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(54) Titre : METHODE ET APPAREIL D'IMPRESSION D'INFORMATIONS SUR DES MARCHANDISES

(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR PRINTING MERCHANDISING INFORMATION



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A weighing scale which includes a label printer for printing labels having a detachable portion. A label cassette is easily inserted or removed from the weighing scale. The label cassette is changed depending on the type of label to be printed. Standard labels can be printed, or labels having detachable portions along one side can be printed. The detachable portion can have merchandising information printed thereon including coupon information, advertising information, discounts, specials, and product information. The information on the label and detachable portions is easily edited by an operator at a control panel of the weighing scale. A conversational display is provided which allows easy editing and also allows specials, recipes, etc., to be displayed. A molded cover is provided to prevent moisture from entering the weighing scale without interfering with the operation of the weighing scale.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

1 A weighing scale which includes a label printer for printing labels having a
2 detachable portion. A label cassette is easily inserted or removed from the
3 weighing scale. The label cassette is changed depending on the type of label to
4 be printed. Standard labels can be printed, or labels having detachable portions
5 along one side can be printed. The detachable portion can have merchandising
6 information printed thereon including coupon information, advertising information,
7 discounts, specials, and product information. The information on the label and
8 detachable portions is easily edited by an operator at a control panel of the
9 weighing scale. A conversational display is provided which allows easy editing
10 and also allows specials, recipes, etc., to be displayed. A molded cover is
11 provided to prevent moisture from entering the weighing scale without interfering
12 with the operation of the weighing scale.

**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR
PRINTING MERCHANDISING INFORMATION**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

The present invention provides a method and apparatus for printing merchandising information including programming labels, entering product and merchandising information and printing a label including merchandising information at the point of weighing or labelling. The merchandising information includes product information such as a special price, advertising information, and/or product information along with a coupon for a related item.

Description of the Related Art

Generally, labels for items purchased at a deli department or bakery department in a grocery store are printed at a weighing station. The labels are preprogrammed into a weighing scale and are printed on command. The labels contain a description of the item, weight, price per pound and UPC code.

Coupons are distributed in a variety of different ways including through newspapers, attached to items to be purchased, or generated at a checkout. Coupons printed in newspapers, magazines, or other related media must be clipped by the consumer, taken to a store and redeemed. The problem with this

1 method is that there is little control over how many coupons are produced and
2 no control as to when and where the coupons will be redeemed. Producing
3 these types of coupons is also very expensive and lacks impact because they are
4 unfocused from a merchandising point of view.

5 Coupons generated in-store at the point of sale (POS) require a separate
6 printer interfaced to the POS system. The problem with this method is that
7 coupons are generated after a customer has paid and therefore are only useable
8 at the next time of purchase. This does not promote impulse purchases.

9 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

10 It is an object of the present invention to provide a label/detachable
11 merchandising information printer as an integral part of a weighing scale, the
12 merchandising information being easily changed.

13 It is another object of the present invention to produce labels for randomly
14 weighed items provided with label/merchandising information in which the
15 merchandising information includes a detachable store-generated coupon or a
16 coupon printed by a manufacturer and/or advertising information.

17 Yet another object of the present invention is to provide label/merchandising
18 information which can be used with any type of weighing scale, is easily edited
19 and has the option of printing up to three dates and a time.

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Still another object of the present invention is to provide label/merchandising information such that specials can be displayed or scrolled on a display without the need for performing special additional programming.

5 Another object of the present invention is to provide a durable molded plastic cover for a weighing scale which prevents moisture and condensation from entering the interior of the scale.

A first aspect of the present invention, provides a
10 method for printing merchandising information, comprising the steps of: (a) programming label designs, so that a first portion of the label includes product information and a second portion of the label separated from the first portion by a perforated portion includes merchandising information, the
15 second portion being detachable from the first portion, wherein the second portion has a backside which is sticky or non-sticky and a backing is placed on the sticky back side when the back side of the second portion is sticky; the first portion has a sticky back side so that the first portion may be attached to a
20 product; and when the back side of the second portion has the backing, the backing is not removed from the second portion when the first portion is attached to the product; (b) entering product and merchandising information; and (c) printing a label including the product and merchandising information, wherein
25 the merchandising information printed on the second portion includes coupon information. Preferably, programming the label designs includes the steps of determining general field position parameters, determining field positions for each label, converting the field positions into coordinate numbers, programming the coordinate numbers into a desired label format
30 and generating the label in accordance with the desired label format. Product and merchandising information may be entered

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by creating and storing a table of merchandising messages in a microprocessor for each of the products to be sold, programming the table of merchandising messages into sales messages, programming products to refer to the sales messages, editing
5 the sales messages to change the merchandising messages and changing the text of the sales messages by editing the contents of the sales messages. A label may be printed by selecting a label cassette containing desired label designs, inserting the label cassette into a scale/label printer, selecting a product
10 number for the product being weighed and printing a label with product information and a selected message in accordance with the selected product number.

In addition, a second aspect of the present invention provides a label, comprising: a first portion; a second portion
15 attached to the first portion and being detachable from the first portion; and a perforation separating the first portion from the second portion, wherein the second portion has a back side which is sticky or non-sticky and a backing is placed on the sticky side when the back side of the second portion is
20 sticky; the first portion has a sticky back side so that the first portion may be attached to a product; and where the back side of the second portion has the backing, the backing is not removed from the second portion when the first portion is attached to the product; wherein product information is printed
25 on the first portion and merchandising information is printed on the second portion; and wherein the merchandising information includes coupon information.

A third aspect of the invention provides a weighing scale, comprising: weighing means; a main body having a

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cavity; a label cassette that can be inserted into or removed from the cavity; labels inserted into the label cassette and having an attachable portion and a detachable portion separated by a perforated portion; and printing means for printing the
5 attachable portion of the labels, to be attached to a product weighed, by the weighing means, with product information, and printing the detachable portion of the labels with merchandising information including coupon information.

Further, a weighing scale having internal electronics
10 is provided including a weighing platter for holding a product to be weighed, a weighing cross for supporting the weighing platter and a molded plastic cover for covering the weighing scale and preventing moisture from entering the internal electronics of the weighing scale. The molded plastic cover is
15 located under the weighing cross so as not to interfere with the weighing operation. It

1 can be held in place with screws or similar devices. The molded plastic cover
2 can be molded into two pieces, the two pieces being joined together by an
3 adhesive and in such a manner as to not allow moisture or condensation into the
4 weighing scale. One of the two pieces of the molded plastic cover has an
5 opening with a flap for allowing receipt of a label cassette.

