



(12) **DEMANDE DE BREVET CANADIEN
CANADIAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(13) **A1**

(86) Date de dépôt PCT/PCT Filing Date: 2019/01/07
(87) Date publication PCT/PCT Publication Date: 2019/07/18
(85) Entrée phase nationale/National Entry: 2020/06/17
(86) N° demande PCT/PCT Application No.: IB 2019/050104
(87) N° publication PCT/PCT Publication No.: 2019/138312
(30) Priorité/Priority: 2018/01/12 (IT10201800000794)

(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. *F24C 15/20* (2006.01),
F24C 15/10 (2006.01), *G01G 19/56* (2006.01)

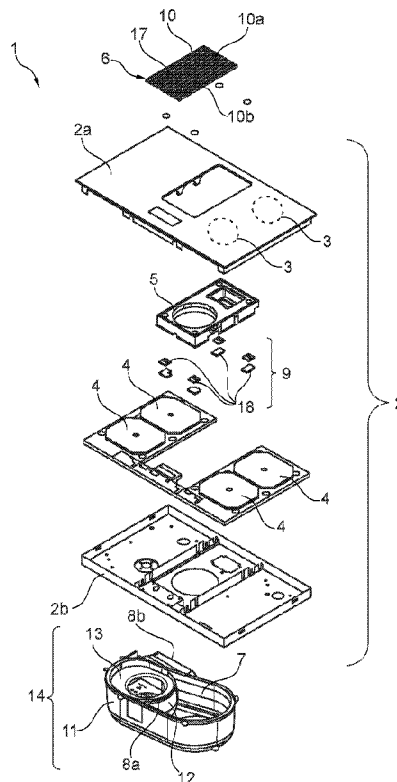
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(54) Titre : PLAQUE DE CUISSON A UNITE D'EXTRACTION ET BALANCE INTEGREES
(54) Title: COOKTOP WITH INTEGRATED EXTRACTION UNIT AND SCALE

Fig. 1



(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

A cooktop (1) as claimed in the present invention comprises a main body (2) having a top surface (2a) and a bottom surface (2b); at least one cooking area (3) configured to accommodate a heating element (4) proximate to the top surface (2a); a suction opening (5) formed on the top surface (2a); suction means (14) in fluid communication with the suction opening (5) and configured to draw in cooking fumes; a support member (6) connected to the main body (2); weight sensing means (9) located between the support element (6) and the main body (2) for sensing the weight of objects to be weighed; the support element (6) at least partially overlaps the suction means (14).

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property
Organization
International Bureau

(43) International Publication Date
18 July 2019 (18.07.2019)



(10) International Publication Number
WO 2019/138312 A1

(51) International Patent Classification:

F24C 15/20 (2006.01) *G01G 19/56* (2006.01)
F24C 15/10 (2006.01)

(21) International Application Number:

PCT/IB2019/050104

(22) International Filing Date:

07 January 2019 (07.01.2019)

(25) Filing Language:

Italian

(26) Publication Language:

English

(30) Priority Data:

102018000000794 12 January 2018 (12.01.2018) IT

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(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every

kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BN, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DJ, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IR, IS, JO, JP, KE, KG, KH, KN, KP, KR, KW, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PA, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO, RS, RU, RW, SA, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every

kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, ST, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, KM, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Declarations under Rule 4.17:

— of inventorship (Rule 4.17(iv))

(54) Title: COOKTOP WITH INTEGRATED EXTRACTION UNIT AND SCALE

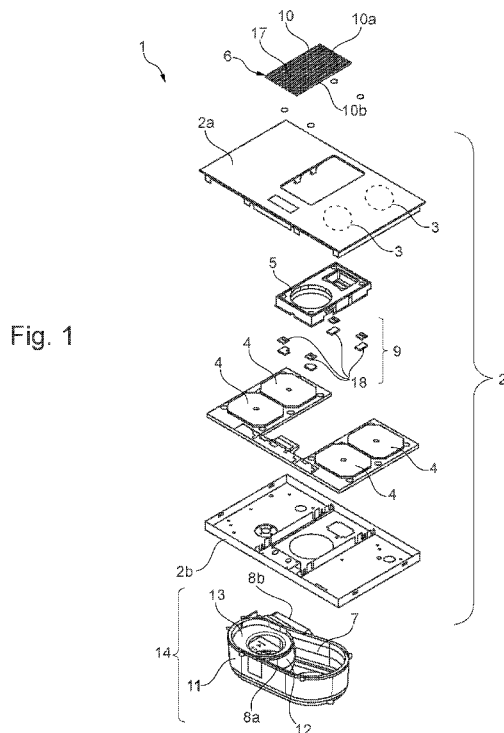


Fig. 1

(57) Abstract: A cooktop (1) as claimed in the present invention comprises a main body (2) having a top surface (2a) and a bottom surface (2b); at least one cooking area (3) configured to accommodate a heating element (4) proximate to the top surface (2a); a suction opening (5) formed on the top surface (2a); suction means (14) in fluid communication with the suction opening (5) and configured to draw in cooking fumes; a support member (6) connected to the main body (2); weight sensing means (9) located between the support element (6) and the main body (2) for sensing the weight of objects to be weighed; the support element (6) at least partially overlaps the suction means (14).



