

USE OF AN AIR-PERMEABLE PAPER SHEET AS SUPPORT ELEMENT
FOR A STACK OF FABRICS

Technical field

5 The present invention relates to the technical sector of manufacturing and it relates more particularly to a novel type of sheet support used as an element for transporting/conveying a mat which consists of a plurality of superimposed textile layers
10 and which is intended to be cut up into the form of elementary panels of suitable shape in order subsequently to be joined together to produce the final product, such as a garment.

15 Prior art

 In the manufacturing field, it was proposed a very long time ago, as is especially apparent from FR-A-2,194,823 (corresponding to US 3,495,492), to produce mats from textile structures (wovens or knits)
20 intended for producing the manufactured article, which mats are transferred onto a cutting table.

 During this operation, the fabric mat is placed on an air-permeable support and the cutting into elementary panels is carried out while creating a
25 vacuum beneath the said table, so that the stack is perfectly held down during the cutting phase.

 To avoid any movement of the elementary layers one with respect to another, and as is especially apparent from the aforementioned FR document and from
30 FR-A-2,030,792 (corresponding to US 3,495,492), the mat is covered in its upper part by an air-impermeable plastic film, thereby making it possible to compact the said mat during the cutting phase and avoiding any movement of the elementary layers one with respect to
35 another.

 With regard to the air-permeable supports which are used for supporting and transferring the mat

consisting of continuous textile webs to the cutting station, various solutions have been proposed.

Thus, in FR 2,030,792 the support consists of a layer of material into which the tool can penetrate and
5 which has channels or passages, thereby making it possible, with the vacuum exerted beneath the stack, to exert a suction action tending to hold down the material on the support table.

At the present time, the solution most often
10 used consists in placing relatively rigid papers beneath the stack, these being perforated by stamping or notching, which have the essential advantage of being relatively inexpensive.

One of the problems which arise with such
15 supports, therefore having channels or orifices allowing the air to flow out, stems from the fact that the suction is not uniformly distributed over the entire surface of the mat and, in some cases, there may therefore be irregular "compaction" possibly resulting
20 in defects in the cut panels.

In addition, the operation of forming the perforations is necessarily carried out after the manufacture of the paper and therefore results in the production of scrap.

25

Summary of the invention

The object of the invention is to propose the use of an air-permeable paper sheet as support element for a fabric stack on a manufacturing line, especially
30 as support during the cutting phase. Such paper sheets are known per se, as revealed especially in Patents EP-A-616,074, EP-A-483,816 and EP-A-426,288 and have been proposed for producing articles having a great capacity for absorbing liquids, especially for the
35 purpose of using them as wiping materials, hygiene articles, etc.

However, it has been found, and it is this which forms the subject of the invention, that it is possible to use such materials, which are inexpensive

to manufacture, as support elements for a stack of fabrics (mat) on a manufacturing line, especially during the operation of cutting the said stack in order to produce elementary panels of suitable shape which are subsequently joined together to produce the final product.

It has been found, surprisingly, that the use of such a paper sheet, instead of the relatively rigid papers perforated by stamping or notching which were used in this technical field, helps to compact the stack under the action of the suction exerted during this cutting phase, ensures that the said mat slides easily on the table when placed thereon, prevents the textile structure from being marked, especially when it is a lightweight structure, and finally can be used practically for any type of textile structure.

For such an application, as paper sheet intended to serve as support, a sheet having, in its thickness, pores or fine perforations distributed over its entire surface will be used, the said sheet having a "bulk" or "body" expressed in cubic centimetres per gram of greater than 2.5, making it capable of allowing air to pass through it due to the effect of suction produced beneath its underside.

According to a first embodiment, the sheet structure has pores uniformly distributed over its entire surface, the said pores having a diameter of less than one millimetre and preferably between 50 and 150 microns.

According to a second embodiment, the pores or fine perforations are distributed in the form of patterns having a central region with high air permeability surrounded by a denser fibrous region with lower permeability.

Lastly, according to a final embodiment, the spacing between the centres of two consecutive patterns is less than 5 mm and preferably less than 3 mm, the central region with high permeability containing no fibres and having a total area of about 1 to 2 mm².



The invention also relates to a process for obtaining a paper sheet that can be used as support element for a fabric stack on a manufacturing line, which consists in producing a filter paper directly on
5 a paper machine, without any special modification, characterized in that, when obtaining the said paper:

- 10 - during the preparation of the pulp, the cellulose fibres (wood pulp) are individualized without refining them excessively so as to maintain the maximum permeability;
- the said pulp is fed to the machine with a very low concentration of less than one gram per litre, thereby making it possible to obtain a bulking sheet; and
- 15 - the sheet produced is not compressed at the wet end of the machine so as to maintain its permeability.