6 These objects, together with other objects and advantages which will be
7 subsequently apparent, reside in the details of construction and operation as
8 more fully hereinafter described and claimed, reference being had to the
9 accompanying drawings, forming a part hereof, wherein like reference numerals
10 refer to like parts throughout.

11 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

12 FIG. 1 is a diagram of a weighing scale employing a method according to
13 the present invention;

14 FIG. 2 is a flowchart for generally explaining the operation of the present
15 invention;

16 FIG. 3 is a detailed flowchart for programming label designs according to
17 the present invention;

18 FIG. 4 is a detailed flowchart for entering product and merchandising
19 information according to the present invention;

1 FIG. 5 is a detailed flowchart for printing a label having merchandising
2 information according to the present invention;

3 FIGS. 6A-6D are diagrams of labels including label/merchandising
4 information generated by the method according to the present invention; and

5 FIG. 7 is a diagram of a weighing scale employing a molded plastic cover
6 according to the present invention.

7 DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

8 The present invention is directed to a method and apparatus for producing
9 labels. The labels are printed in a portion of a weighing scale 20 provided with
10 a removable label cassette 22. The removable label cassette 22 includes, for
11 example, a roll of label material (not shown). A label format is programmed and
12 then printed on the label material when an item is weighed. Various cassettes
13 including various label materials can easily be inserted or removed from the
14 weighing scale. Information is printed on the label material and can include, for
15 example, product information, ingredient information, recipes, sell by dates, use
16 by dates, store receipt dates, a time, price per pound, weight of the product, total
17 price, discount price, and UPC symbol. The label material can have a perforated
18 portion on any of its four sides. The perforation allows merchandising
19 information, including advertisements, manufacturers coupons or store coupons,
20 printed thereon, to be easily detached from the label (product) information which

1 includes, for example, the name of the product, the weight of the product, UPC
2 code, and price per pound. The coupon can include, for example, information
3 pertaining to any discounts, specials on the purchased item, advertising, cents-off
4 on a product, UPC code, expiration date, etc.

5 As shown in FIG. 1, the weighing scale 20 employed in the present
6 invention includes a main body 21 having an opening 24 for the insertion or
7 removal of the label cassette 22. The label cassette 22 can be front loading or
8 side loading. The optimum placement of the cassette opening is in the front of
9 the weighing scale for easy access by the operator for inserting and removing the
10 label cassette 22 and removal of the labels printed by the label cassette 22. The
11 weighing scale 20 also includes a control panel 26, a key sheet 28 located on the
12 control panel 26, a weigh platter 30, and a display column 31 including a seven
13 segment display 32 and a dot matrix display 34.

14 The method for generating a label according to the present invention is
15 described with respect to the flowchart in FIG. 2. That is, generally, the present
16 invention prints merchandising information by programming label designs and
17 entering product and merchandising information by way of the key sheet 28. The
18 display prompts the operator and shows the operator what has been
19 programmed. A label is then printed having the merchandising information
20 programmed therein.

1 The flowchart in FIG. 3 discloses a method for programming the label
2 designs. First, for example, a distributor which sells the weighing scale meets
3 with a customer to agree on general field position parameters for the labels to be
4 generated. Each label is drawn and the position of each field is clearly measured
5 in millimeters. The position of each field is then converted into coordinate
6 numbers. The coordinate numbers are programmed into a desired label format
7 in a microprocessor (not shown) in the weighing scale 20. A sample of the label
8 is then produced for the customer to determine whether any changes should be
9 made. If the customer does not agree to the format of the label, the label is then
10 redrawn with different field positions. Once the customer agrees to the format of
11 the label, all of the customer's weighing scales 20 are then programmed with the
12 label format before installation into the store, supermarket, etc.

13 Product and merchandising information is entered as shown in FIG. 4. That
14 is, a table of merchandising messages for each product is created and then
15 programmed into the microprocessor in the weighing scale 20. The
16 merchandising table is then converted into sales messages. The sales messages
17 have numbers, for example, from 7 to 99, but are not limited to these numbers.
18 Product look-up codes (PLUs) are then programmed into the weighing scale 20
19 and are programmed to refer to a respective sales message, for example, 7 to 99.
20 To change the merchandising information programmed for each respective PLU
21 code, the sales message can be easily edited by an operator and/or distributor.

1 To change the text programmed as a sales message, that is, change the sales
2 message in location 7, the contents of this location, or any of the locations 7-99,
3 can be quickly and easily edited by an operator. Once all the information
4 regarding the product and message associated therewith is programmed, a label
5 is printed with the programmed information.

6 The method for printing a label is shown by the flowchart in FIG. 5. First,
7 a label cassette 22 containing the type of merchandising labels required for that
8 product is inserted into the opening 24 in the weighing scale 20. That is, if a
9 coupon is not to be generated for that product, a label cassette containing
10 standard labels can be quickly and easily inserted into the weighing scale 20. If
11 a label to be printed also has a coupon or advertisement associated with the
12 product being weighed, then, for example, a label cassette containing labels
13 having perforations thereon is selected and inserted into the weighing scale.
14 Once the label cassette 22 is inserted into the weighing scale 20, the labels are
15 correctly aligned by, for example, pressing a feed key on the control panel 26.
16 The product to be weighed is then placed on the scale, or if it is a bakery item,
17 the PLU code corresponding to that product is selected. Once the PLU number
18 is selected, a label is printed having the required information thereon by pressing
19 a key on the control panel 26. The weighing scale 20 can also be set to
20 automatically print labels when a package is placed on the weigh platter 30,
21 rather than having to hit a print key.

1 FIGS. 6A-6D are diagrams of various label formats, in which
2 label/merchandising information generated by the method of the present invention
3 is printed on a label. Labels of the present invention are shown in FIGs. 6A-6D.
4 Labels 40 according to the present invention have a perforated portion 41 on one
5 of four sides. That is, for example, either a top portion or a bottom portion is
6 perforated in a horizontal direction or a left portion or right portion is perforated
7 in a vertical direction. The portion 42 of the label 40 having product information,
8 can include the product name, ingredients, price per pound, weight, and date, for
9 example. The back of the portion 42 is peeled off so that it adheres to the
10 package. The detachable portion 44 of the label 40 includes a coupon or
11 advertisement. The portion 44 can include the name of an item, cents-off,
12 expiration date, date generated, discounts, a bar code for allowing automatic
13 scanning of the coupon, and any advertising messages. The portion 44 maintains
14 its backing so that it does not stick to the package when the label is adhered
15 thereto. If the customer wishes to use the coupon (detachable portion 44)
16 attached to the label 40, all that is required is that the coupon be torn off at the
17 perforated portion 41. If the label material is sticky, then the backing remains on
18 the coupon. If the label material is non-sticky, then the backing can be removed
19 from the coupon. As noted above, the labels 40 can have a store-generated
20 coupon attached thereto as shown in FIG. 6A. In addition, the labels can be
21 printed by the manufacturer as shown in FIG. 6B so that everyone receives the

1 same coupon no matter what product is being weighed. The manufacturer's
2 label/coupon can be pre-printed with the manufacturer's name. Any of the labels
3 and coupons, whether store generated or manufacturer generated, can be
4 colored using various colors for each label/coupon.