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WO 2019/138312 A1

Published:

- *with international search report (Art. 21(3))*
- *in black and white; the international application as filed contained color or greyscale and is available for download from PATENTSCOPE*

COOKTOP WITH INTEGRATED EXTRACTION UNIT AND SCALE

DESCRIPTION*Field of the Invention*

The present invention relates to a cooktop in accordance with the preamble of claim
5 1.

Particularly, but without limitation, the present invention relates to a cooktop
integrating a hood that is commercially available under the name of “downdraft hood”.

Background of the invention

Domestic hoods have become a common feature in residential kitchens, due to their
10 undisputed usefulness in extracting food preparation gases, i.e. vapors generated during by
cooking. The provision of domestic hoods that can effectively remove cooking vapors
generated during food preparation is of increasing importance.

For this purpose, hoods have been developed that can both extract air and exhaust
the extracted air out of the house, using an intake section, and filter such air and recirculate
15 it into the domestic environment.

Downdraft hoods are among the variety of commercially available hoods, and are
often integrated either in a cooktop or in a kitchen furniture countertop. Namely, the
downdraft hood is configured to generate a descending current that is higher than the
ascending flow rate of cooking steam, so that such steam is extracted toward the cooktop
20 in a vertical downward direction.

Cooktops comprising scales are also known in the art, as disclosed for instance in
the Italian utility model 264 479.

Namely, this cooktop integrates electronic or mechanical sensors located proximate
to the burners. In addition, the cooktop comprises a plurality of support grates, particularly
25 a grate for each burner. These grates are designed to rest upon the sensors, such that as a

pot is placed upon a grate, its weight may be immediately read.

While the above described example is specially designed for a gas cooktop, similar arrangements have been also developed for electric cooktops, which may be either resistive or induction cooktops.

5 *Prior art problem*

The integration of a scale into a cooktop involves the drawback of requiring arrangements to prevent infiltration of any liquids and/or vapors proximate to the cooktop, which may damage the electric parts of the cooktop. The prior art arrangement requires the use of insulating seals, but these parts are prone to wear, and must be hence replaced once
10 or multiple times during the life of the cooktop to ensure their integrity.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Therefore, the technical purpose of the present invention is to provide a cooktop that can overcome the aforementioned prior art drawbacks.

Particularly, the object of the present invention is to provide a cooktop that
15 incorporates a scale and can ensure a seal against any cooking liquids that might be poured thereupon.

The aforementioned technical purpose and objects are substantially fulfilled by a cooktop that comprises the technical features as disclosed in one or more of the accompanying claims.

20 Particularly, a cooktop in accordance with the present invention comprises a main body that has a top surface and a bottom surface. At least one cooking area is configured to accommodate a heating element proximate to the top surface.

A suction opening is formed on the top surface. Suction means are in fluid communication with the suction opening to draw in cooking fumes.

25 A support element is connected to the main body. Weight sensing means are placed

between the support element and the main body, to sense the weight of any objects placed thereupon. The support element at least partially overlaps the suction means.

This device solves the technical problem, as it allows the same area of the cooktop to be used both to draw in cooking fumes and to weight objects. Both the suction opening and the filter housing are already fluid-tightly sealed. No additional seal is hence required.

LIST OF DRAWINGS

Further features and advantages of the present invention will result more clearly from the illustrative, non-limiting description of a preferred, non-exclusive embodiment of a cooktop as shown in the annexed drawings, in which:

- 10 - Figure 1 is an exploded perspective view of a first embodiment of a cooktop of the present invention;
- Figure 2 is a perspective view of the cooktop of Figure 1;
- Figure 3 is a lateral sectional view of a detail of the cooktop of Figures 1 and 2.
- Figure 4 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of a cooktop of the present invention;
- 15 - Figure 5 is a perspective view of the cooktop of Figure 4, with certain parts omitted to better show other parts; and
- Figure 6 is a perspective view of a third embodiment of a cooktop of the present invention, with certain parts omitted to better show other parts;

20 DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Even when this is not expressly stated, the individual features as described with reference to the particular embodiments shall be intended as auxiliary to and/or interchangeable with other features described with reference to other exemplary embodiments.

25 Referring to the annexed figures, numeral 1 designates a cooktop of the present

invention.

The cooktop 1 comprises a main body 2.

The main body 2 has a top surface 2a and a bottom surface 2b. Namely, when the cooktop 1 is installed, the top surface 2a of the main body 2 is designed to be the exposed or visible side for the user while the bottom surface 2b is designed to be the side that is hidden to the view of user, e.g. because embedded in kitchen furniture. In one embodiment, the top surface 2a is embodied as a glass sheet or a sheet made of any material having similar properties (not shown).

