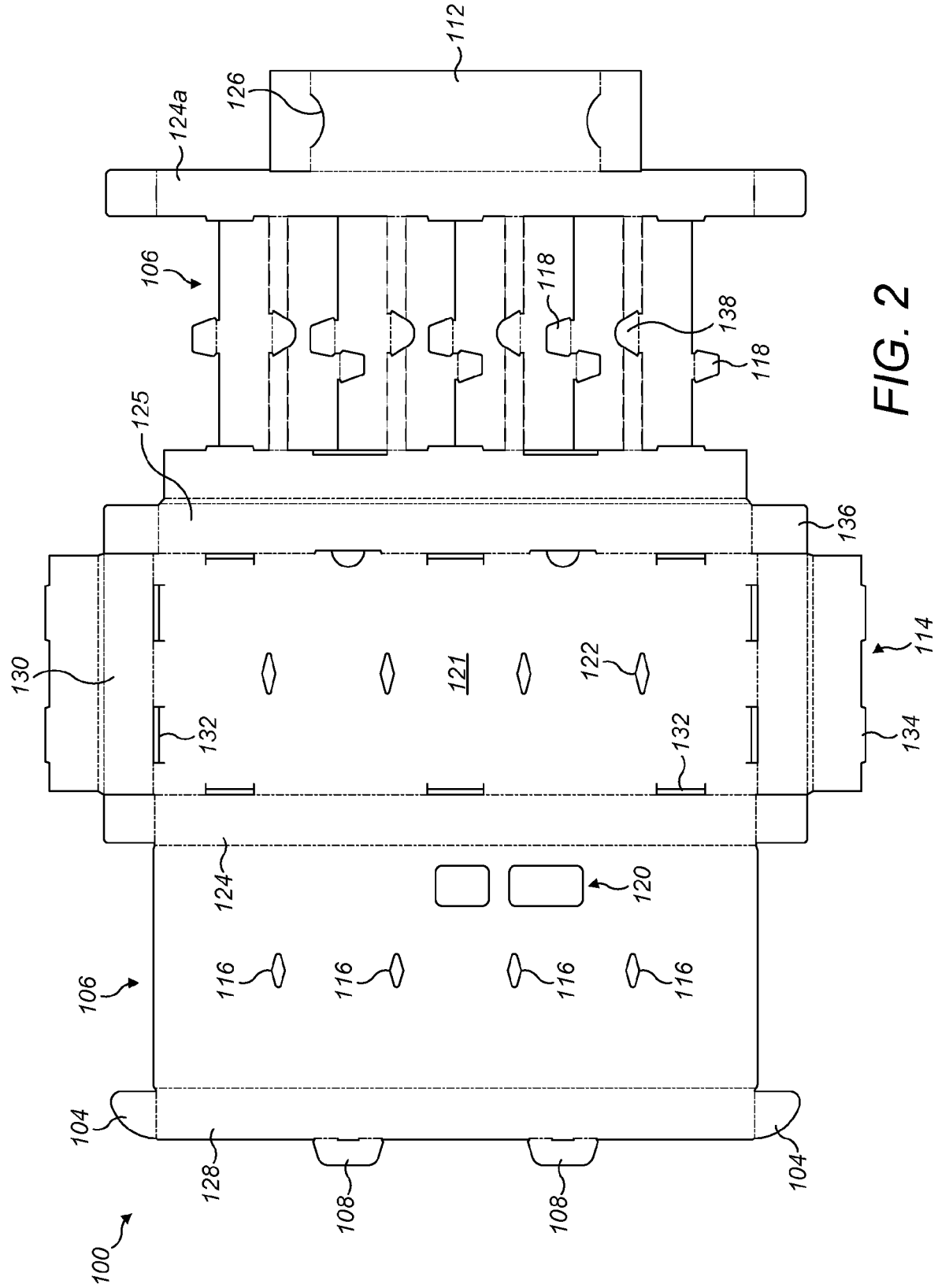


FIG. 1


112
126
124a
106
118
138
118
125
136
130
121
122
114
132
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134
124
120
106
116
116
116
116
104
128
108
108
104
100