5 Further, the store coupon can match certain items with certain products
6 such as shown in FIGs 6A or 6C. That is, if, for example, a package of bagels is
7 purchased, a coupon off of cream cheese can be generated. Or, for example, a
8 coupon for a packet of cajun spices can be generated when shrimp or fish is
9 purchased, etc. Thus, the coupon can be generated by the weighing scale 20 in
10 accordance with the product purchased. In addition, the weighing scale 20 and
11 printer (not shown) can print regular labels as shown in FIG. 6D without a
12 coupon. If it is not desired to generate a coupon with a purchased product, an
13 advertising message or recipe can be generated instead. The messages and
14 coupons can be easily changed according to various codes in the microprocessor
15 in the weighing scale 20. This allows a store to target its marketing, have control
16 over coupons being generated and easily discount a product if the store is
17 overstocked.

18 The microprocessor in the weighing scale 20 can be programmed to store
19 various label formats. The label format of the machine can be changed to match
20 the label format in the label cassette.

As noted above, different label formats are preprogrammed by the dealer or distributor. The store determines the UPC code and the PLU code - the PLU code being the product look-up code. In the program mode, the PLU code
5 is typed in along with the product, ingredients, recipes, price, etc. A weighed mode or non-weighed mode is then selected in accordance with whether the item is, for example, a deli item or a bakery item. Further, UPC codes, up to three dates and a time and a discounted price and regular
10 price (see, for example, 46 in FIGs. 6A and 6C) can be programmed.

To protect the weighing scale 20 from moisture and condensation, a cover 50 can be provided as shown in FIG. 7. The cover 50 is a molded plastic cover which covers
15 everything on the scale except for the opening 24 for the label cassette 22 and the weighing platter 30. The cover 50 has a flap to cover the opening 24 so that the label cassette 22 can be easily inserted and removed. The cover 50 is attached under the weighing cross 52 which supports the
20 weighing platter 30, so as not to affect the weight of the item. The molded plastic cover 50 is thin, lightweight and is molded to tightly fit the weighing scale 20 so that there is no problem operating the weighing scale 20. The only portion not covered by the cover 50 is the display column 31
25 including the 7-segment display 32 and the dot matrix display 34. The cover 50 is removable to allow entry to the weighing machine 20 when servicing is required. The cover 50 can be made of two

1 portions joined together with double-sided tape. The seam is intended to overlap
2 and be in a downward direction to ensure that water does not seep through.

3 The features of the present invention include a large bright fluorescent
4 alphanumeric dot display 34 plus a numeric display 32. Nine messages can be
5 programmed into the display at selectable speeds. Each message can hold up
6 to 100 characters. In addition, there are, at this time, 93 extra text areas which
7 can be used for recipes, ingredients, or coupon labels. Depending on the
8 microprocessor employed, this area could be increased. Further, nutritional facts
9 can be programmed as part of the PLU code and can be changed immediately
10 by an operator. A word dictionary can be employed in the microprocessor so that
11 codes can be used to replace words in the product description so as to save
12 memory. The device can also network at least 31 scales to a master scale (a total
13 of 32 scales) to facilitate the ease of programming, price changes, etc. A mark
14 down can be shown by price or percent and batch file prices can be updated
15 (that is, an operator can program in price changes for a future date and can
16 activate these price changes when needed). As above-mentioned, optimally, the
17 label cassette 22 is front loading for ease in label production and detachment.
18 Further, at least three dates, for example, a use by date, a sell by date, and the
19 date the store received the product, and a time can be printed. The time can be
20 printed to allow a customer to know when a short shelf life item such as a
21 sandwich has been made, or coffee has been ground. In addition, items can be

1 programmed to be displayed on the display without the need to create a new
2 message or to require additional programming. That is, an item that has been
3 programmed into the memory of a microprocessor can be displayed by merely
4 hitting a sequence of keys rather than retyping the pertinent information. In
5 addition, messages can be programmed to scroll across the display. The
6 messages can hold up to, for example, four lines of information and can
7 correspond to specials for the day, helpful hints or recipes for preparing an item,
8 as noted above. The speed at which the message scrolls across the display is
9 adjustable. The message can flash and/or it can be set up to come on at certain
10 times of the day or on particular days.

11 The printer employed in the present invention can be any type of printer
12 feasible for use in a weigh scale environment. Programming of information and
13 fixed position parameters depends on the type of programming the
14 microprocessors employ. The present invention was developed and tested
15 employing an AC-2000 manufactured by ISHIDA SCALES MFG. CO., LTD. and
16 ISHIDA U.S.A. INC., but can be adapted to any type of weigh scale.

17 The foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the
18 present invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily
19 occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact
20 construction and application shown and described, and accordingly all suitable

- 1 modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the
- 2 invention and the appended claims and their equivalents.

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CLAIMS:

1. A method for printing product information and merchandising information on a label while measuring a weight of a product by a weighing scale, which method
5 comprises the steps of:

(a) programming label designs into a microprocessor contained in the weighing scale, so that a first portion of the label includes the product information and a second portion of the label separated from the first
10 portion by a perforated portion includes the merchandising information;

(b) entering the product information and the merchandising information into the microprocessor;

(c) weighing the product by using the weighing
15 scale; and

(d) printing the label including the product information and the merchandising information by a printer which is an integral part of the weighing scale,

wherein the merchandising information printed on
20 the second portion includes information of a coupon;

the second portion is detachable from the first portion due to the perforated portion; the second portion has a backside which is sticky or non-sticky and a backing is placed on the sticky back side when the back side of the
25 second portion is sticky;

the first portion has a back capable of being peeled off to reveal a sticky back side so that the first portion may be attached to the product; and

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when the back side of the second portion has the backing, the backing is not removed from the second portion when the first portion is attached to the product.

2. The method according to claim 1, which is
5 conducted in a grocery store.

3. The method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the step (a) comprises the substeps of:

(i) determining general field position parameters;

(ii) determining field positions for each label;

10 (iii) converting the field positions into
coordinate numbers;

(iv) programming the coordinate numbers into a
desired label format; and

(v) generating the label in accordance with the
15 desired label format.

4. The method according to claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein the perforated portion is formed by a line of perforations parallel to one of four edges of the label.

