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(71) Applicant: **TETRA LAVAL HOLDINGS & FINANCE S.A.** [CH/CH]; 70, Avenue Général-Guisan, CH-1009 PULLY (CH).

(72) Inventors: **STURESSON, Göran**; Ejdvägen 1z, 227 33 Lund (SE). **LINDSTEDT, Mikael**; Bäckahästgatan 45, 212 33 Malmö (SE). **CARLSSON, Lars**; Björkvägen 7, 224 56 Lund (SE).

(74) Agent: **TETRA PAK - PATENT ATTORNEYS SE**; AB Tetra Pak, Patent Department Ruben, Rausing's gata, 221 86 LUND (SE).

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(54) Title: PRESSURE UNIT

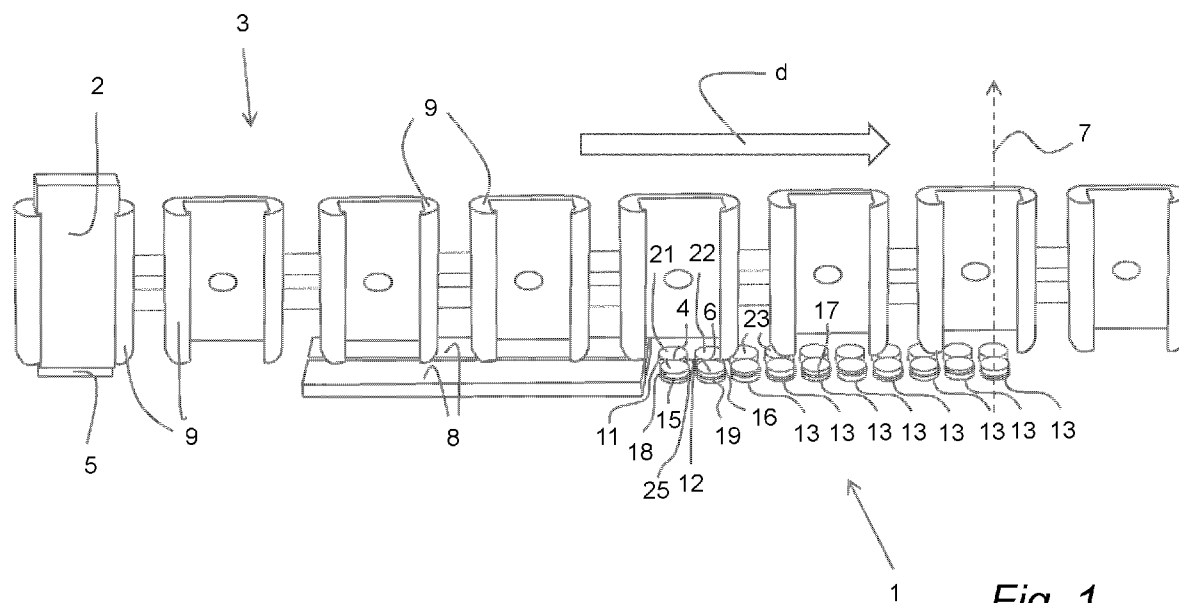


Fig. 1

(57) Abstract: The invention relates to a pressure unit (1) for sealing a package (2) for a food product, comprising a conveyor (3) for transporting the package (2) through the pressure unit (1) in a travelling direction (d), a first rotatable pressure roller (11) and a first rotatable anvil roller (21). The first pressure roller (11) is arranged opposite to the first anvil roller (21) to form a first nip (4) for receiving and rotationally engage with a portion (5) of the package, and arranged downstream of the first pressure roller (11) and the first anvil roller (21) in the travelling direction, a second rotatable pressure roller (12) and a second rotatable anvil roller (22). The second pressure roller (12) is arranged opposite to the second anvil roller (22) to form a second nip (6) for receiving and rotationally engage with the portion (5) of the package. The first anvil roller (21) and the second anvil roller (22), respectively, has a smooth rim surface (25). The first pressure roller (11) comprises a first bulge (15) extending annularly around its rim surface (18), the second pressure roller (12) comprises a second bulge (16) extending annularly around its rim surface (19), and the first bulge (15) is offset in relation

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PRESSURE UNIT

Technical field

The invention relates to pressure unit for sealing a package for a food product. More particular, the invention relates to a pressure unit according to the introductory parts of claim 1. The invention further relates to a method for
5 sealing a package for a food product using such a pressure unit.