According to a preferred aspect, both the top surface 2a and the bottom surface 2b are embodied as parallel and opposed flat surfaces. Therefore, the main body 2 defines a volume that is adapted to contain the parts required for controlling and heating/cooking food, as well as for downward extraction of cooking vapors.

More in detail, the main body 2 has at least one cooking area 3 which is configured to accommodate a heating element 4 at the top surface 2a.

Particularly referring to Figure 1, a plurality of cooking areas 3 may be defined on the top surface 2a. In this case, the cooking areas 3 are suitably distributed over the top surface 2a of the main body 2 and are particularly designed to radiate heat, if the heating elements are of resistive type, or induce heat generation in appropriate cooking containers, if the heating elements are of inductive type.

In the illustrated embodiments, there are four cooking areas 3, although different alternative embodiments, not shown, may be provided, in which the number of cooking areas 3 is greater or smaller.

The main body 2 also has a suction opening 5, particularly on the top surface 2a, and has the purpose to draw in cooking fumes.

The cooktop 1 also comprises suction means 14 associated with the top surface 2a.

These suction means 14 have the purpose to draw in the cooking fumes proximate to the top surface 2a of the main body 2. Namely, the suction means 14 comprise a duct 7 in fluid communication with the opening 5.

The suction means 14 further comprise a housing 15 in fluid communication with said duct and is configured to receive filters 25 for the cooking fumes.

The suction means 14 further comprise a centrifugal fan (not shown) connected to an inlet port 8a and an outlet scroll 8b. The inlet port 8a is in fluid communication with the duct 7.

More in detail, the suction means 14 comprise a motor (not shown) with the centrifugal fan to set it into rotation. Particularly, the motor is mechanically coupled to the centrifugal fan, e.g. by a direct mechanical coupling between the rotor of the motor and the hub of the centrifugal fan.

As shown for example in Figure 1, the suction means 14 comprise a peripheral wall 11 that extends transverse and particularly perpendicular to the bottom surface 2b of the main body 2. The perimeter wall 11 at least partially defines the duct 7 and the outlet scroll 8b.

The suction means 14 further comprise a partition wall 12, also transverse and particularly perpendicular to the bottom surface 2b of the main body 2. The partition wall 12 is arranged within the perimeter wall 11, and separates the duct 7 from the outlet scroll 8b of the centrifugal fan 8.

A septum 13 is transverse to the walls 11, 12 and at least partially define the outlet scroll 8b of the centrifugal fan 8. The aforementioned inlet opening 8a is formed on the septum 13 and is designed to channel the air flow into the centrifugal fan.

Particularly referring to Figure 1, the cooktop 1 comprises a support element 6 connected to the main body 2. This support element 6 has the purpose of supporting of

items to be weighed, e.g. food containers. It shall be noted that, according to the invention, the support element 6 at least partially overlaps the suction means 14.

More in detail, the support element 6 comprises a panel 10.

According to a first embodiment of the invention, as shown in Figures 1 and 2, the
5 panel 10 entirely covers both the opening 5 and the housing 15.

In a second embodiment, as shown in Figure 4, the panel 10 is only placed on the housing 15. Here, the cooktop 1 comprises an additional panel 16 that closes the opening 5. Such additional panel 16 is known in the art and will not be further described herein.

It should be noted that the panel 10 has a top surface 10a and a bottom surface 10b,
10 opposite to the top surface 10a. The top surface 10a is designed to be placed in contact with the objects to be weighed, and is particularly substantially coplanar with the top surface 2a of the main body 2. Advantageously, this facilitates ordinary cleaning of the cooktop 1.

Weight sensing means 9 are placed between the support element 6 and the main
15 body 2, to sense the weight of the objects placed on the support element 6, namely on the panel 10. It shall be noted that, advantageously, the weight sensing means 9 are placed in correspondence of the duct 7 and/or of the housing 15.

The cooktop 1 also comprises a grid 17 for the passage of cooking fumes. In the
embodiment of Figure 1, the grid 17 is formed on the panel 10. In the embodiment of Figure 4, the grid 17 is placed on the additional panel 16.

20 More in detail, the weight sensing means 9 comprise at least one load cell 18. In the preferred embodiments of the present invention, the weight sensing means 9 comprise a plurality of load cells 18. In alternative embodiments of the present invention, not shown, the weight sensing means 9 may comprise a single load cell.

The load cells 18 are inserted in the main body 2, and are disposed between the main
25 body 2 itself and the panel 10.

Namely, the load cells 18 are arranged along a perimeter of the panel 10. It shall be noted that the load cells 18 are of a type that is known to the skilled person, and will not be further described herein.

In the embodiments of Figures 1 and 4, the weight sensing means 9 comprise four
5 load cells 18, each placed at a respective corner of the panel 10.

In the embodiment of Figure 6, the weight sensing means 9 comprise two load cells 18 only. Here, the load cells 18 are arranged at about half the side of the panel 10.