FIG. 2

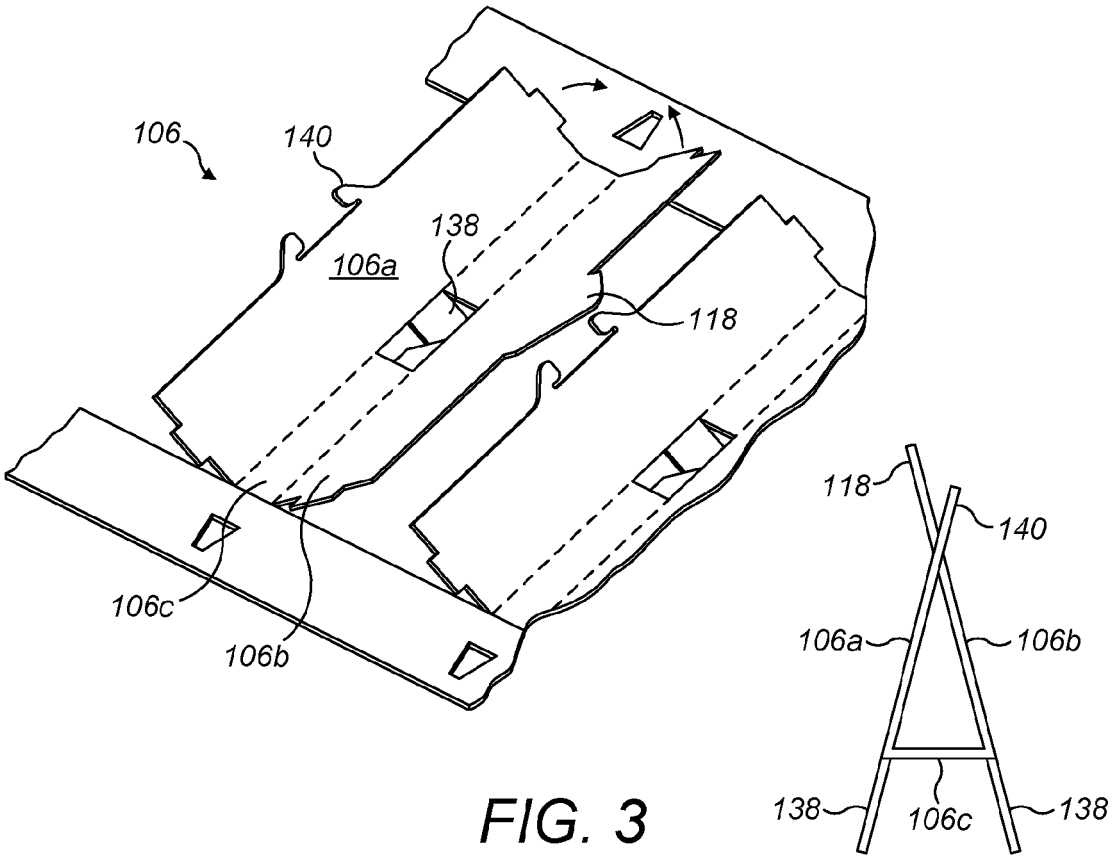

106
140
138
106a
118
106c
106b
118
140
106a
106b
138
106c
138

FIG. 3