Preferably, according to the invention, the permeability is maximized by subjecting the paper sheet
20 produced, before it is dried, to a textiling treatment which consists in locally displacing the fibres by means of fluid jets or knives through a mesh having a coarse texture or through a perforated cylinder of the rotary printing cylinder type, or screen-printing type,
25 so as to form patterns having a central region of high air permeability surrounded by a region with lower permeability.

In such a case of textiling treatment, the latter may have the consequence either of leaving in
30 the central part only a small minority of fibres or of possibly producing a true perforation containing no fibres.

Such a treatment may be carried out on machines of known type, for example of the type forming the
35 subject-matter in particular of FR-A-2,625,937.

Optionally, in order to improve the tear strength of the paper, it may be envisaged to incorporate synthetic or artificial fibres into the cellulose pulp, and to do so in an amount of 5 to 25%,

the incorporation of such fibres moreover having a complementary effect of aerating the sheet and of consequently improving the permeability.

It has been found that an incorporation of less than 5% has no significant effect and that if this incorporation is greater than 25%, then, on the one hand, the manufacturing costs increase appreciably and, on the other hand and above all, it is absolutely essential to use additional binders.

Finally, as known in the paper field, it may be envisaged to incorporate an additional binder in an amount of about 5 to 25%, thereby making it possible to achieve chemical bonding, which improves the mechanical properties. Optionally, it could be envisaged to incorporate less than 5% of additional binders, but in this case the mechanical properties are hardly improved. Above 25%, the costs increase appreciably without any significant improvement in the properties.

As reinforcing fibres, it is possible to use synthetic fibres such as polyester, polyamide, polypropylene or polyethylene fibres, or even artificial fibres such as viscose fibres, or even natural fibres such as flax or cotton fibres for example.

The possible binders will be chosen from the following ingredients, possibly combined together:

- conventional polymers also called "LATEX", particularly of the acrylic type, ethylene-vinyl acetate type, vinyl acetate type, polyvinyl alcohol type, styrene-butadiene type, etc., and their associated copolymers by copolymerization or terpolymerization;
- starch, carboxymethylcellulose, hexamethylcellulose;
- polyamide or polyamine epichlorohydrin;
- heat-bonding fibres.

Embodiment of the invention

The invention and the advantages that it provides will, however, be more clearly understood by means of the illustrative examples given below by way of indication, but implying no limitation, in which
5 examples the properties of the paper according to the invention are compared with three specimens of conventional perforated papers referred to as Sp1, Sp2, Sp3, respectively.

10 These examples are illustrated by the appended figures in which:

- Figures 1, 2 and 3 are reproductions, on a scale of 1, of three conventional perforated papers;
- 15 - Figure 4 is a reproduction, with a magnification of about 200, of a sheet structure in which the pores are distributed uniformly over the entire surface of the said sheet; and
- 20 - Figure 5 is a reproduction, magnified by about 30, of a sheet structure that has received a textiling treatment which reorients the fibres.

Example 1

25 A paper that can be used according to the invention as a support element for a stack of fabrics on a manufacturing line, is produced from a conventional paper composition consisting of 77% unbleached southern-pine kraft pulp and 8% unbleached
30 fluff pulp.

In the circuit, sufficient water is added in order to obtain a final dilution of less than 1 g/litre, namely, in the present case, 0.3 g/litre, allowing the fibres to be uniformly dispersed.

35 Binders consisting of 5% pregelatinized cationic starch and 10% vinyl acetate latex are incorporated, these binders being incorporated by any conventional technique such as a padding, spraying or

imprinting or "size press" technique and, in the present case, a "size press" technique.

After drying and crosslinking, the end product is wound up with the desired width by the user and has
5 a structure as illustrated in Figure 4.

The table below gives the characteristics of such a product compared with three conventional perforated papers as illustrated in Figure 1 (Sp1), Figure 2 (Sp2) and Figure 3 (Sp3).

10

Characteristics	Units	Invention	"Perforated" papers		
			Sp1	Sp2	Sp3
Grammage	g/m ²	45.6	67	84	56
Thickness	microns	161	124	160	89
Body	cm ³ /g	3.53	1.85	1.9	1.59
Permeability	l/m ² /s under 196 Pa	309	112	822	305
Tensile strength, machine direction	N/m	3252	3726	2898	1762
Tensile strength, cross direction	N/m	2123	1792	728	736
Elongation, machine direction	%	2.6	1.8	1.3	0.9
Elongation, cross direction	%	5.5	2.2	0.9	1.4
Tear strength, machine direction	Cn	187	198	185	100
Tear strength, cross direction	Cn	207	332	210	129
Mean pore diameter	microns	50	several millimetres		

It has been found that during the use, as
15 support element for a stack of fabrics on a manufacturing line, of such a paper, despite a mean permeability of 309 l/m²/s - whereas in the control specimens the permeability may sometimes be markedly higher (see specimen 2) - in practice the hold-down of
20 the textile stack on the cutting table is improved, making the cutting easier.