In addition, the weight sensing means 9 comprise a connecting element 24 that joins
10 load cells 18 with each other. This connecting element 24 is interposed between the

It will be appreciated from the accompanying figures that any object placed upon
the panel 7 will apply a stress to all the load cells 18 beneath the panel 7. It shall be noted
that the load cells 18 are electrically connected to one another, such that the weight applied
to the panel 7 may be read. Namely, the weight sensing means comprise an electrical
15 connection circuit (not shown), which may be of known type, connecting the load cells 18
to a processing unit (not shown). The electrical connection circuit may be, for example, a
Wheatstone bridge.

Preferably, the cooktop 1 comprises display means (not shown), which are
connected to the electrical connection circuit and the processing unit, and are able to
20 provide a reading of the sensed weight to the user. For example, these display means may
comprise a display incorporated in the main body 2.

Particularly referring to Figure 3, it will be appreciated that the panel 10 comprises
a plurality of support zones 19. Each support zone 19 is located at a respective load cell 18.
In detail, each support zone 19 preferably has a circular shape as viewed in a plan view,
25 and comprises a central portion 19a which contacts its respective load cell 18. Furthermore,

the support zone 19 has a peripheral portion 19b surrounding the central portion 19a.

It shall be noted that each support zone 19 has a respective projection 20. This projection 20 is located at the peripheral portion 19b. The projection 20 juts out of the panel 10, and is transverse, and particularly perpendicular to the panel 10.

5 As shown in Figure 3, the main body 2 has a plurality of receptacles 21. Each receptacle 21 is located at a respective load cell 18 and surrounds the load cell 18. Each receptacle 21 is configured to receive a respective projection 20 of the corresponding support zone 19. Advantageously, the receptacle 21 and the projection 20 define a labyrinth seal 23 that surrounds the load cell 18, and limit liquid infiltrations toward the load cell 18.

10 In the embodiment shown in Figure 3, the cooktop 1 comprises a plurality of interface elements 22. These interface elements 22 are attached to the panel 10, and particularly to the bottom surface 10b. Note that the support zones 19 are each defined on a respective interface element 22. It should be noted that the interface elements 22 are formed with a material having a limited deformability, such that the weight reading of the
15 load cell 18 will not be altered. Advantageously, the use of interface elements 22 separate from the panel 10 allows the profile of the support zone 19 to fit the particular load cell 18 that is designed to be used without making changes to the panel 10.

According to an alternative embodiment of the invention, not shown, the support zones 19 are formed directly on the panel 10, particularly at the bottom surface 10b.
20 Advantageously, this simplifies the manufacturing process to obtain the panel 10, as the panel 10 can be molded with the shape of the support zones 19 without requiring the attachment of any additional element.

Those skilled in the art will obviously appreciate that a number of changes and variants may be made to the arrangements as described hereinbefore to meet incidental and
25 specific needs. All of these variants and changes fall within scope of the invention, as

defined in the following claims.

CLAIMS

1. A cooktop (1) comprising:

- a main body (2) having a top surface (2a) and a bottom surface (2b);
- at least one cooking area (3) configured to accommodate a heating element (4) proximate
5 to said top surface (2a);

- a suction opening (5) formed on said top surface (2a);

- suction means (14) in fluid communication with said suction opening (5) and configured
to draw in cooking fumes;

- a support element (6) connected to said main body (2);

10 - weight sensing means (9) located between said support element (6) and said main body
(2) for sensing the weight of objects to be weighed;

- said support element (6) at least partially overlaps said suction means (14);

characterized in that said suction means (14) comprise a suction duct (7) in fluid
communication with said opening (5); and a housing (15) in fluid communication with said
15 duct (7) and configured to receive filters (25) for said cooking fumes, said weight sensing
means (14) being located at said duct (7) and/or said housing (15).

2. A cooktop (1) as claimed in claim 1, wherein said weight sensing means (9) comprise at
least one, preferably two and more preferably four load cells (18).

20

3. A cooktop (1) as claimed in claim 2, wherein said support element (6) comprises a panel
(10), said load cells (18) being arranged along a perimeter of said panel (10).

4. A cooktop (1) as claimed in claim 3, characterized in that it comprises a grate (17) formed
25 on said panel for the passage of cooking fumes.

5. A cooktop (1) as claimed in claim 3 or 4, wherein said panel (10) has a top surface (10a) that is substantially coplanar with the top surface (2a) of the main body (2).

5 6. A cooktop (1) as claimed in any of claims 3 to 5, wherein said panel (10) has a plurality of support areas (19) each located at a respective load cell (18).

7. A cooktop (1) as claimed in claim 6, wherein each support area (19) comprises a central portion (19a) that contacts its respective load cell (18) and a peripheral portion (19b) surrounding said central portion (19a), each support area (19) having a respective protrusion (20) projecting out of said panel (10) and located at said peripheral portion (19b).