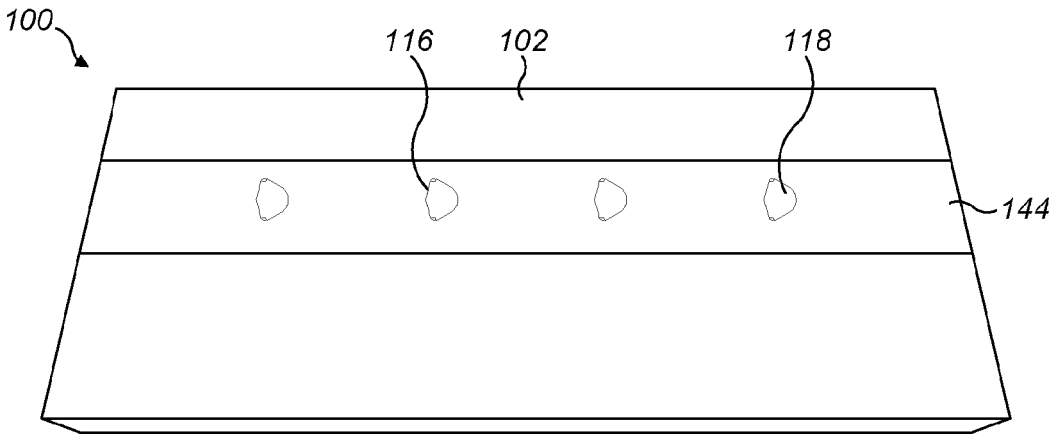

100
116
102
118
144

FIG. 4

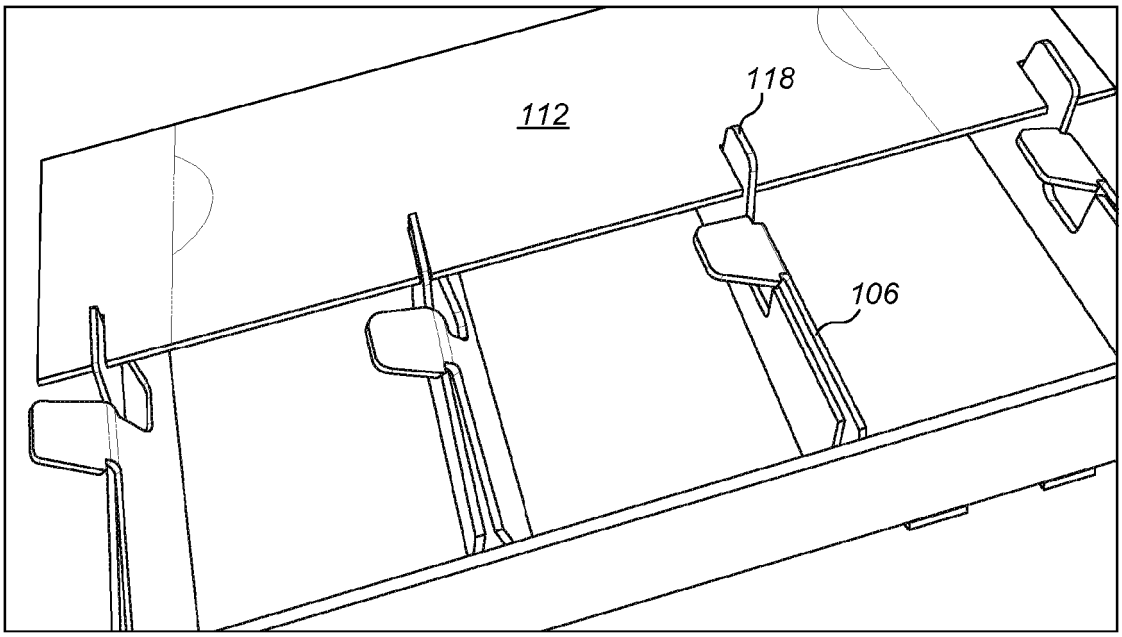
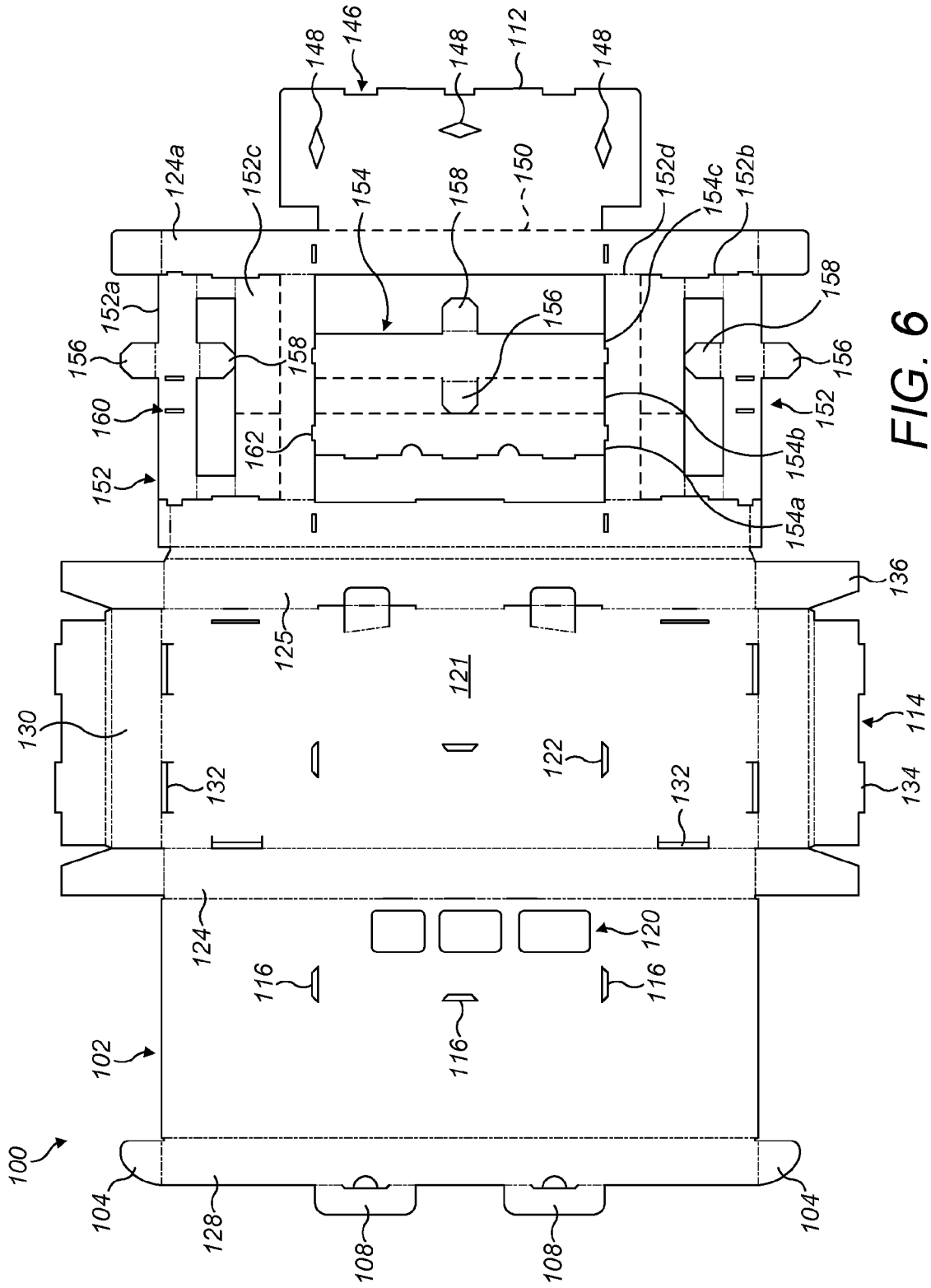