Background art

Many pourable food products, such as fruit juice, UHT milk, wine, tomato sauce, etc., are sold in packages made of sterilized packaging
10 material.

A typical example of this type of package is the parallelepiped-shaped package for liquid or pourable food products made by folding and sealing laminated strip packaging material.

The packaging material has a multilayer structure substantially
15 comprising a base layer for stiffness and strength, which may comprise a layer of fibrous material, e.g. paper, or mineral-filled polypropylene material; and a number of layers of heat-seal plastic material, e.g. polyethylene films, covering both sides of the base layer.

In the case of aseptic packages for long-storage products, such as
20 UHT milk, the packaging material also comprises a layer of gas- and light-barrier material, e.g. aluminium foil or ethyl vinyl alcohol (EVOH) film, which is superimposed on a layer of heat-seal plastic material, and is in turn covered with another layer of heat-seal plastic material forming the inner face of the package eventually contacting the food product.

25 As is known, packages of this sort are produced on fully automatic packaging units, on which the packages .e.g. are made by sheets, arriving pre-folded to a cylinder and sealed along a longitudinal overlap, the cylinders having crease lines to enable a rectangular cross-section. This cylinder is then transversally sealed and folded at its top so as to form a receptacle for
30 food placing the open bottom upwards.

The next steps are to pour food into the package and seal the bottom portion with a transversal sealing to fully enclose the food in the package.

In such automated machines the packages or pre-stages thereof are often moved along conveyor lines. While being transported in these conveyor
5 lines the bottom and top transversal sealings are made without stopping the transportation of the packages.

The sealing units for performing the seal of the bottom and top of the package is made by sliding the portions that are to be sealed by a longitudinal induction heating device while pressing the edges that are to be sealed
10 together between a row of pressure roller that apply a pressure onto the portions of the packages with support of a row of anvil roller on the other side of the portions of the packages that are to be sealed. On these roller there has traditionally been a placed an annular bulge or ridge for locally applying a higher pressure along a line in the sealing resulting in a recess in the sealing
15 running as a line along the transversal sealing.

It has been discovered that transversal sealing in automated machines of the above, where sealings are made by sliding the package through a sealing unit, sometimes have the drawback that air is trapped in the sealing weakening the seal. It is thus a need for improvements in these kinds of
20 sealing devices.

Summary of the invention

It is an object of the present invention to mitigate, alleviate or eliminate one or more of the above-identified deficiencies in the art and disadvantages
25 singly or in any combination and solve at least the above mentioned problem.

According to a first aspect, these and other objects are achieved in full, or at least in part, by a pressure unit for sealing a package for a food product, comprising a conveyor for transporting said package through the pressure unit in a travelling direction. The pressure unit further comprises a first
30 rotatable pressure roller and a first rotatable anvil roller, wherein the first pressure roller is arranged opposite to the first anvil roller to form a first nip for receiving and rotationally engage with a portion of the package, and

arranged downstream of the first pressure roller and the first anvil roller in the travelling direction, and a second rotatable pressure roller and a second rotatable anvil roller, the second pressure roller being arranged opposite to the second anvil roller to form a second nip for receiving and rotationally
5 engage with the portion of the package. The first pressure roller comprises a first bulge extending annularly around its rim surface, and the second pressure roller comprises a second bulge extending annularly around its rim surface. The first bulge is offset in relation to the second bulge in an axial direction of the first pressure roller and the second pressure roller. The first
10 anvil roller and the second anvil roller, respectively, may have a substantially smooth rim surface.

By the offset in the bulge position the bulge will apply extra pressure to different parts of the sealing thereby forcing any trapped air to move. The end result is surprisingly that most air is removed from the sealing by using the
15 pressure unit according to the invention.

The first and second bulge may have a profile comprising a curvature to try to affect the direction of movement of air trapped in the sealing. It is preferred to move the air out of the sealing but not into the package. With a top sealing any trapped air should preferably be moved in the bottom-to-top
20 direction and with a bottom sealing any trapped air should preferably be moved in the top-to-bottom direction.

The first and second bulge may have a radius of between 0,3 mm and 1,5 mm, preferably about 0,7 mm.

The curvature of the first bulge may differ from said curvature of the
25 second bulge. The reason could e.g. be to apply a different amount of pressure from different bulges.

The curvature of the second bulge may be wider than the first bulge.