8. A cooktop (1) as claimed in claim 7, wherein said main body (2) has a plurality of seats (21) each located at a respective load cell (18) and surrounding said load cell (18), each seat (21) being configured to receive a respective protrusion (20) of a respective support area (19) to define a labyrinth seal (23) surrounding said load cell (18).

9. A cooktop (1) as claimed in any of claims 6 to 8, characterized in that it comprises a plurality of interface elements (22) attached to said panel (10), each support area (19) being defined on a respective interface element (22).

10. A cooktop (1) as claimed in any of claims 6 to 8, wherein said support areas (19) are directly formed on said panel (10).

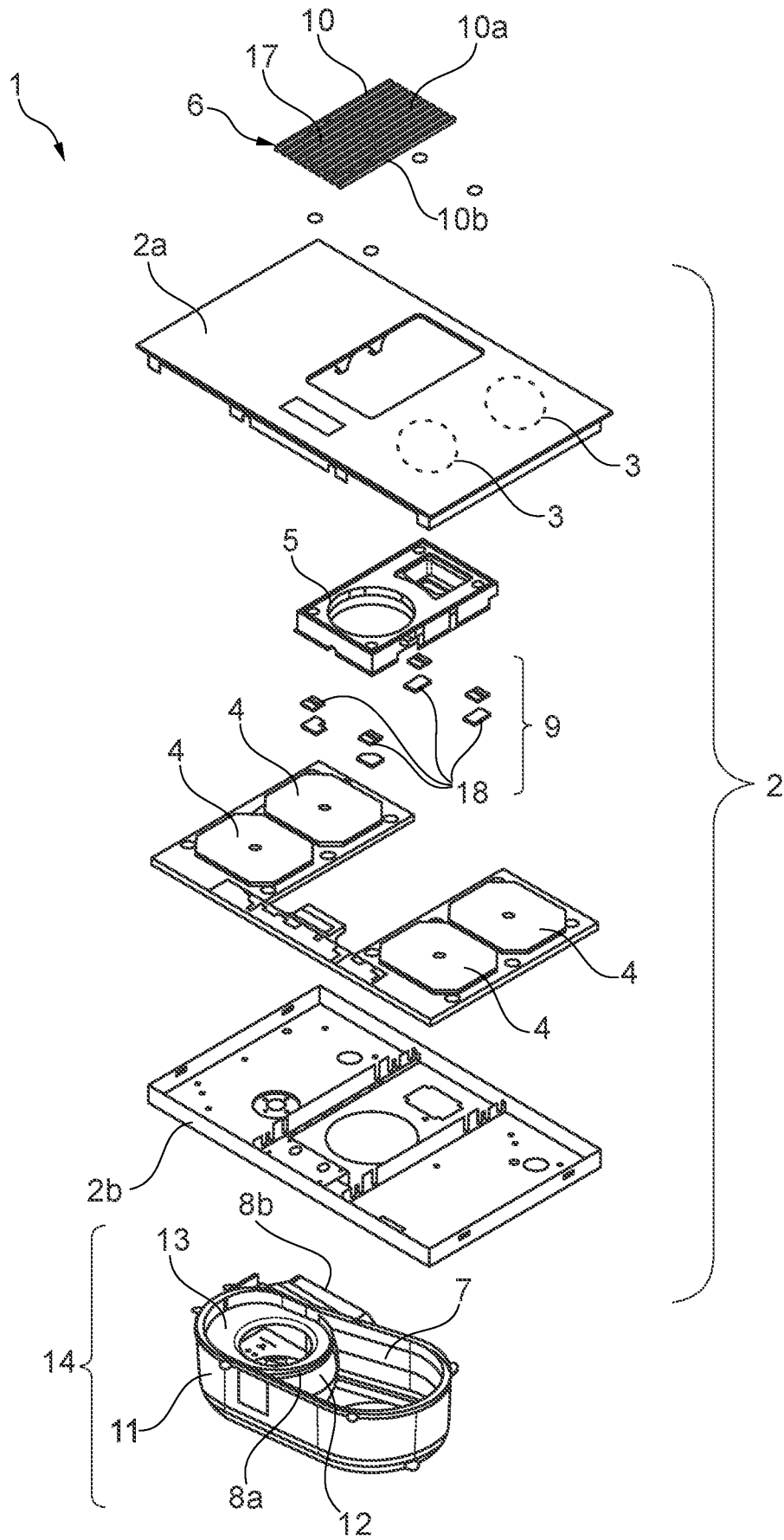


Fig. 1