Such an improvement may be explained, on the one hand, by the fact that the outflow of air produced by the suction source takes place uniformly over the entire surface of the paper through the pores which are
5 uniformly distributed over the latter and, on the other hand, that this outflow is also facilitated by the markedly higher "body" compared with the prior products.

10 Example 2

A paper sheet that can be used according to the invention as support for a stack of fabrics is produced by carrying out, before adding the binder as in Example 1, a textiling treatment by passing it over a
15 conventional machine for conventional fluid jet or knife treatment, of the type of those sold by the company ICBT Perfojet.

In order to produce such a paper, a paper pulp comprising, as in Example 1:

- 20 • 77% unbleached southern-pine kraft pulp; and
 • 8% unbleached fluff pulp
is used.

The entire pulp is defibred/refined to only
15 degrees Schopper-Riegler with approximately
25 30 g/litre of water.

As in Example 1, sufficient water is provided in the circuit in order to achieve a final dilution of less than 1 g/litre, and in the present case 0.3 g/litre, thereby ensuring that the fibres are
30 uniformly dispersed.

The still-wet fibrous web thus formed receives a microperforation treatment by a fluid jet or knife on a conventional Perfojet-type machine, with a perforated cylinder or through a mesh with an open structure with
35 a water pressure of 5 to 80 bar. Such a treatment makes it possible to obtain, locally, partial or total displacement of the fibres according to the pattern on the cylinder or the mesh size of the mesh. In the

present case, the treatment is carried out with a 9-bar water knife.

After this operation, binders are added by any appropriate means, namely padding, spraying, imprinting or "size press", these binders being based on a composition containing 5% pregelatinized cationic starch and 10% vinyl acetate latex.

After drying and crosslinking, the end product is wound up with the desired width for the envisaged use, having a structure as illustrated in Figure 5.

The table below gives the characteristics of such a product compared with three conventional perforated papers.

15

Characteristics	Units	Invention	"Perforated" papers		
			Sp1	Sp2	Sp3
Grammage	g/m ²	35.6	67	84	56
Thickness	microns	163	124	160	89
Body	cm ³ /g	4.59	1.85	1.9	1.59
Permeability	l/m ² /s under 196 Pa	1081	112	822	305
Tensile strength, machine direction	N/m	1707	3726	2898	1762
Tensile strength, cross direction	N/m	1152	1792	728	736
Elongation, machine direction	%	2.5	1.8	1.3	0.9
Elongation, cross direction	%	6.1	2.2	0.9	1.4
Tear strength, machine direction	Cn	146	198	185	100
Tear strength, cross direction	Cn	169	332	210	129
Mean pore diameter	microns	150	several millimetres		

Compared with Example 1, a paper is obtained which has a markedly higher permeability than the prior papers and which, compared with the product produced according to Example 1, makes it even more suitable as support for a stack of fabrics on a manufacturing line.

Example 3

Example 2 is repeated, except that reinforcing fibres are incorporated into the paper pulp.

5 The aqueous composition contains 72% unbleached southern-pine kraft pulp and 9% unbleached fluff pulp.

 All of the pulp is defibred/refined to only 18 degrees Schopper-Riegler and incorporated into it are 5% of 1.7 decitex polyester fibres chopped to
10 18 mm.

 The mixing into water is done so as to have 15 to 20 g/litre approximately.

 A wet-strength agent, consisting of 0.7% of a polyamide epichlorohydrin resin, is added in the
15 circuit for feeding the forming fabric.

 The supply of water to the circuit is carried out in such a way that a final dilution of less than one gram/litre is obtained, making it possible to ensure that the fibres are uniformly dispersed, which
20 dilution in this example is 0.3 g/litre.

 The wet fibrous web thus formed is textiled in a manner similar to Example 2, the fluid pressure being 11 bar and the water knife having been replaced by fluid jets, with approximately 100 jets/needles per
25 metre of width, making it possible to obtain a structure which is similar to that in Example 2 and which is shown in Figure 5.

 After the textiling treatment, an additional binder is deposited, consisting of a composition
30 containing 5% pregelatinized cationic starch and 10% vinyl acetate latex.

 The incorporation of these ingredients and binders is also carried out in a conventional manner and, after drying/crosslinking, the end product is also
35 wound up with the desired width.

 The table below gives the characteristics of such a paper compared with the conventional perforated papers.