FIG. 5


100
102
104
104
108
108
112
114
116
116
116
120
121
122
124
124a
125
128
130
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132
134
136
146
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148
148
150
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FIG. 6

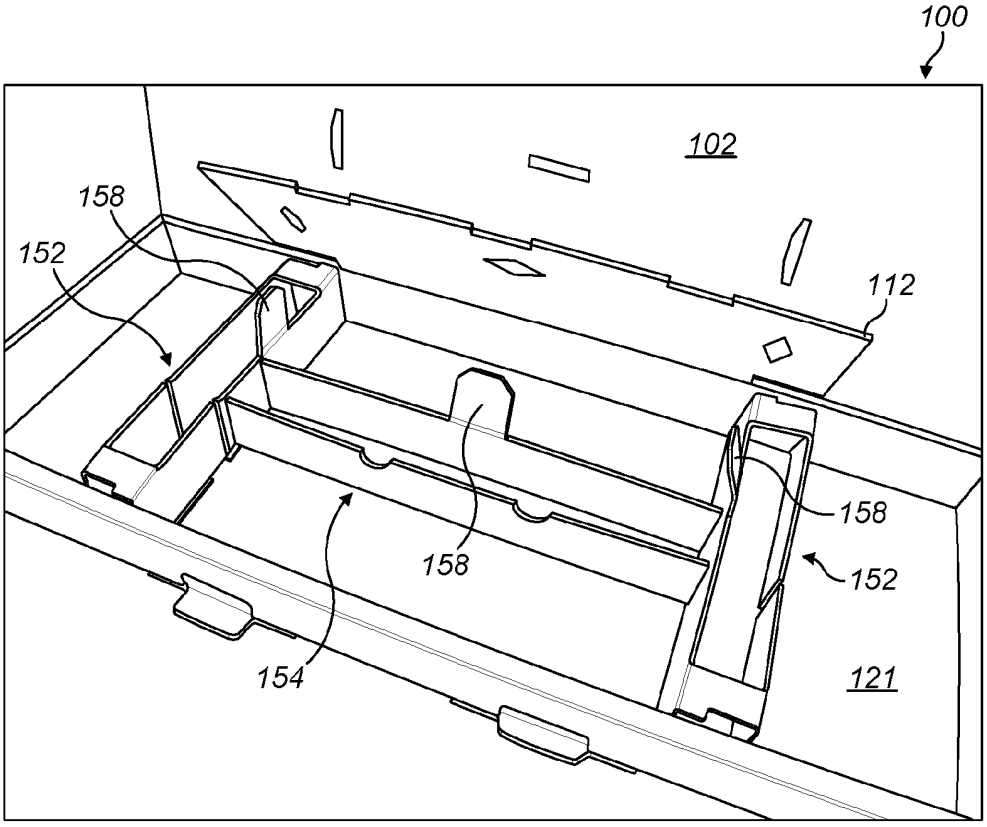


FIG. 7

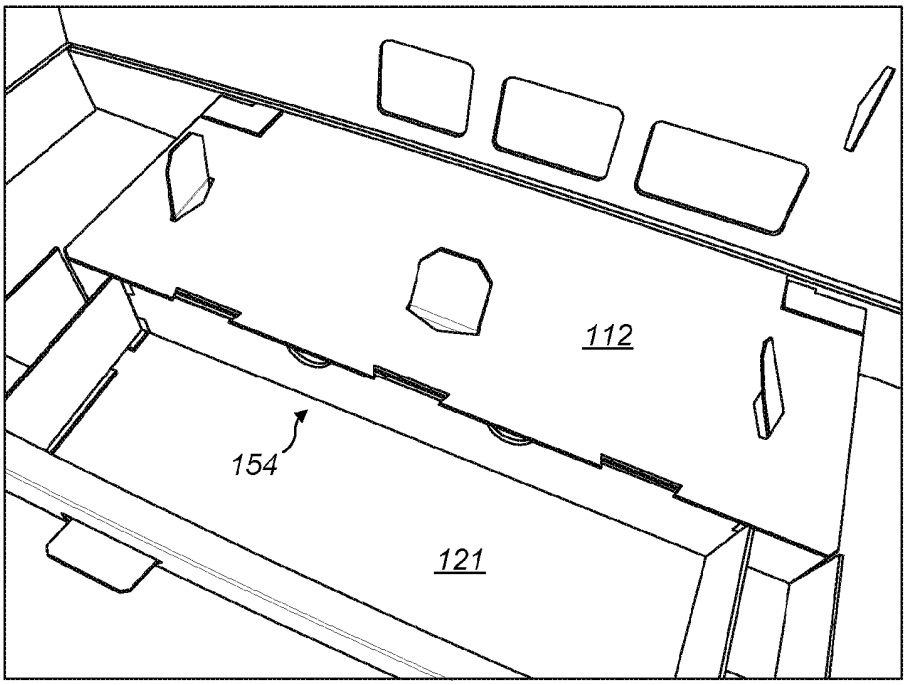
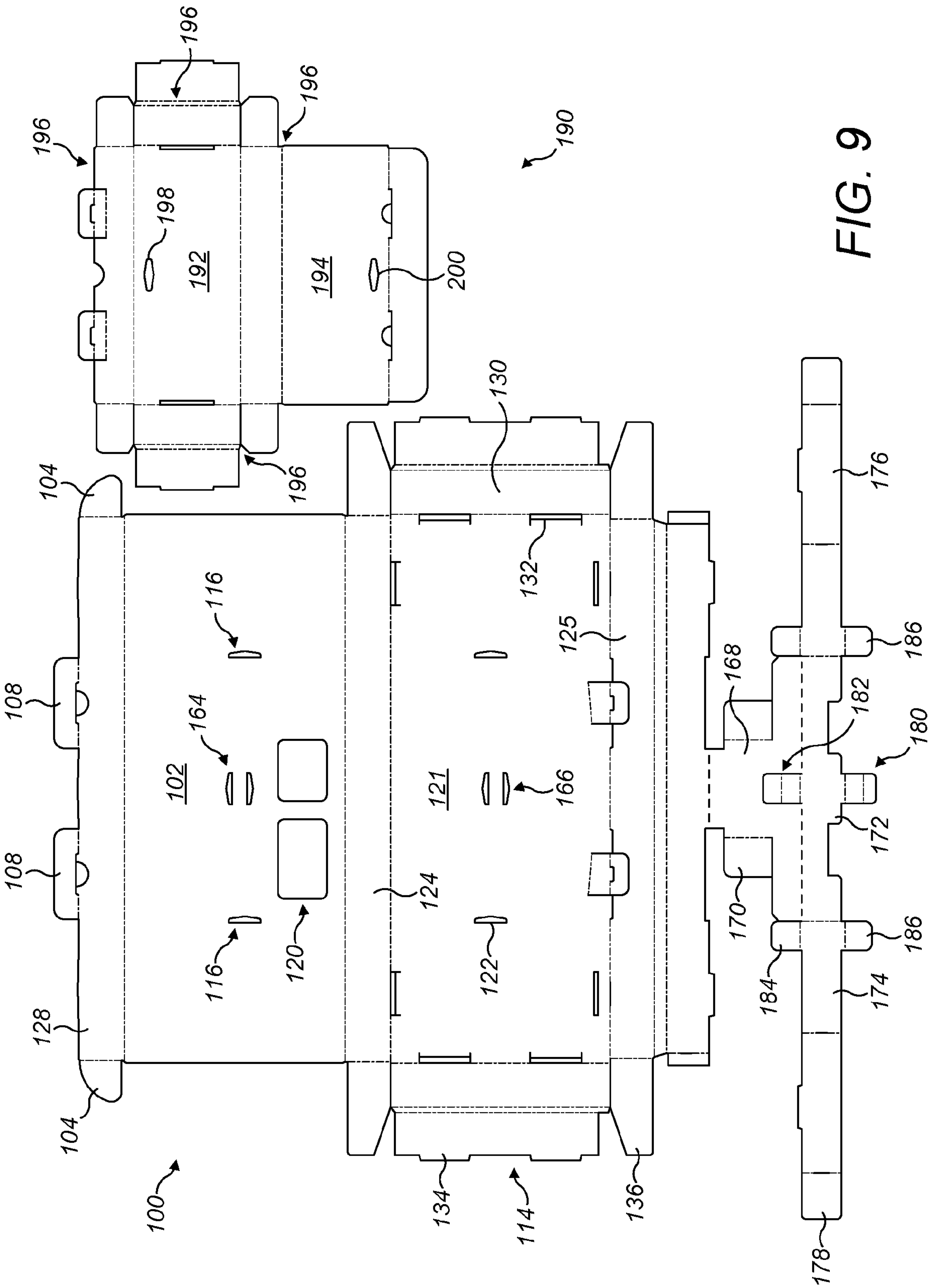


FIG. 8


196
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190
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192
194
200
196
104
108
108
104
128
116
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116
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130
132
125
168
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134
114
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176
186
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180
172
170
186
184
174
178
100