5. The method according to claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein
20 the step (b) comprises the substeps of:

(i) creating and storing a table of merchandising
messages for the product, in the microprocessor;

(ii) programming the table of merchandising
messages into sales messages;

25 (iii) programming the product to refer to the
sales messages;

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(iv) editing the sales messages to change the merchandising messages; and

(v) changing the text of the sales messages by editing contents of the sales messages.

5 6. The method according to claim 1, 2, 3 or 5, wherein the step (c) comprises the substeps of:

(i) selecting a label cassette containing desired label designs;

10 (ii) inserting the label cassette into the printer;

(iii) selecting a product number for the product being weighed; and

15 (iv) printing the label identifying the product and a selected message in accordance with the selected product number.

7. The method according to claim 6, wherein the substep (iv) of the step (c) comprises the substep of producing a label having the perforated line along one of four edges.

20 8. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the second portion of the label also includes at least one of item information and advertising information.

9. A scale for weighing a product and printing a label containing information of the product, which scale
25 comprises:

a weighing platter for holding the product to be weighed;

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a weighing cross for supporting the weighing
platter;

a main body having an opening and containing
therein a microprocessor;

5 a label cassette which can be inserted into and
removed from the opening and which contains a roll of labels
having an attachable portion and a detachable portion
separated by a perforated portion;

a control panel having a key sheet thereon for
10 entering product information and merchandising information
into the microprocessor;

a display column for displaying the product and
merchandising information; and

a printer for printing, as programmed in the
15 microprocessor, the attachable portion of the labels, to be
attached to a product weighed, with the product information,
and printing the detachable portion of the labels with the
merchandising information including information of a coupon,
wherein:

20 the second portion is detachable from the first
portion due to the perforated portion; the second portion
has a backside which is sticky or non-sticky and a backing
is placed on the sticky back side when the back side of the
second portion is sticky;

25 the first portion has a back capable of being
peeled off to reveal a sticky back side so that the first
portion may be attached to the product; and

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when the back side of the second portion has the backing, the backing is not removed from the second portion when the first portion is attached to the product.

10. The weighing scale according to claim 9, wherein
5 the display column comprises:

a seven segment display; and

a dot matrix display.

11. The weighing scale according to claim 9 or 10,
wherein the detachable portion is also printed with at least
10 one of advertising information and product information.

12. The weighing scale according to claim 9, 10 or 11,
wherein the detachable portion of the labels is detachable
at the perforated portion in a vertical direction along a
left or right portion of the labels.

15 13. The weighing scale according to claim 9, 10 or 11,
wherein the detachable portion of the labels is detachable
at the perforated portion in a horizontal direction along a
top or bottom portion of the labels.

14. The weighing scale according to any one of claims
20 9 to 13, wherein the perforated portion is formed by a line
of perforations.

15. A label produced in accordance with the method
claimed in claim 1, comprising:

a first portion; and

25 a second portion attached to the first portion and
being detachable from the first portion due to a perforation

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separating the first portion from the second portion,
wherein:

product information is printed on the first
portion and merchandising information is printed on the
5 second portion;

the merchandising information includes information
of a coupon;

the second portion has a back side which is sticky
or non-sticky and a backing is placed on the sticky side
10 when the back side of the second portion is sticky;

the first portion has a back capable of being
peeled off to reveal a sticky back side so that the first
portion may be attached to a product; and

where the back side of the second portion has the
15 backing, the backing is not removed from the second portion
when the first portion is attached to the product.

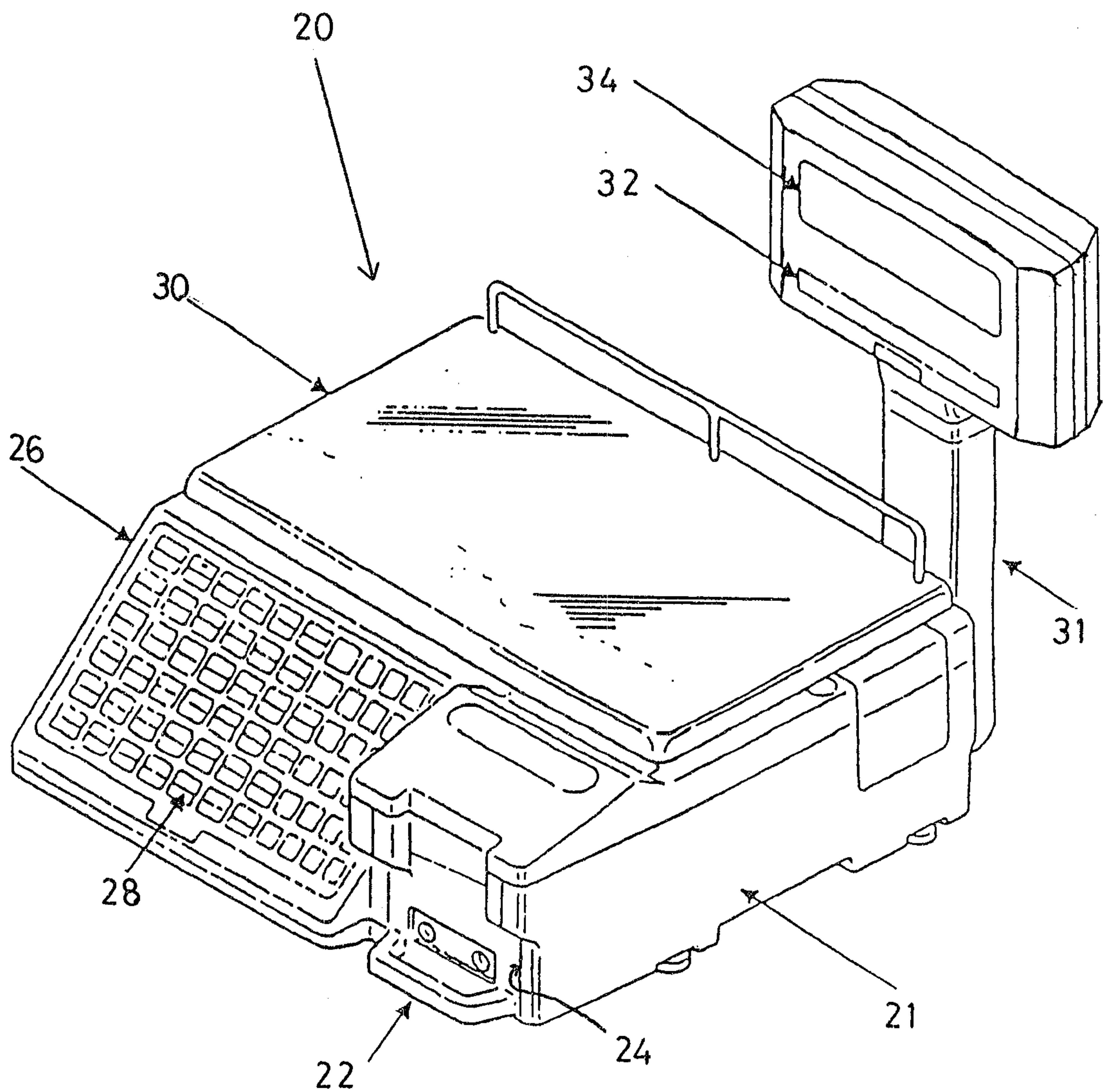
16. The label according to claim 15, wherein the
perforation is parallel to one of four edges of the label.