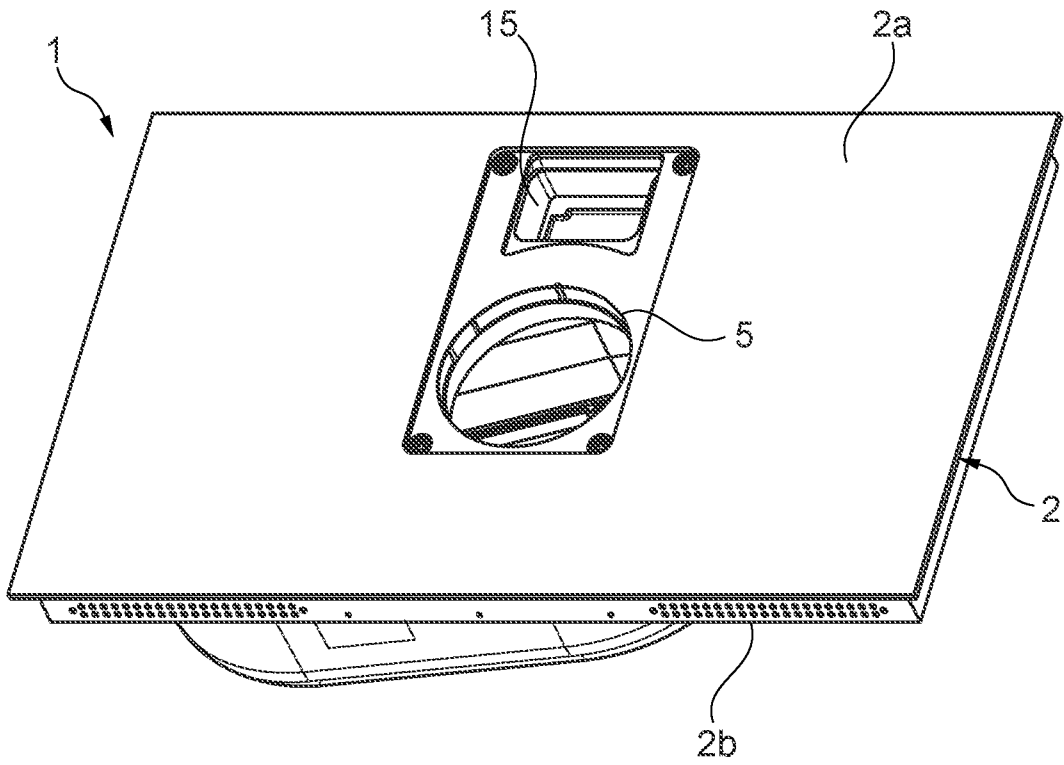


Fig. 2

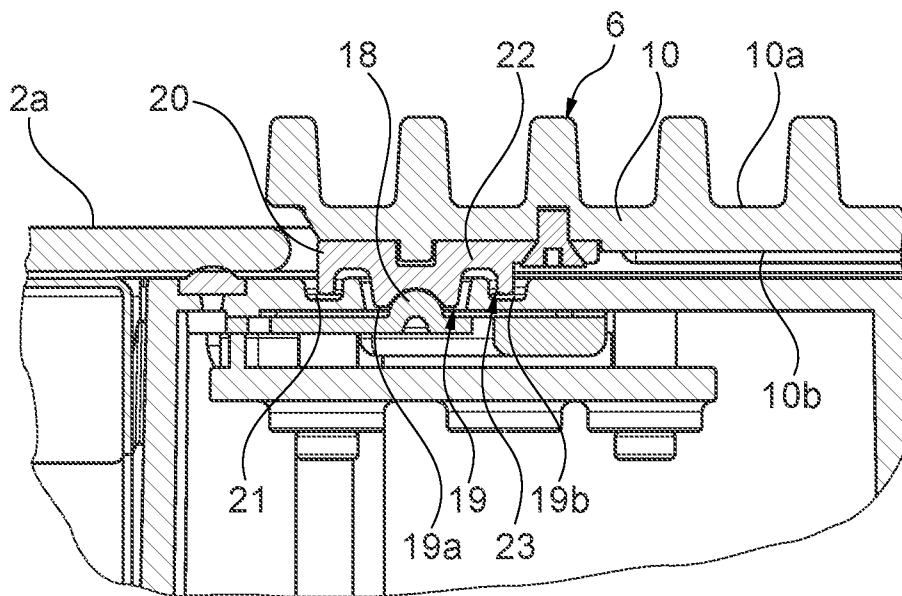


Fig. 3

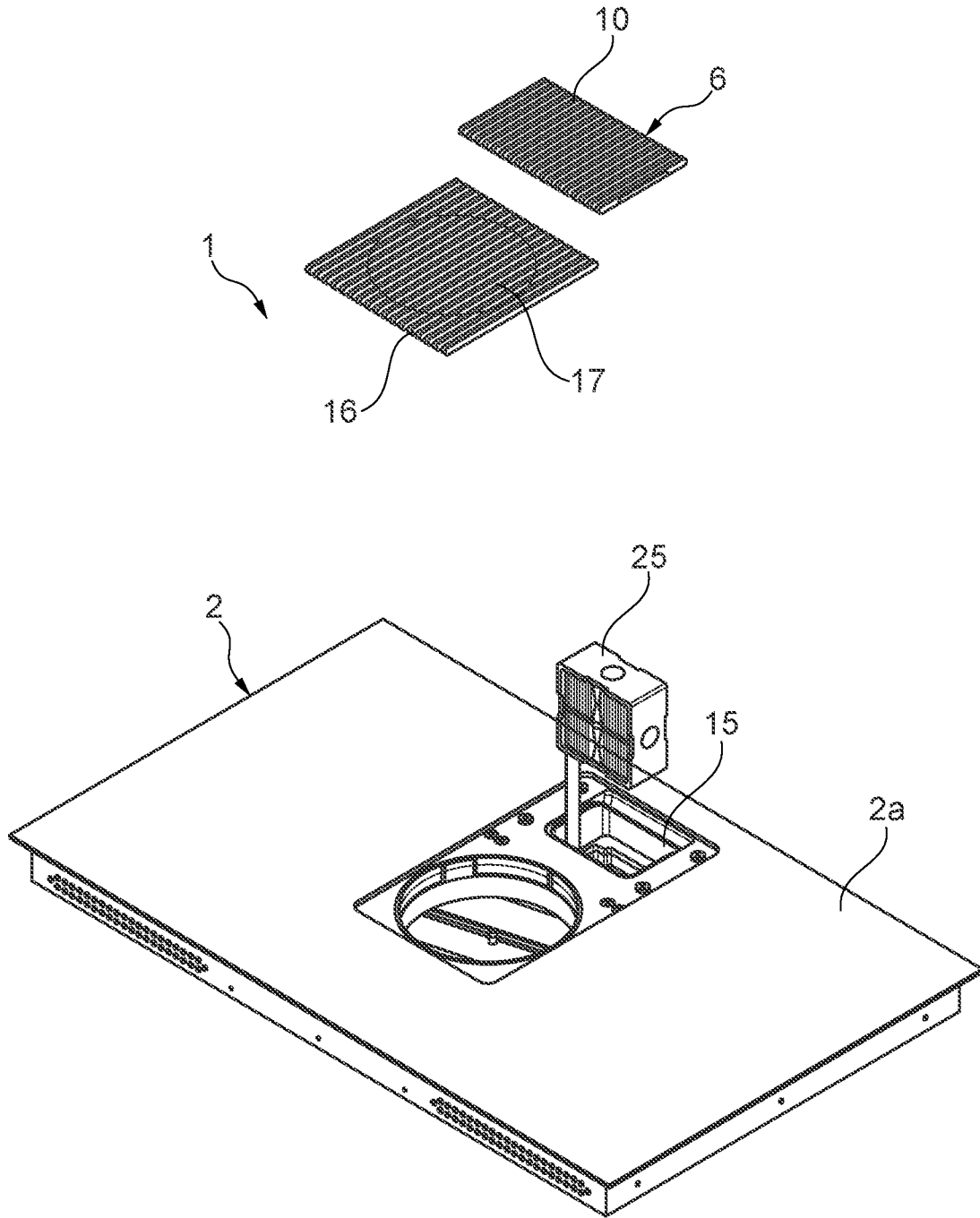


Fig. 4

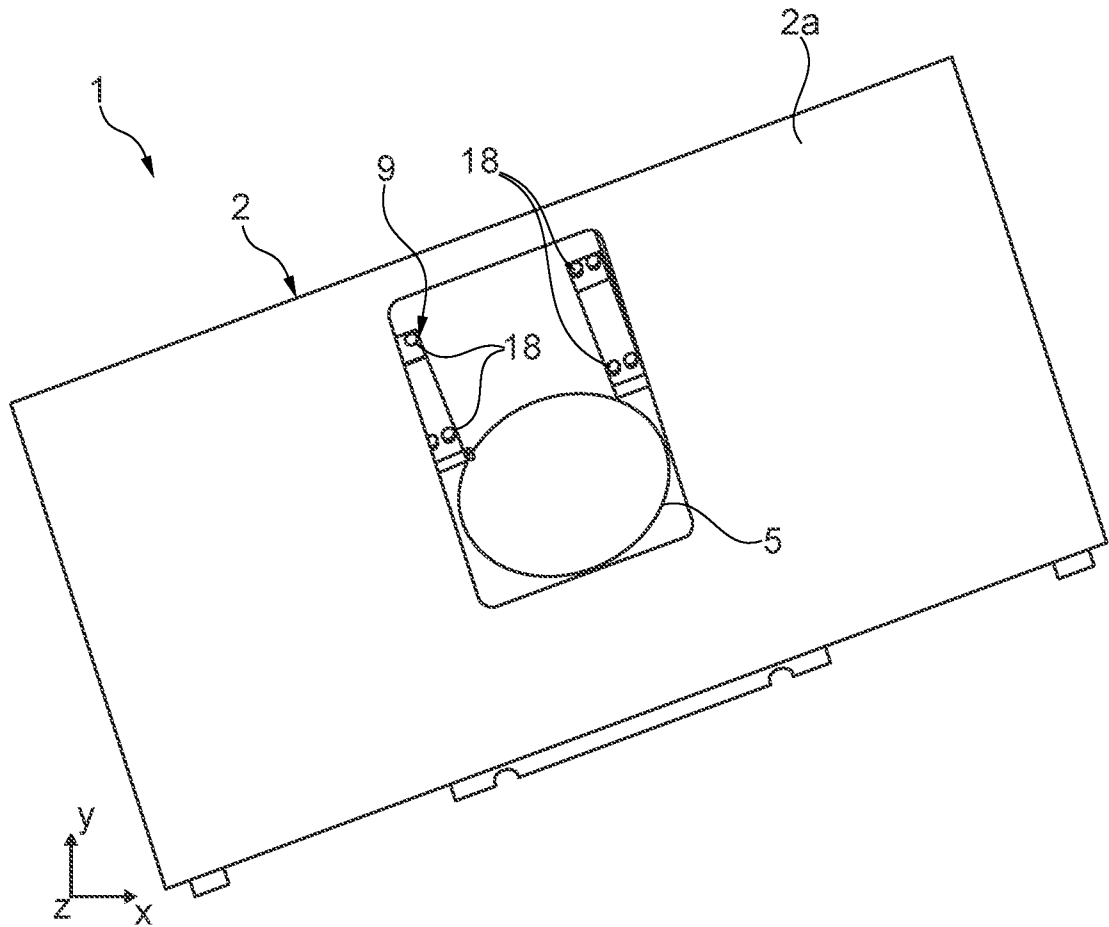


Fig. 5

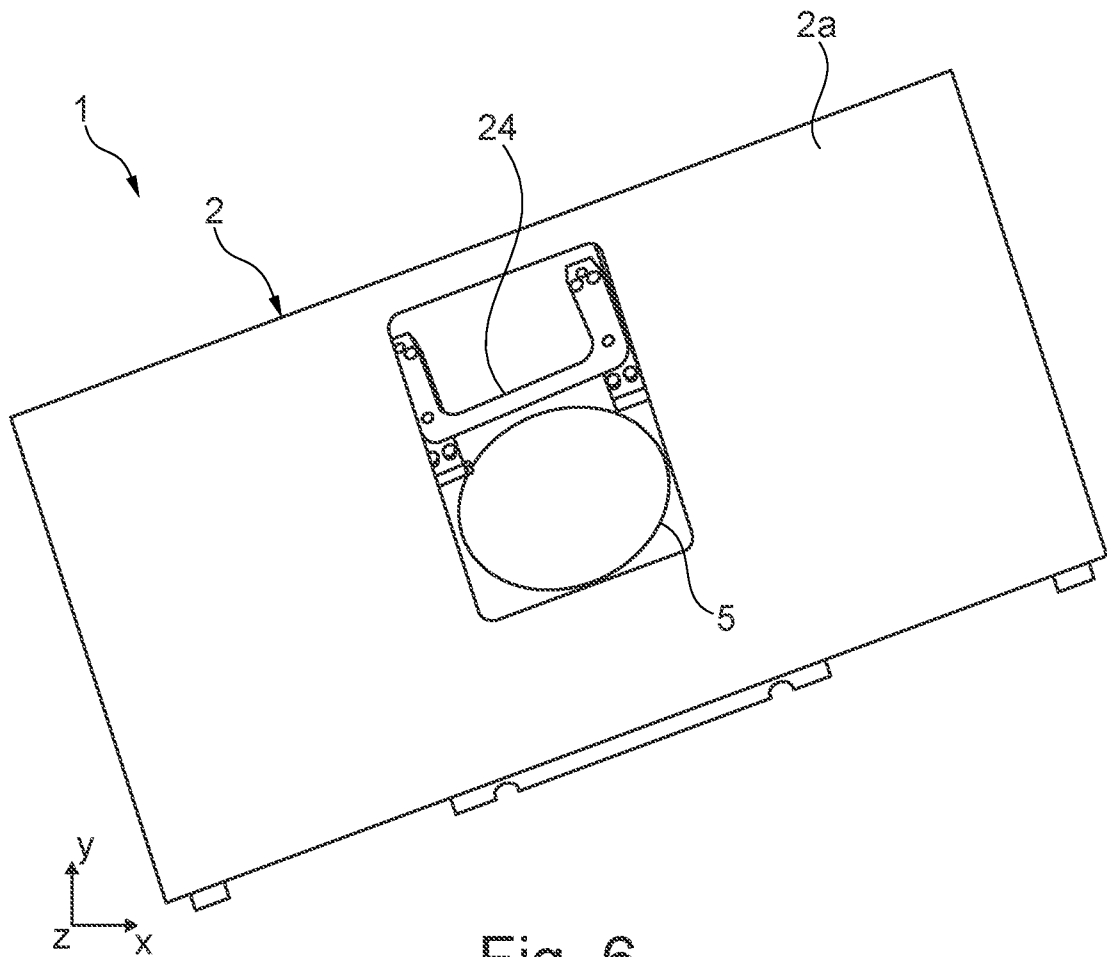


Fig. 6

Fig. 1