FIG. 9

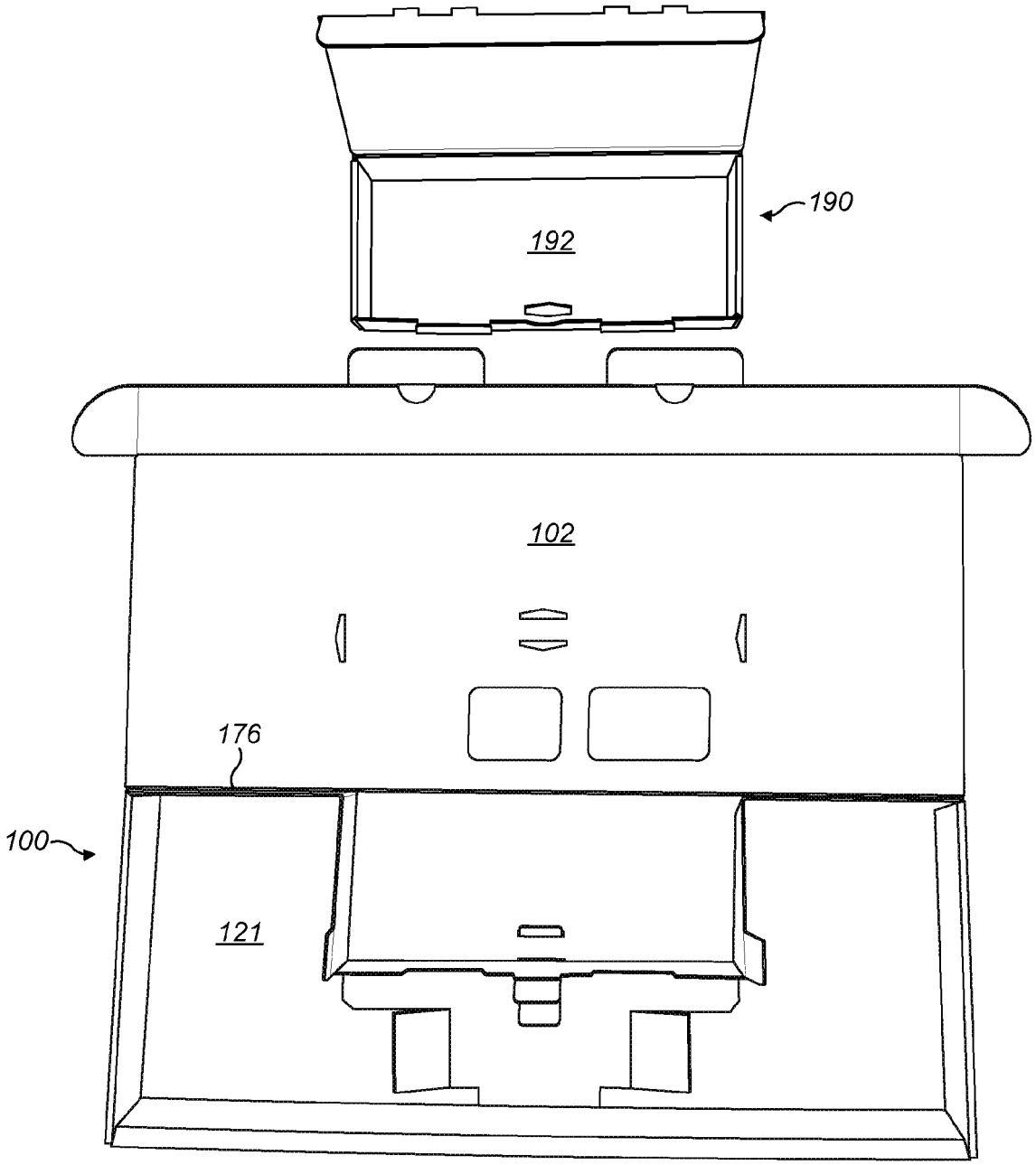

FIG. 10

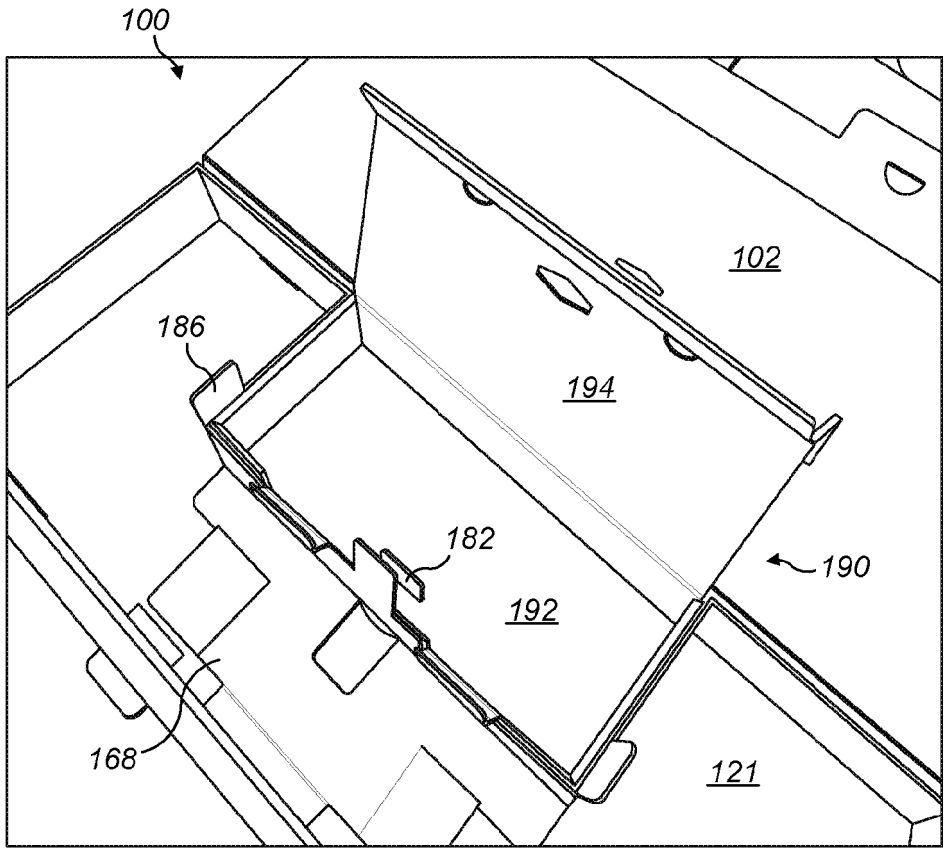

FIG. 11

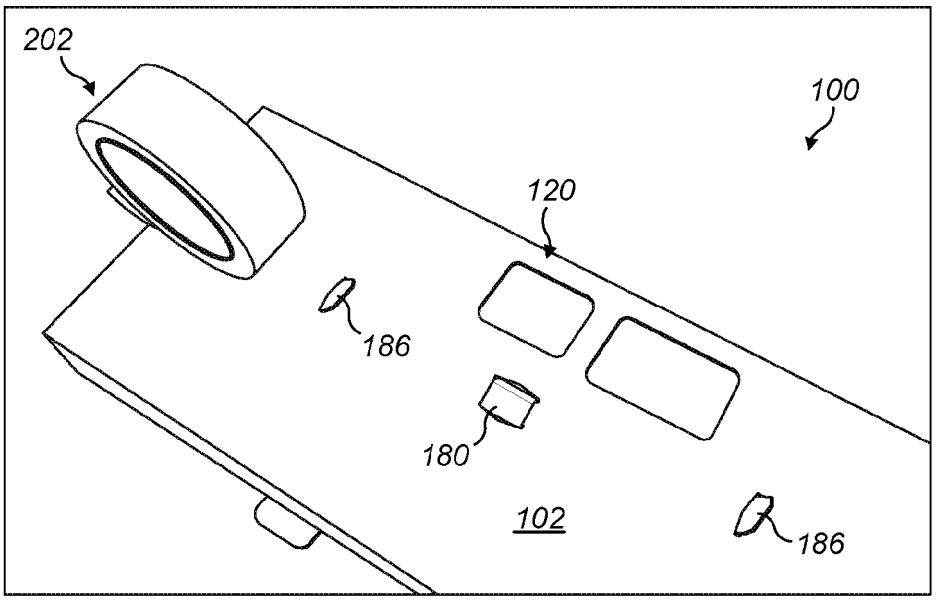