17. The label according to claim 15 or 16, wherein the
20 merchandising information also includes advertising
information.

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PATENT AGENTS

FIG. 1



Patented Agents
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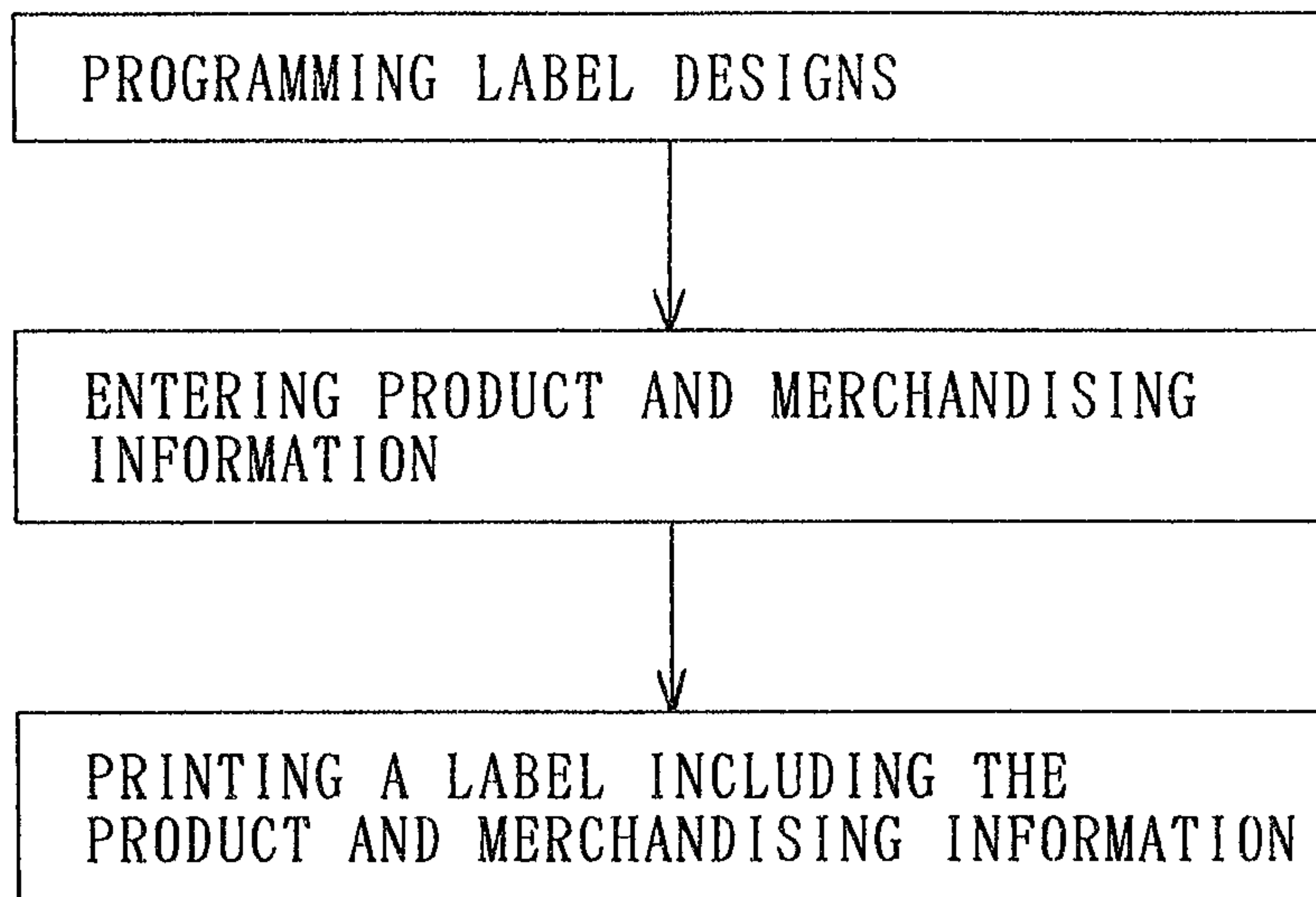