Characteristics	Units	Invention	"Perforated" papers		
			Sp1	Sp2	Sp3
Grammage	g/m ²	37.4	67	84	56
Thickness	microns	160	124	160	89
Body	cm ³ /g	4.28	1.85	1.9	1.59
Permeability	l/m ² /s under 196 Pa	644	112	822	305
Tensile strength, machine direction	N/m	2905	3726	2898	1762
Tensile strength, cross direction	N/m	1646	1792	728	736
Elongation, machine direction	%	2.1	1.8	1.3	0.9
Elongation, cross direction	%	6.0	2.2	0.9	1.4
Tear strength, machine direction	Cn	168	198	185	100
Tear strength, cross direction	Cn	240	332	210	129
Mean pore diameter	microns	100	several millimetres		

5 Such a paper is also perfectly suited to
serving as support element for a stack of fabrics on a
manufacturing line.

Compared with the prior perforated papers used
as supports for stacks of fabrics on a manufacturing
10 line, the proposed paper sheet has many advantages,
among which mention may be made of:

- since the distribution of the pores within
the structure is uniform, the risk of dust
being taken up into the textile during the
15 cutting operation is virtually zero;
- in addition, the uniformity of the sheet
ensures that it slides better over the
cutting surface, without soiling the latter;
- since such a sheet is perfectly plane, this
20 virtually eliminates any risk of marking the

surface of the textiles, particularly in the case of fine textiles;

- 5 • because of its uniformity, such a sheet ensures that the thickness of the mat is more homogeneous, which consequently means better cutting of the textile;
- 10 • the uniformity of the sheet also ensures an overall smaller thickness because of the absence of bumps and hollows, thereby making it possible to envisage increasing the number of textile layers in the mat; and
- 15 • finally and above all, it is possible to use such a support whatever the type of fabric forming part of the stack, whereas, previously, it was necessary to use ranges of perforated paper having different characteristics.

Of course, the invention is not limited to the illustrative examples described above, rather it
20 encompasses all variants thereof which are produced within the same context.

This Sheet Has Been Replaced



THIS SHEET HAS BEEN REPLACED

CLAIMS

1. Use of an air-permeable paper sheet as support element for a stack of fabrics (mat) on a manufacturing line, especially during the cutting phase, characterized in that the said sheet has, in its thickness, pores or fine perforations distributed over its entire surface, the said sheet having a "bulk" or "body" expressed in cubic centimetres per gram of greater than 2.5, making it capable of allowing air to pass through it due to the effect of suction produced beneath its underside.
2. Use of a sheet according to Claim 1, characterized in that the said sheet has pores uniformly distributed over its entire surface, the said pores having a diameter of less than one millimetre and preferably between 50 and 150 microns.
3. Use of a sheet according to Claim 1, characterized in that the pores or fine perforations of the said sheet are distributed in the form of patterns having a central region with high air permeability surrounded by a denser fibrous region with lower permeability.
4. Use of a sheet according to Claim 3, characterized in that the pores or fine perforations distributed in the form of patterns are produced during the production of the paper sheet, before it is dried, by subjecting it to a textiling treatment which consists in locally displacing the fibres by means of fluid jets or knives through a mesh having a coarse texture or through a perforated cylinder of the "rotary printing cylinder" type.
5. Use of a sheet according to either of Claims 3 and 4, characterized in that the spacing between the centres of two consecutive patterns is less than 5 mm and preferably less than 3 mm, the central region with high permeability containing no fibres and having a total area of about 1 to 2 mm².

6. Use of a sheet according to one of Claims 1 to 5, which can be used as support element for a stack of fabrics on a manufacturing line, characterized in that it is obtained according to a process which consists:

5 - in producing a filter paper directly on a paper machine, without any special modification, and in such a way that:

- 10 - during the preparation of the pulp, the cellulose fibres (wood pulp) are individualized without refining them excessively so as to maintain the maximum permeability;
- 15 - the said pulp is fed to the machine with a very low concentration of less than one gram per litre, thus making it possible to obtain a bulking sheet; and
- the sheet produced is not compressed at the wet end of the machine so as to maintain its permeability.

20 7. Use of a sheet according to Claim 6, characterized in that synthetic, artificial or natural fibres are incorporated into the cellulose pulp, thus making it possible to improve the tear strength of the paper and having a complementary effect of aerating the
25 sheet, and consequently of improving the permeability.

8. Use of a sheet according to Claim 7, characterized in that the synthetic or artificial fibres are incorporated in an amount of 5 to 25%.