FIG. 12

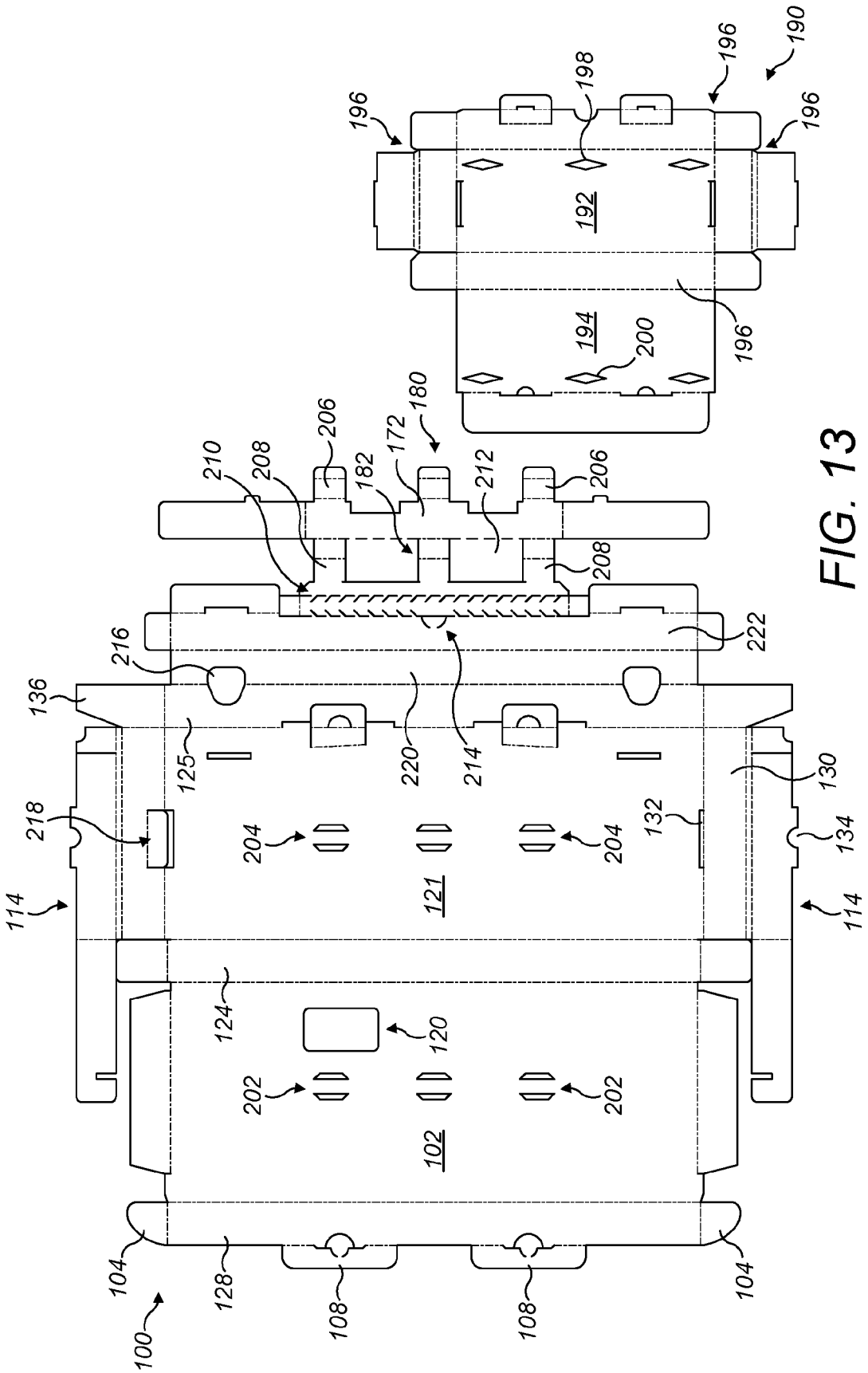
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FIG. 13