FIG.2

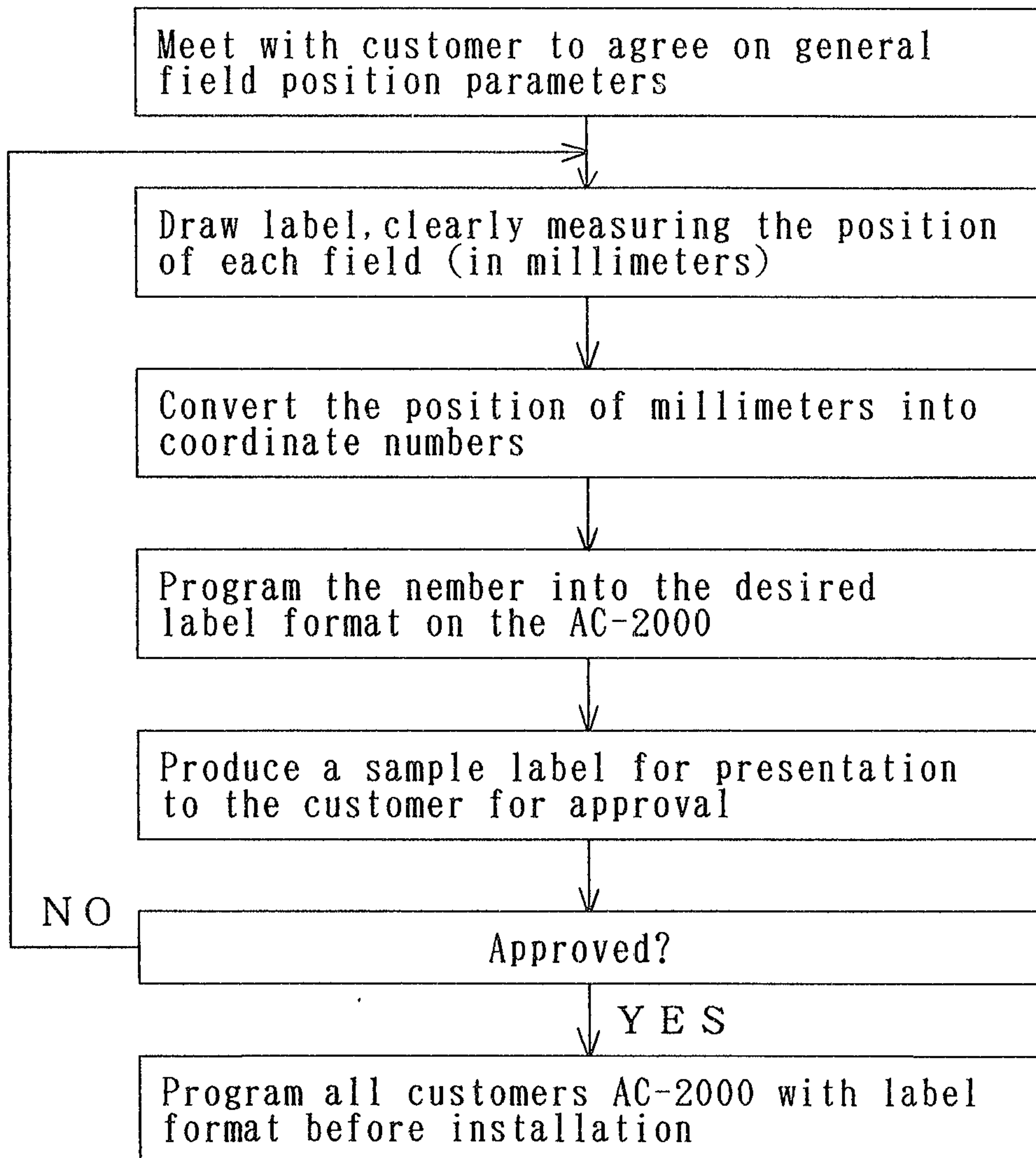


FIG.3

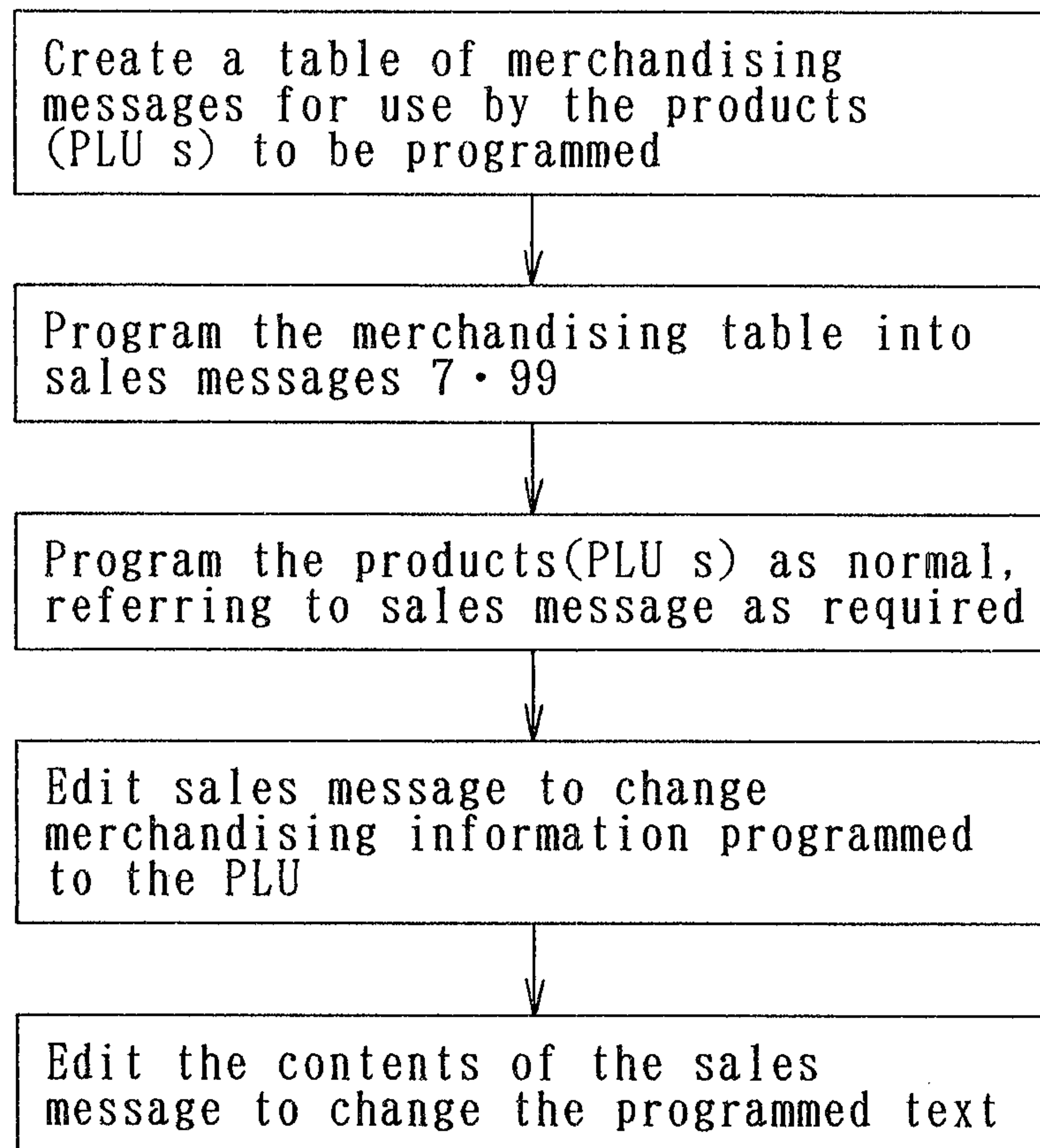


FIG.4

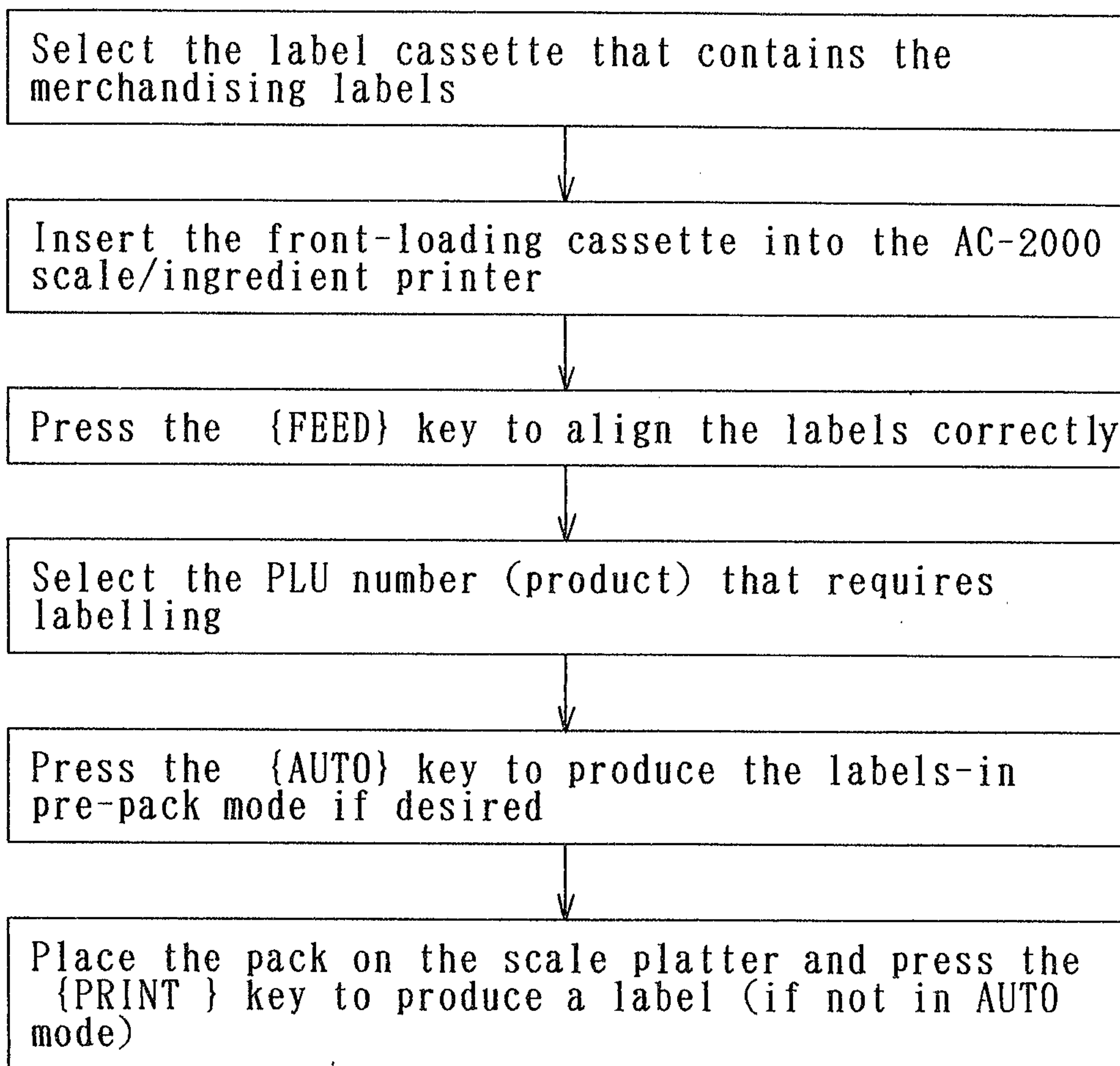


FIG.5



FIG. 6A



FIG. 6B



FIG. 6C

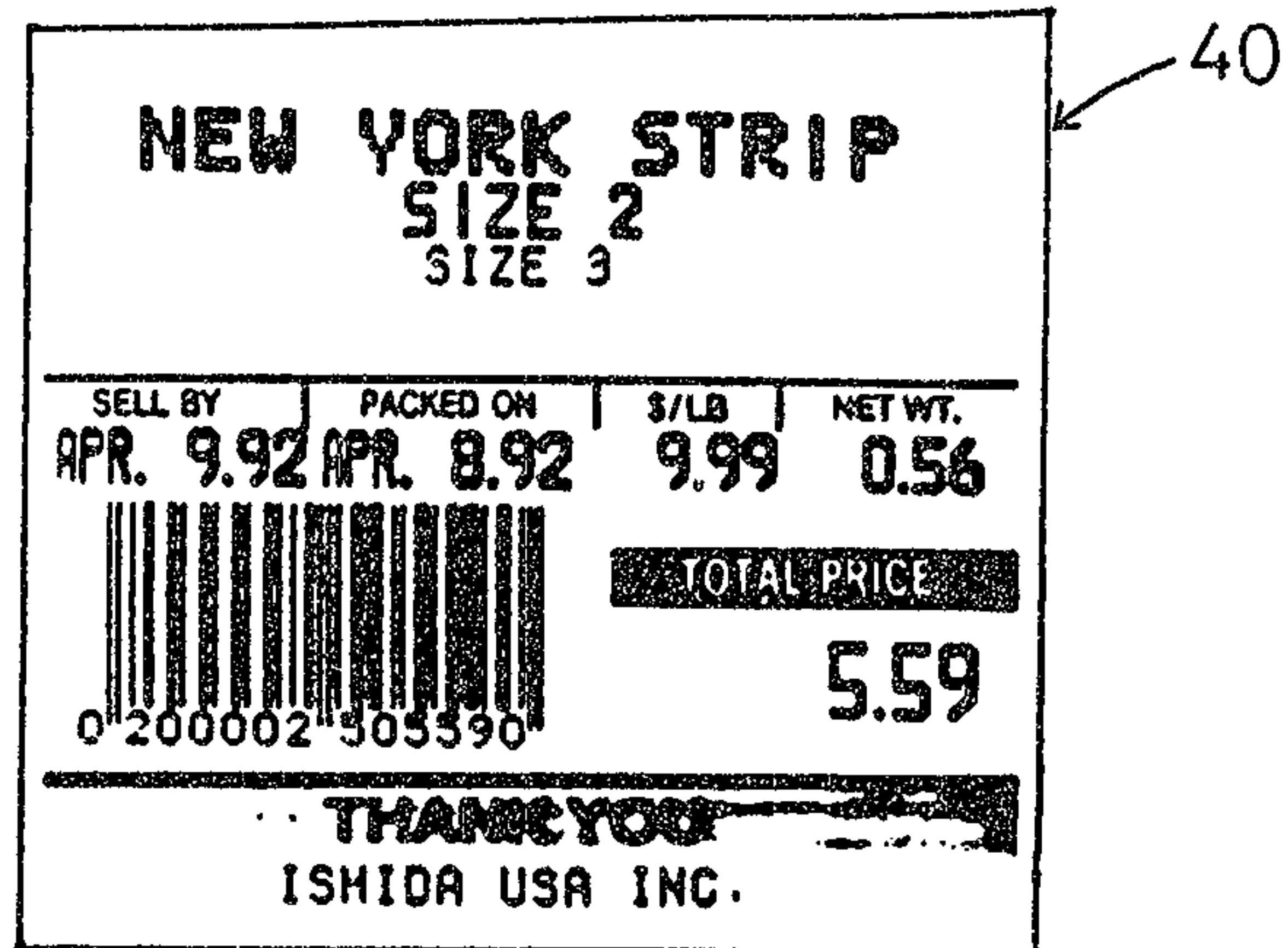