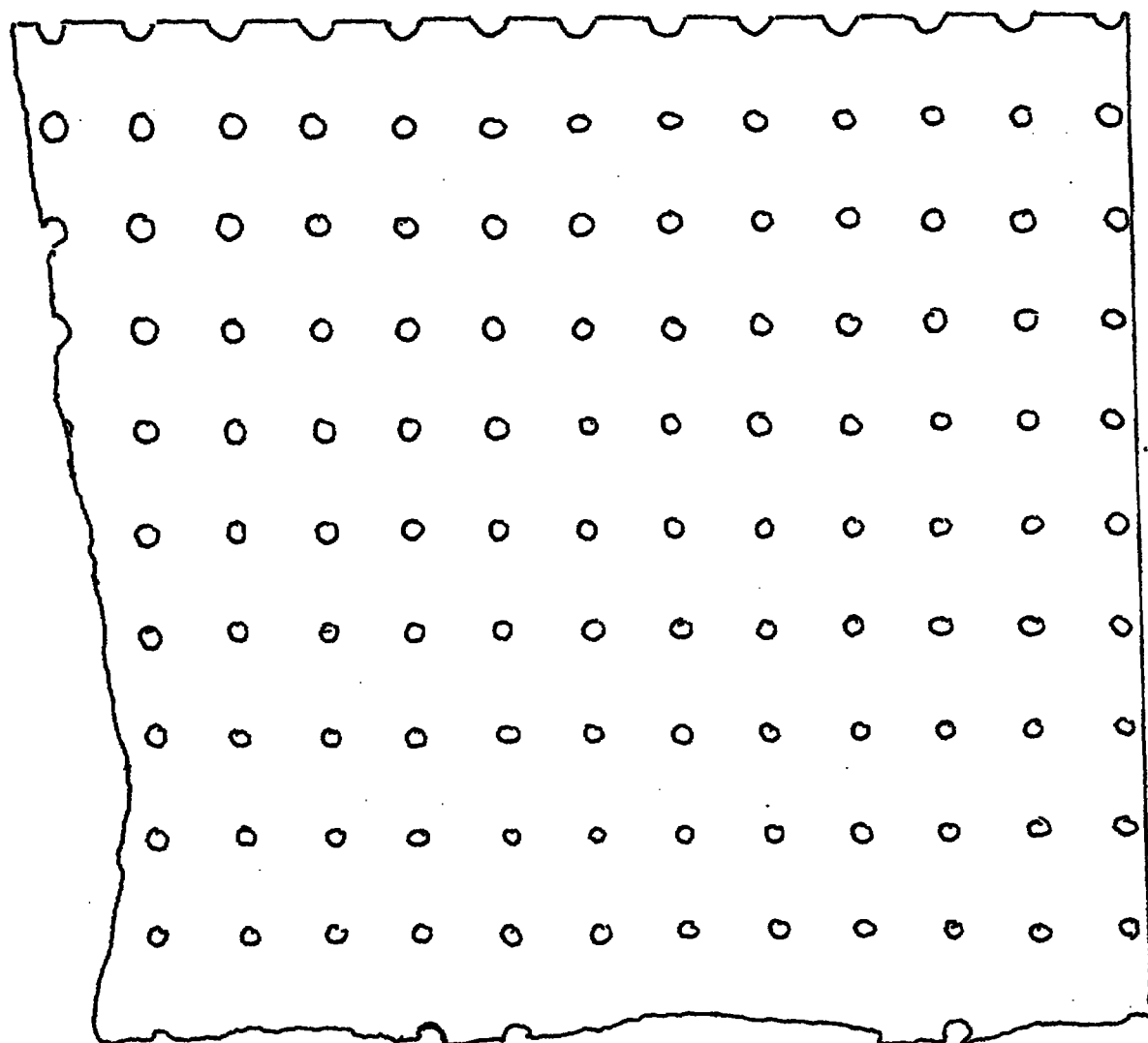
9. Use of a sheet according to one of Claims 6 to
30 8, characterized in that an additional binder is incorporated into the said sheet during its manufacture, making it possible to achieve chemical bonding, which improves the mechanical properties.

