CLAIMS

1. A dispensing machine assembly comprising one or more modules or sub-assemblies~~,~~ that are components of the machine assembly, at least one of said modules being provided with a readable memory device, or tag, having a read-only portion and a writeable portion, said machine comprising a controller device for interacting with said memory device, ~~characterized in that~~wherein

said tag contains identification data to identify said module,

said data including the characteristics of the modules and/or the components of the machine assembly, wherein said controller comprises information to identify said module by reading the data of the module tag and comparing said data with a configuration table of acceptable machine configurations and

further comprises means to allow or deny use of said module according to said comparison result.

2. A dispensing machine according to claim 1, wherein said information comprises at least one of: a date, a configuration table and an algorithm for data coding.

3. A dispensing machine according to any previous claim, wherein said tag further comprises a re-writable portion containing data containing ~~an amount of consumables~~the expected life-span of the module, said data being progressively altered in said tag portion with the module use.

4. A dispensing machine according to claim 3, wherein ~~said module is a food product module comprising a food product container, said food module tag comprising initialization data and algorithm coded data~~said tag provides information regarding the operating parameters of the module to which it is applied.

5. A dispensing machine according to any claim 1 to 4, wherein said tag comprises a read-only memory containing first data and a second, writable, memory portion containing second data, said second data containing said first data written through a coding algorithm, to provide at least part of said module identification data.

6. A dispensing machine assembly ~~comprising one or more modules or sub-assemblies, at least one of said modules being provided with a readable memory device, or tag, having a read-only portion and a writeable portion, said machine comprising a controller device for interacting with said memory device, wherein said tag contains identification data to identify said module, characterized in that~~ according to any claim 1 to 5, wherein

said identification data of the module comprise initialization data selected from the data of production of said module, date of pre-delivery inspection and date of first use of said module or their combination.

7. A method of controlling the operation of a dispensing machine assembly comprising one or more modules or sub-assemblies that are components of the machine assembly, having a readable memory device, or tag; said machine having a tag controller device for interacting with said module tag by reading and/or writing and/or transmitting information data on or through said tag, characterized in

comprising the steps of providing said tag with identification data to identify the module to said machine, said data including the characteristics of the modules and/or the components of the machine assembly,

wherein said controller reads the data of a module tag, compares said identification data with a configuration table of acceptable machine configurations and allows operation of said module only if said module is within said acceptable machine configuration.

8. A method according to claim 7, where said module is associated with a tag having a re-writable memory portion containing data concerning ~~an amount of consumables~~the expected life-span of said module, said data being progressively altered with the module use and said module use being denied after all the data have been altered.

~~9. A method according to claim 8, wherein said module is a food product container and said consumables are an amount of food.~~

~~10~~9. A method according to any claim 7 to ~~9~~8, wherein said data ~~on consumables~~ is selected from the number of performable operations and/or the number of remaining cycles before exhaustion of the module life-span.

~~11~~10. A method according to any claim 7 to ~~10~~9, wherein said tag is provided with a read-only memory containing first data and with a writable memory, wherein said identification data are obtained by reading said first data, elaborating said first data through an algorithm and writing said algorithm coded data in a portion of the write-once memory on the said tag.

~~12~~11. A method according to any claim 7 to ~~11~~10, wherein said identification data are obtained by writing in said tag memory an initialization data selected from the data of production of said module, date of pre-delivery inspection and date of first use or their combination.

~~13~~12. A method ~~of controlling the operation of a dispensing machine assembly comprising one or more modules or sub-assemblies, having a readable memory device, or tag; said machine having a tag controller device for interacting with said module tag by reading and/or writing and/or transmitting information data on or through said tag~~according to any claim 7 to 11, ~~characterized in~~ comprising the steps of

providing said tag with identification data to identify the module to said machine, said data including initialization data selected from at least one of date of production of module, date of pre-delivery inspection and date of first use of said module,

comparing said identification data to information provided to said controller and

operating said dispensing machine according to the information gathered from said tag and the result of said data comparison.

~~14~~13. A method according to claim ~~13~~12, wherein said controller information comprises at least one of: a date, a modules configuration table and an algorithm for data coding.