The pressure unit may further comprising one or more additional pressure rollers and anvil rollers arranged in the same way as and further
30 downstream of the first pressure roller and the first anvil roller, and the second pressure roller and the second anvil roller, in the travelling direction.

The bulges of the pressure rollers, arranged downstream of the first pressure roller in the travelling direction, may be arranged with a subsequently increasing offset in relation to the first bulge of the first pressure roller. In that way the bulges will be spread out in the offset direction so as to affect all portions of the sealing. The bulges could e.g. be placed with an increasing offset in a step-like fashion to stepwise move trapped air upwards (for a bottom sealing) and away from the interior of the package.

The bulges of the pressure rollers, arranged downstream of the first pressure roller in the travelling direction, may be arranged with a subsequently increasing or subsequently decreasing width in relation to said first bulge of said first pressure roller. This is an alternative way to affect any trapped air. A first thin bulge could e.g. be placed at the bottom of a pressure roller so as to apply pressure close to the package interior. The bulge of the next pressure roller could be wider, also placed at the bottom of the pressure roller. The succeeding pressure roller rollers could then have wider and wider bulges placed at the bottom of the pressure roller until the last roller has a bulge that is as wide as the roller.

According to a second aspect, the objects are achieved in full, or at least in part, by a filling machine for filling a package with a food product, comprising an inductor device having a coil conductor which interact with the package, and arranged downstream of said inductor device, wherein the filling machine further comprises a pressure unit according to the first aspect of the invention.

According to a third aspect, the objects are achieved in full, or at least in part, by a package containing a food product, wherein the package has been sealed using said pressure unit according to the first aspect of the invention, or filled using the filling machine according to the second aspect of the invention.

According to a fourth aspect, the objects are achieved in full, or at least in part, by a method for sealing a package for a food product, comprising feeding said package through an inductor device which interact with the package to melt at least one layer in a portion of said package, feeding the

package through a pressure unit according to the first aspect of the invention to provide a pressure on at least a first section of the portion and thereafter on a second section of the upper portion. The first section and second section corresponds to bulges of different height of different pressure rollers. The
5 portion may be an upper portion or a lower portion of the package.

Generally, all terms used in the claims are to be interpreted according to their ordinary meaning in the technical field, unless explicitly defined otherwise herein. All references to “a/an/the [element, device, component, means, step, etc.]” are to be interpreted openly as referring to at least one
10 instance of the element, device, component, means, step, etc., unless explicitly stated otherwise.

Brief description of the drawings

The above objects, as well as additional objects, features and
15 advantages of the present invention, will be more fully appreciated by reference to the following illustrative and non-limiting detailed description of preferred embodiments of the present invention, when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

20 Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a part of a filling machine showing an induction sealing device with a pressure unit according to the invention.

Fig. 2a-e are schematic views of different offset settings of the bulges of the pressure rollers of the pressure unit.

25

Detailed description of preferred embodiments of the invention

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a part of a filling machine showing an induction sealing device with a pressure unit according to the invention. A package 2 is held by a package holder 9 and conveyed by the conveyor 3. A
30 portion 5 of the package 2 is conveyed through an inductor device 8 in a direction d where the portion 5 is heated as a first step in sealing the inside of the edges of the package 2 in the portion 5. The heated portion 5 is

subsequently moved to a pressure unit 1 where the heated portion is pressurized by a number of pairs of pressure rollers 11, 12, 13 and anvil rollers 21, 22, 23. Each pressure roller 11, 12, 13 applies a pressure onto the portion 5 and on the anvil roller 21, 22, 23 behind the portion 5. The pressure is especially applied by a bulge 15, 16, 17 extending annularly around the otherwise smooth rim surface 18, 19 of the pressure roller 11, 12, 13. The first bulge 15 of the first pressure roller 11 is offset in relation to said second bulge 16 of the second pressure roller 12 in an axial direction 7 of said first pressure roller 11 and said second pressure roller 12. In that way the bulges 15, 16 of the first pressure roller 11 and the second pressure roller 12, respectively, will apply pressure onto different parts of the portion 5 of the package 2. The subsequent pressure rollers 13 are provided with bulges that are also offset. In the embodiment of Fig. 1, the bulges of the pressure rollers, 11, 12, 13 are offset in groups of three, but as mentioned in the summary section above, the configuration of the offset of the bulges may be different as shown in Fig. 2a-2e. The exact configuration is not as important as to facilitate some kind of offset between the bulges of different pressure rollers so that the bulges apply pressure on alternating areas of the portion 5 of the package 2 that is to be sealed. The offset will cause air that is trapped in the sealing to be pressed out creating a better sealing.