This Sheet Has Been Replaced



THIS SHEET HAS BEEN
REPLACED

FIG.1



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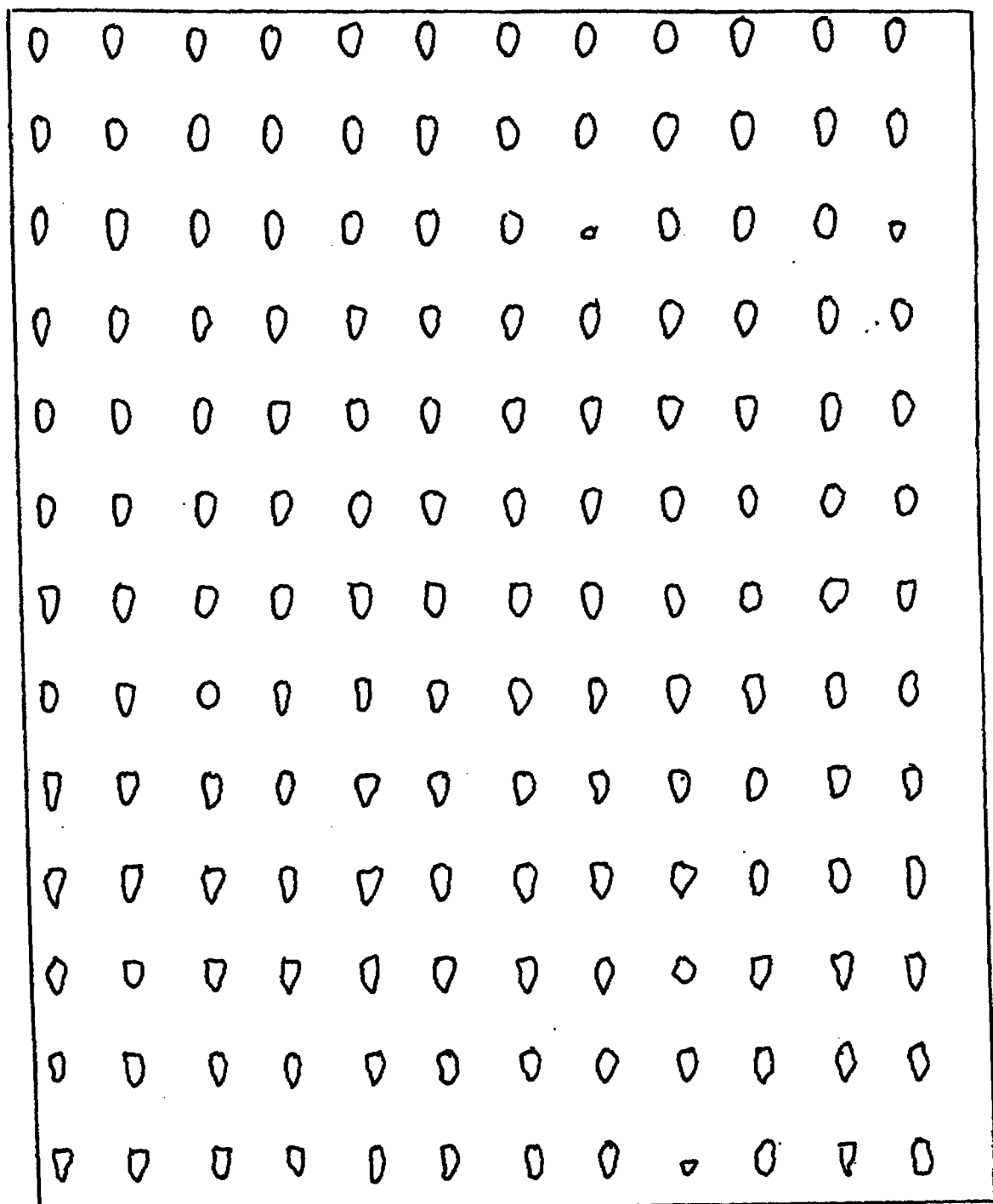
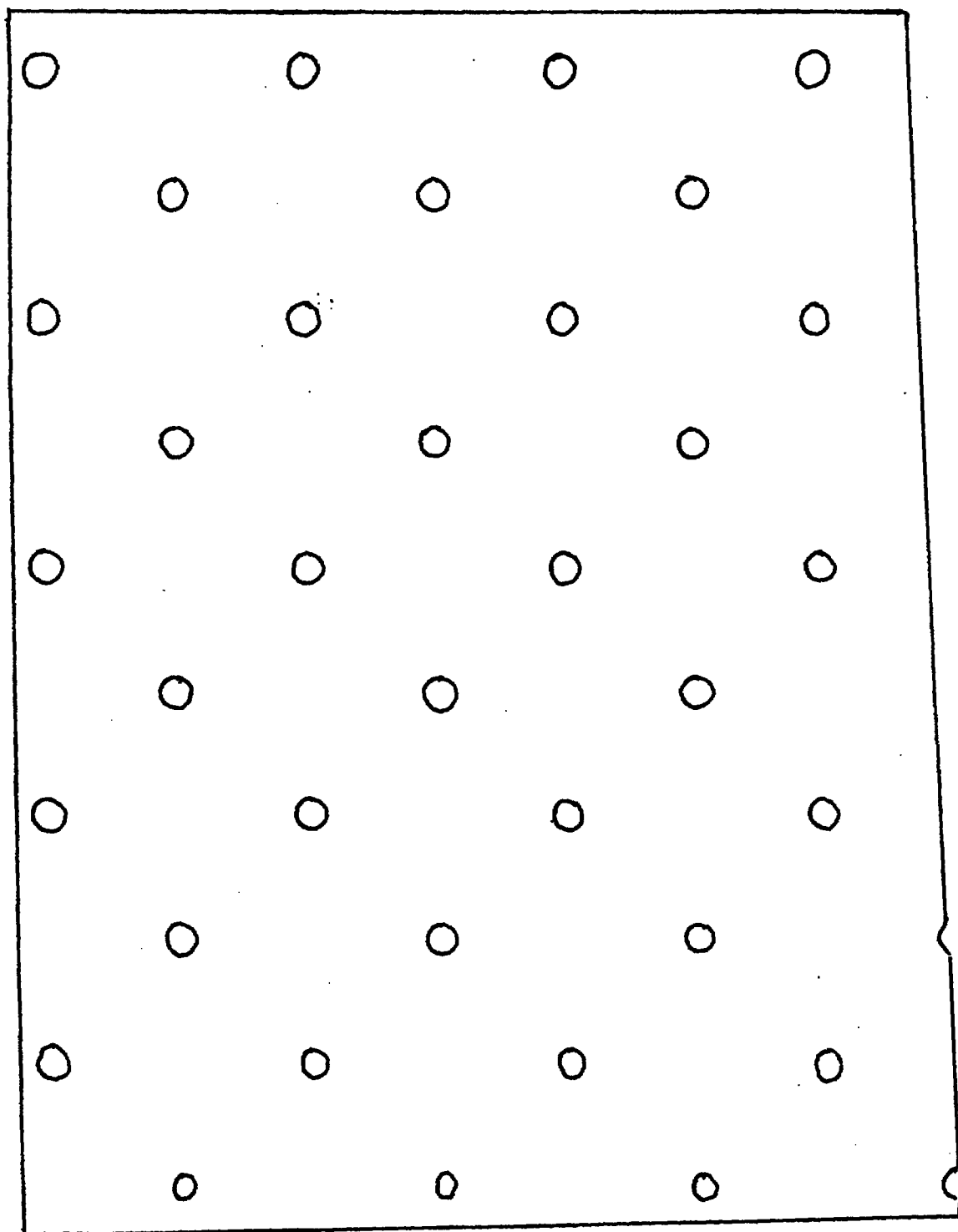
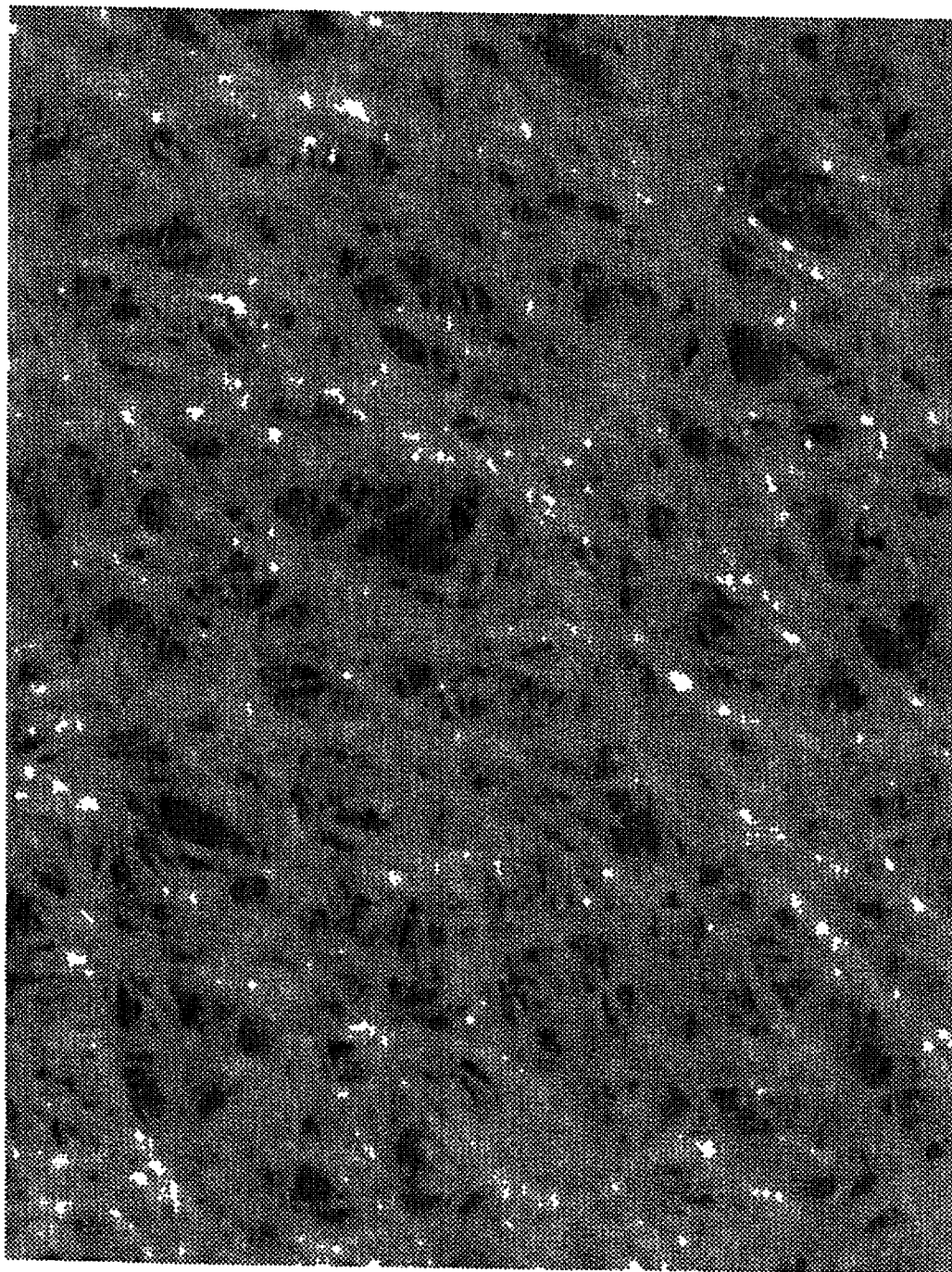
FIG.2