~~15. A method according to claim 13 or 14, further including the features of any claim 7 to 12.~~

14. A method according to claims 8 or 9, wherein said component of the machine assembly is a food container and a tag is associated with a fresh amount of food without being secured to the food container and in that when said food container is refilled said tag detached from said container gives instructions to the tag reader to accept a fresh amount of food.

15. A method according to claim 14, wherein said tag detached from said container gives instructions to the tag reader to accept a fresh amount of food and to correspondingly re-write the tag of the food container.

CLAIMS

1. A dispensing machine assembly comprising one or more modules or sub-assemblies that are components of the machine assembly, at least one of said modules being provided with a readable memory device, or tag, having a read-only portion and a writeable portion, said machine comprising a controller device for interacting with said memory device, wherein

said tag contains identification data to identify said module,

said data including the characteristics of the modules and/or the components of the machine assembly, wherein said controller comprises information to identify said module by reading the data of the module tag and comparing said data with a configuration table of acceptable machine configurations and

further comprises means to allow or deny use of said module according to said comparison result.

2. A dispensing machine according to claim 1, wherein said information comprises at least one of: a date, a configuration table and an algorithm for data coding.

3. A dispensing machine according to any previous claim, wherein said tag further comprises a re-writable portion containing data containing the expected life-span of the module, said data being progressively altered in said tag portion with the module use.

4. A dispensing machine according to claim 3, wherein said tag provides information regarding the operating parameters of the module to which it is applied.

5. A dispensing machine according to any claim 1 to 4, wherein said tag comprises a read-only memory containing first data and a second, writable, memory portion containing second data, said second data containing said first data written through a coding algorithm, to provide at least part of said module identification data.

6. A dispensing machine assembly according to any claim 1 to 5, whereinsaid identification data of the module comprise initialization data selected from the data of production of said module, date of pre-delivery inspection and date of first use of said module or their combination.

7. A method of controlling the operation of a dispensing machine assembly comprising one or more modules or sub-assemblies that are components of the machine assembly, having a readable memory device, or tag; said machine having a tag controller device for interacting with said module tag by reading and/or writing and/or transmitting information data on or through said tag, characterized in

comprising the steps of providing said tag with identification data to identify the module to said machine, said data including the characteristics of the modules and/or the components of the machine assembly,

wherein said controller reads the data of a module tag, compares said identification data with a configuration table of acceptable machine configurations and allows operation of said module only if said module is within said acceptable machine configuration.

8. A method according to claim 7, where said module is associated with a tag having a re-writable memory portion containing data concerning the expected life-span of said module, said data being progressively altered with the module use and said module use being denied after all the data have been altered.

9. A method according to any claim 7 to 8, wherein said data is selected from the number of performable operations and/or the number of remaining cycles before exhaustion of the module life-span.

10. A method according to any claim 7 to 9, wherein said tag is provided with a read-only memory containing first data and with a writable memory, wherein said identification data are obtained by reading said first data, elaborating said first data through an algorithm and writing said algorithm coded data in a portion of the write-once memory on the said tag.

11. A method according to any claim 7 to 10, wherein said identification data are obtained by writing in said tag memory an initialization data selected from the data of production of said module, date of pre-delivery inspection and date of first use or their combination.

12. A method according to any claim 7 to 11, comprising the steps of

providing said tag with identification data to identify the module to said machine, said data including initialization data selected from at least one of date of production of module, date of pre-delivery inspection and date of first use of said module,

comparing said identification data to information provided to said controller and

operating said dispensing machine according to the information gathered from said tag and the result of said data comparison.

13. A method according to claim 12, wherein said controller information comprises at least one of: a date, a modules configuration table and an algorithm for data coding.

14. A method according to claims 8 or 9, wherein said component of the machine assembly is a food container and a tag is associated with a fresh amount of food without being secured to the food container and in that when said food container is refilled said tag detached from said container gives instructions to the tag reader to accept a fresh amount of food.

15. A method according to claim 14, wherein said tag detached from said container gives instructions to the tag reader to accept a fresh amount of food and to correspondingly re-write the tag of the food container.