Fig. 2a-2e show different configurations of the offset of the bulges 15, 16, 17 of the row of pressure rollers 11, 12, 13. Fig. 2a shows a prior art configuration, i.e. a row of pressure rollers with bulges without any offset between the rollers. The arrow d indicates the direction of movement of the package 2 and the portion 5 that is to be sealed and is the same direction as the direction d in Fig. 1.

Fig. 2b shows a configuration of bulges 15, 16, 17 offset in the same way as shown in Fig. 1, i.e. groups of three with offset bulges subsequently repeated.

In Fig. 2c a different configuration according to the invention is presented with a group of five bulges 15, 16, 17 with increasing offset to the first bulge 15 of the first pressure roller 11.

Fig. 2d shows a random configuration with random offset between the bulges 15, 16, 17. It has surprisingly been shown that the effect using a random configuration of the offsets is as good as using an increasing offset as in Fig. 2c or Fig. 2e.

- 5 Fig. 2e shows configuration with a group of five bulges 15, 16, 17 with increasing offset to the first bulge 15 of the first pressure roller 11, just as in Fig. 2c but with the direction of the offset inversed to the one in Fig. 2c.

It is understood that other variations in the present invention are contemplated and in some instances, some features of the invention can be
10 employed without a corresponding use of other features. Accordingly, it is appropriate that the appended claims be construed broadly in a manner consistent with the scope of the invention.

For instance, other configurations of the offsets between bulges 15, 16, 17 of different pressure rollers 11, 12, 13 than those shown in Figs. 2a – 2e
15 are possible within the scope of the invention. In fact even a random configuration is sufficient to create large improvements to the prior art solution.

CLAIMS

1. A pressure unit (1) for sealing a package (2) for a food product, comprising a conveyor (3) for transporting said package (2) through said
5 pressure unit (1) in a travelling direction (d),
a first rotatable pressure roller (11) and a first rotatable anvil roller (21), said first pressure roller (11) being arranged opposite to said first anvil roller (21) to form a first nip (4) for receiving and rotationally engage with a portion (5) of said package, and
10 arranged downstream of said first pressure roller (11) and said first anvil roller (21) in said travelling direction, a second rotatable pressure roller (12) and a second rotatable anvil roller (22), said second pressure roller (12) being arranged opposite to said second anvil roller (22) to form a second nip (6) for receiving and rotationally engage with said portion (5) of said package,
15 wherein
said first pressure roller (11) comprises a first bulge (15) extending annularly around its rim surface (18),
said second pressure roller (12) comprises a second bulge (16) extending annularly around its rim surface (19),
20 said first bulge (15) is offset in relation to said second bulge (16) in an axial direction (7) of said first pressure roller (11) and said second pressure roller (12).
2. The pressure unit according to claim 1, wherein said first bulge (15)
25 and second bulge (16) has a profile comprising a curvature.
3. The pressure unit according to claim 2, wherein said curvature of said first bulge (15) and second bulge (16) has a radius of between 0,3 mm and 1,5 mm, preferably about 0,7 mm.
30
4. The pressure unit according to claim 2, wherein said curvature of said first bulge (15) differ from said curvature of said second bulge (16).

5. The pressure unit according to claim 4, wherein said curvature of said second bulge (16) is wider than the first bulge (15).

5 6. The pressure unit according to any one of the preceding claims, further comprising one or more additional pressure rollers (13) with respective bulges (17) and anvil rollers (23) arranged in the same way as and further downstream of said first pressure roller (11) and said first anvil roller (21), and said second pressure roller (12) and said second anvil roller (22), in said
10 travelling direction.

7. The pressure unit according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said bulges (15, 16) of said pressure rollers (11, 12, 13), arranged downstream of said first pressure roller (11) in said travelling direction, are
15 arranged with a subsequently increasing offset in relation to said first bulge (15) of said first pressure roller (11).

8. The pressure unit according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said bulges (15, 16) of said pressure rollers (11, 12, 13), arranged
20 downstream of said first pressure roller (11) in said travelling direction, are arranged with a subsequently increasing or subsequently decreasing width in relation to said first bulge (15) of said first pressure roller (11).

9. A filling machine for filling a package with a food product,
25 comprising
an inductor device (8) having a coil conductor which interact with said package, and
a pressure unit (1) according to any one of claims 1-8 arranged downstream of said inductor device.