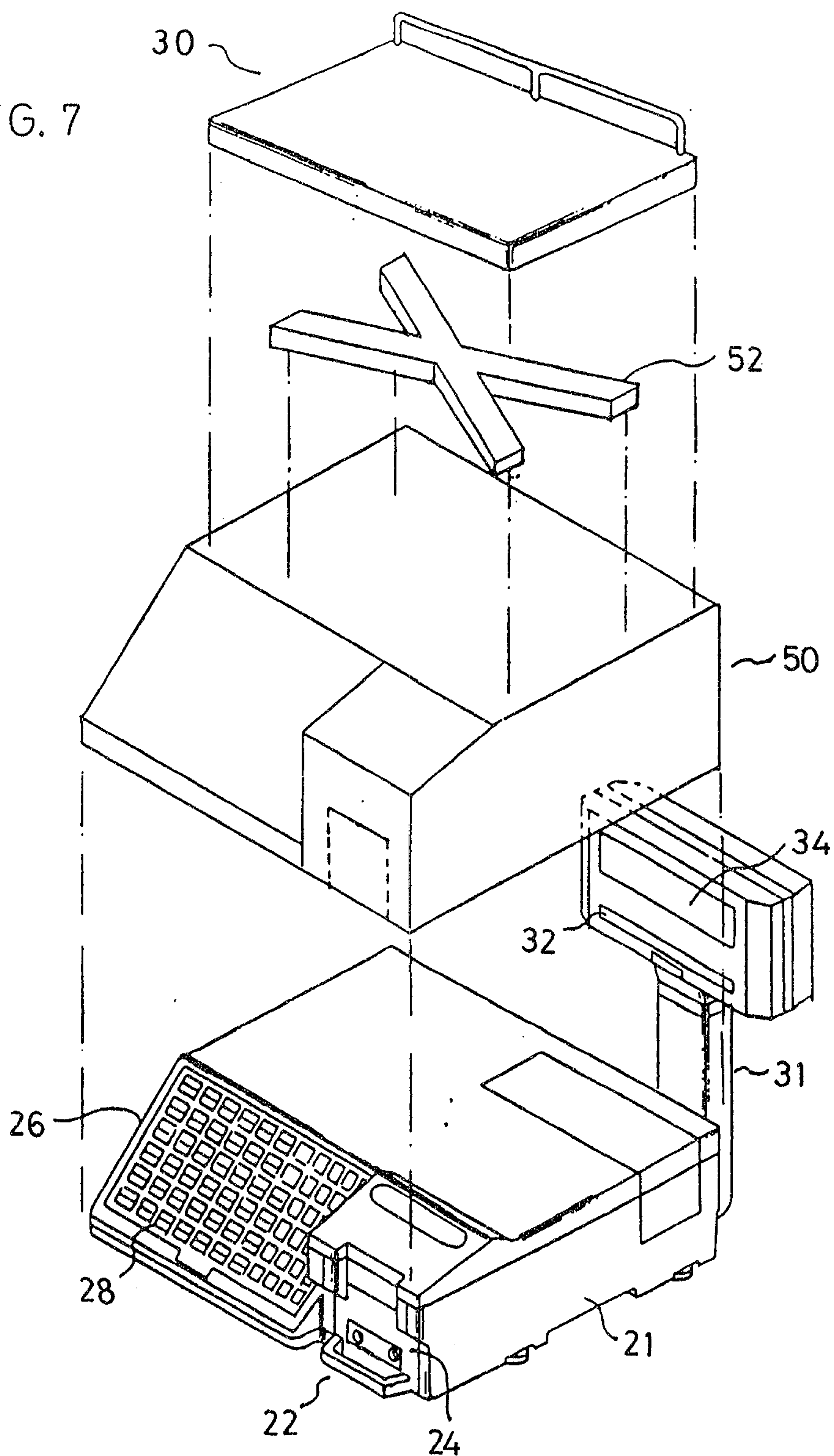


FIG. 6D

FIG. 7



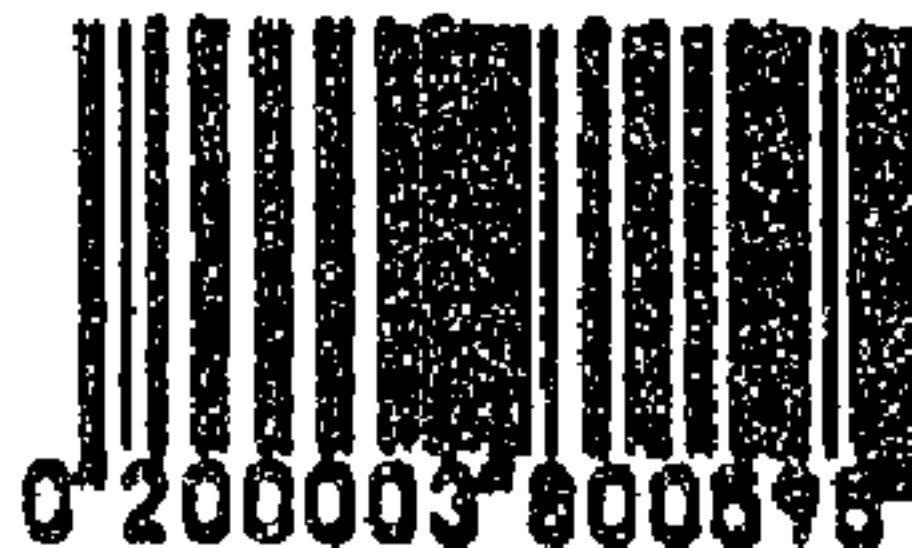
**KOSHER BAGELS
(12 PACK)**

---INGREDIENTS---

ENRICHED UNBLEACHED FLOUR
(WHEAT FLOUR, NICKIN, THIAMINE
MONONITRATE), VEGETABLE
SHORTENING, WATER, SUGAR,
YEAST, KOSHER SALT.

20¢ (1 lb 4oz)

APR 15.92



**.50
OFF
BEST
FOODS
CREAM
CHEESE**

WITH THIS
IN-STORE COUPON
(VALID 8 DAYS
DATE BELOW).



APR 16.92

30.59

41

40

44

46

42