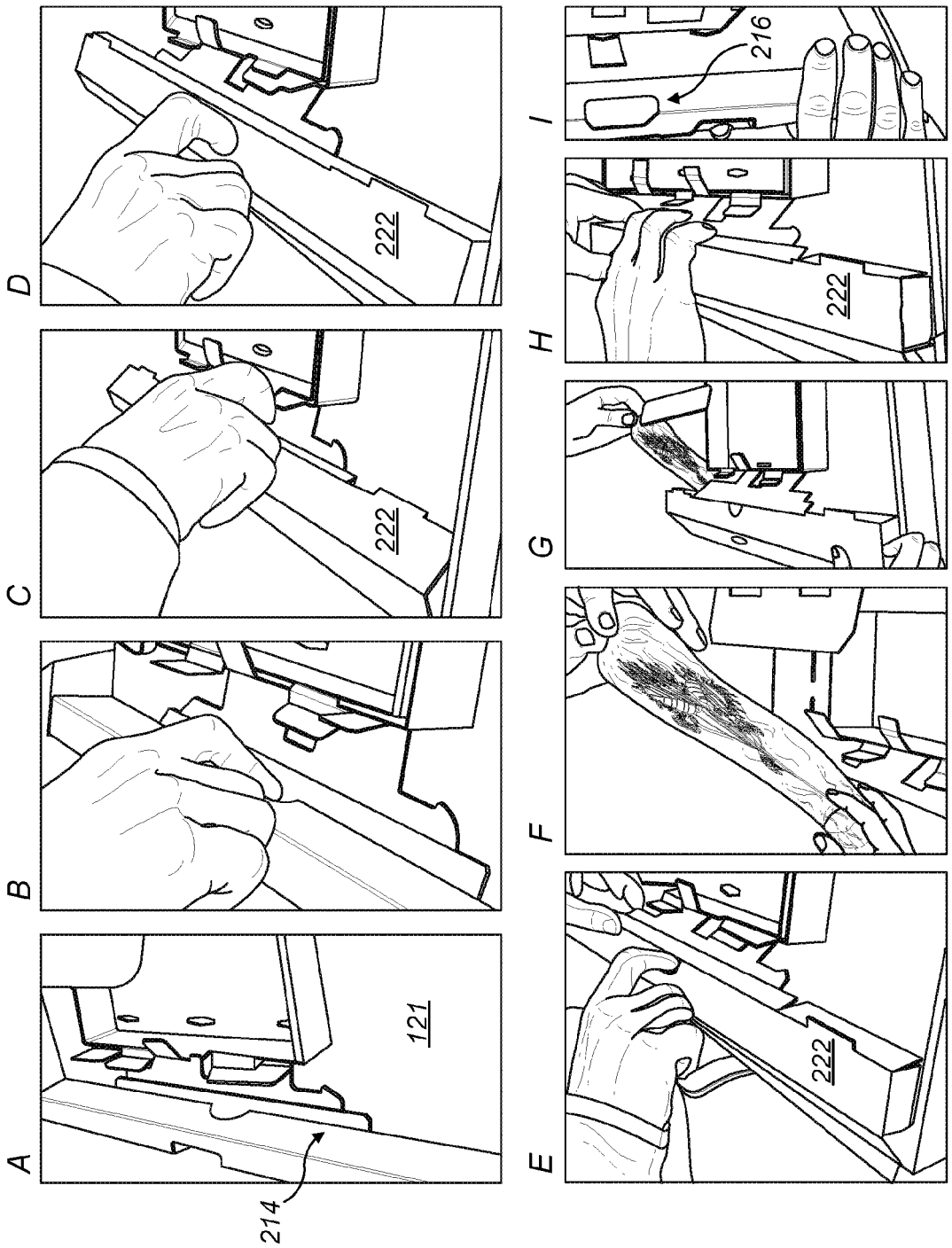

FIG. 14

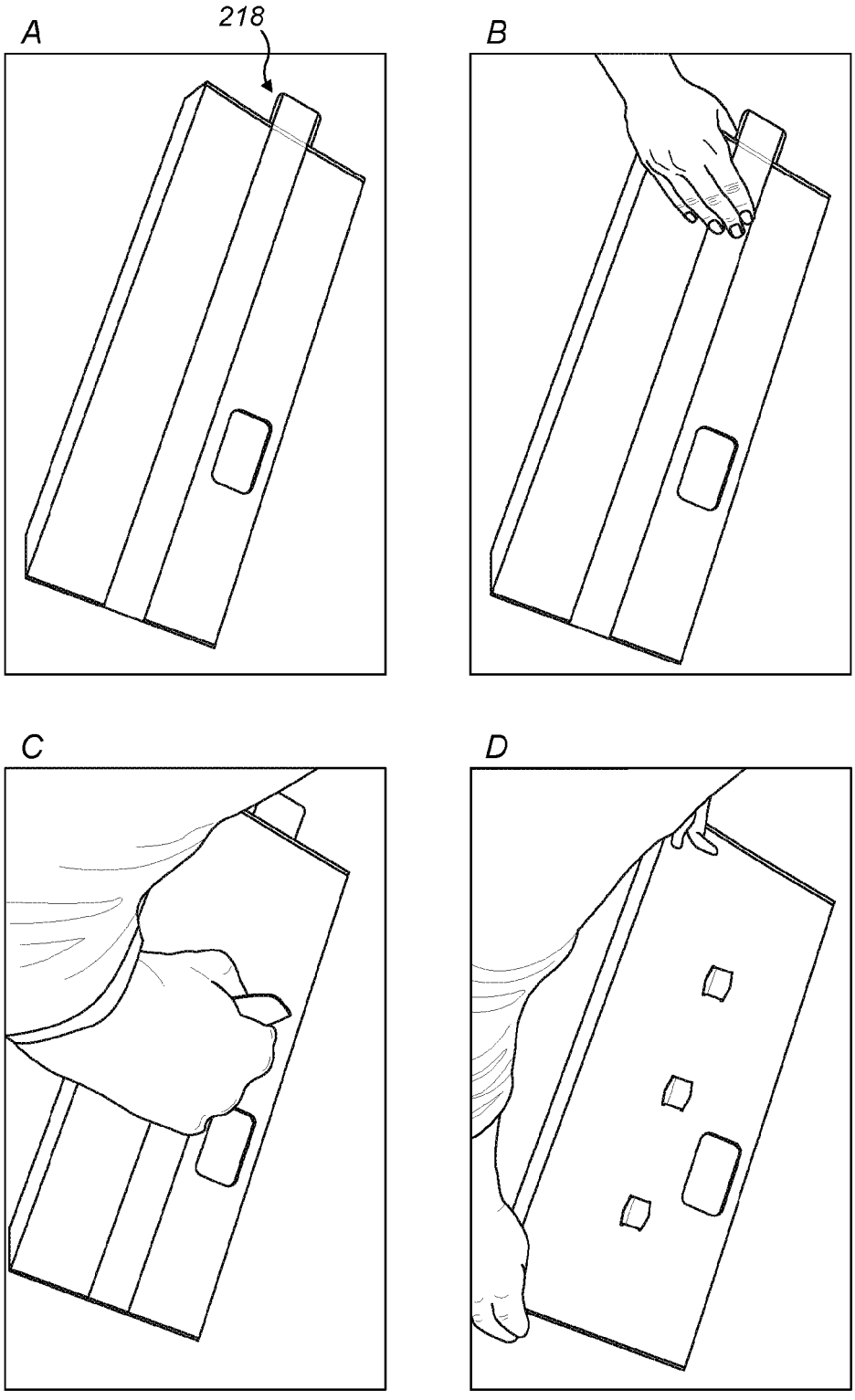

FIG. 15

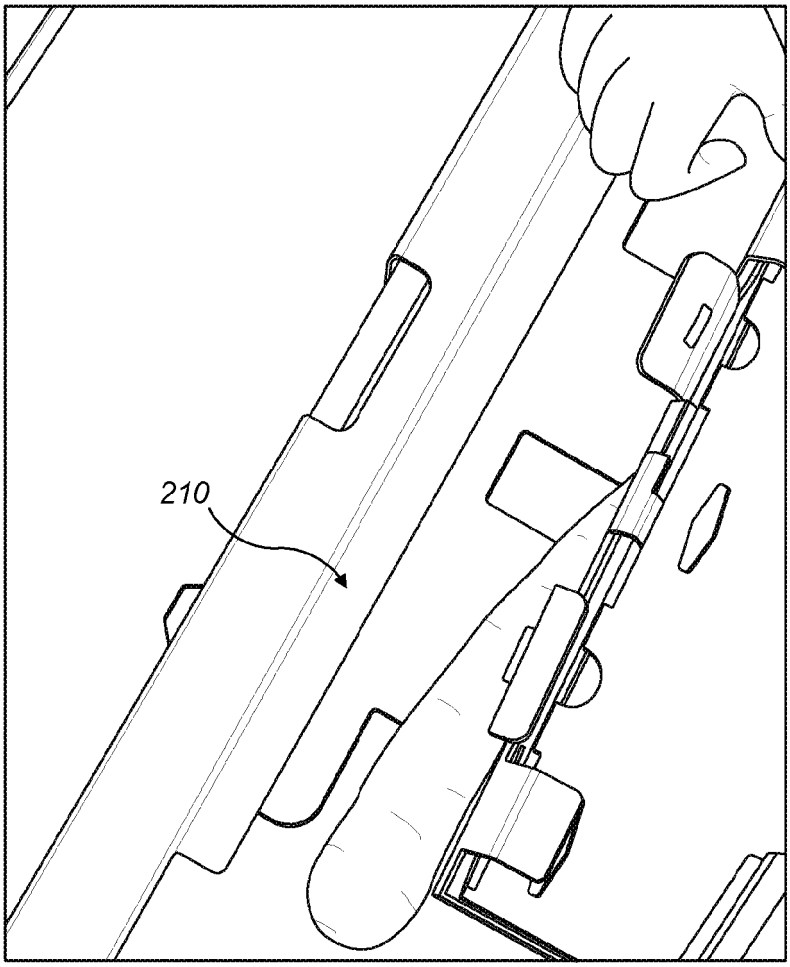

FIG. 16

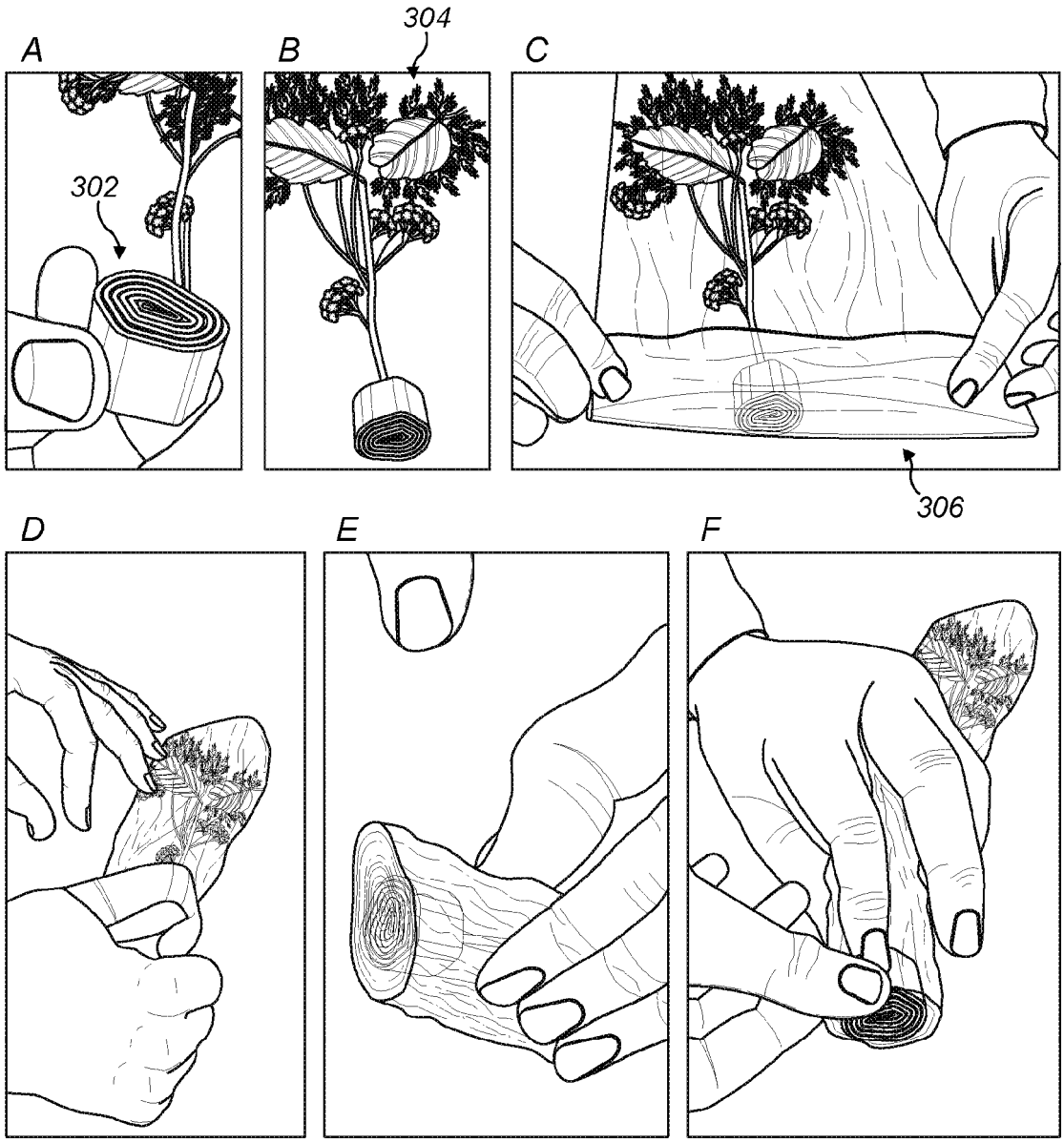

FIG. 17

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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Patent documents cited in the description

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