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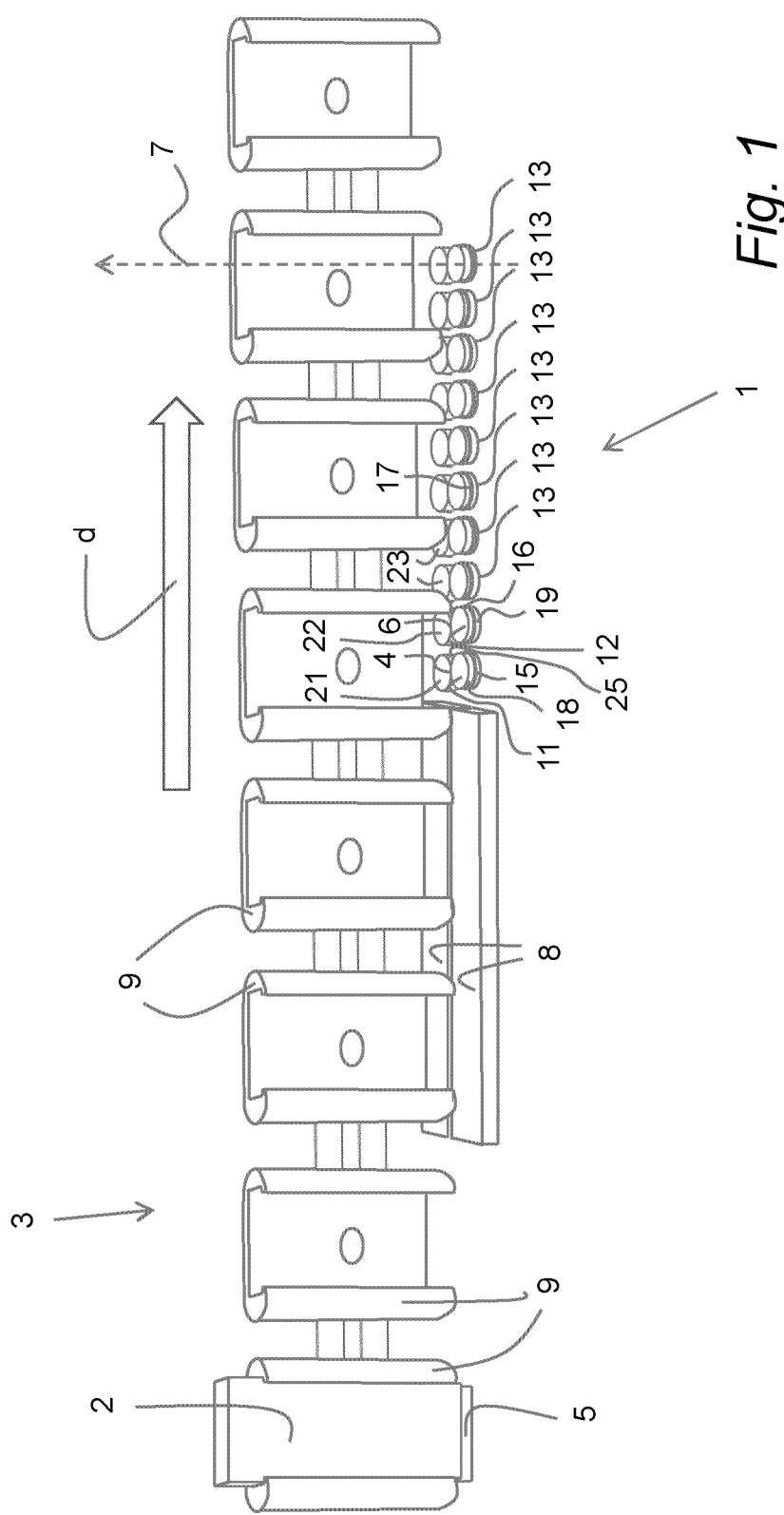
10. A package (2) containing a food product, wherein said package (2)

has been sealed using said pressure unit according to any one of claims 1-8, or filled using said filling machine according to claim 9.

11. A method for sealing a package for a food product, comprising
5 feeding said package through an inductor device which interacts with said package to melt at least one layer in a portion (5) of said package, feeding said package through a pressure unit (1) according to any one of claims 1-8 to provide a pressure on at least a first section of said portion (5) and thereafter on a second section of said upper portion.

10

12. The method according to claim 11, wherein said portion is an upper portion (5) or a lower portion of said package (2).



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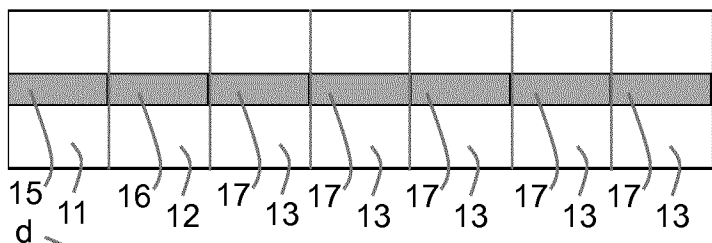


Fig. 2a

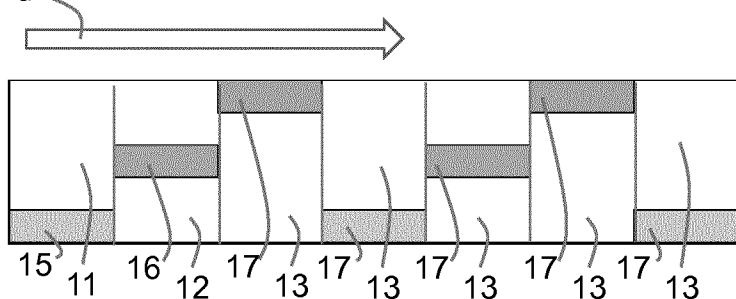


Fig. 2b

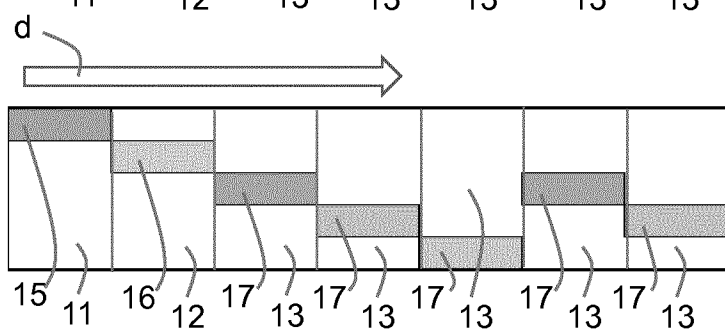


Fig. 2c

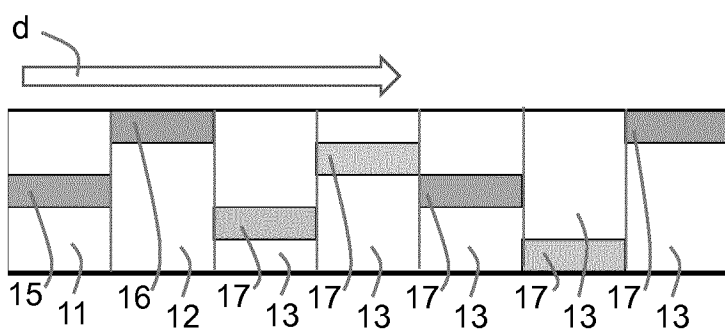


Fig. 2d

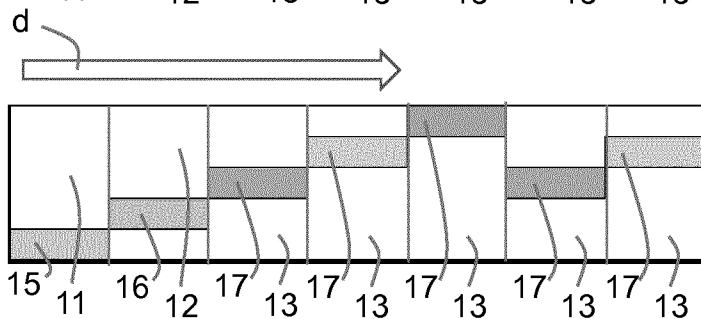


Fig. 2e

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER		
INV.	B65B9/20 B29C65/00	B65B25/00 B29C65/02
	B65B51/16	B65B51/22 B29C65/36
ADD.		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) B65B B29C		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) EPO-Internal, WPI Data		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☒ See patent family annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents : "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance "E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art "&" document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 27 June 2017		Date of mailing of the international search report 06/07/2017
Name and mailing address of the ISA/ European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016		Authorized officer Schmitt, Michel

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

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Information on patent family members

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