FIG. 3



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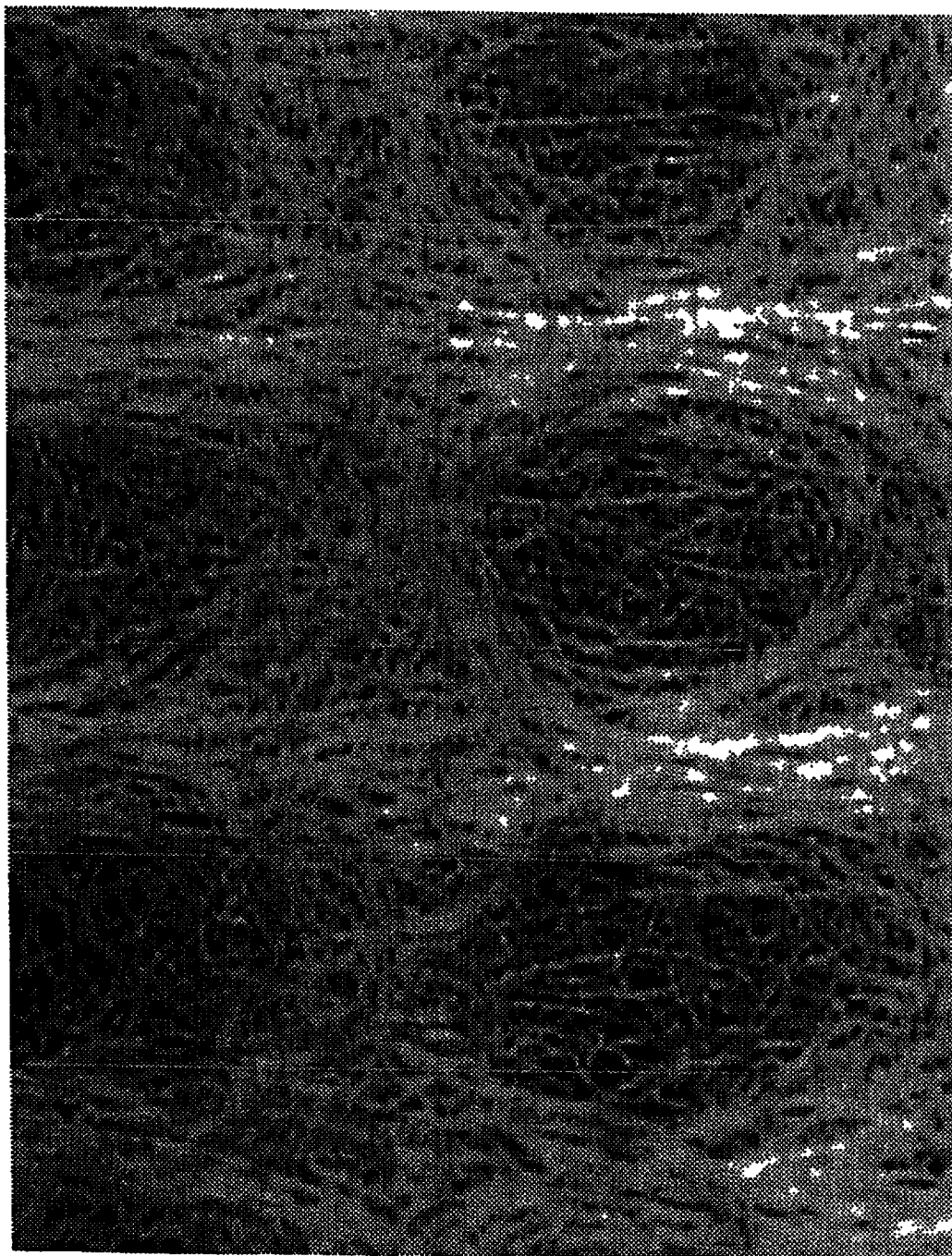
FIG.4



REPLACEMENT SHEET (RULE 26)

5/5

FIG.5



REPLACEMENT SHEET (RULE 26)

5 The paper sheet used as a support on a producing line can be obtained by a method consisting of producing a filter paper directly on a paper machine, without any special modification, the method having the following features :

- during the preparation of the pulp, the celluloses fibres (wood pulp) are individualized without refining them excessively so as to maintain the maximum permeability ;
- 10 - the said pulp is fed to the machine with a very low concentration of less than one gram per litre, thereby making it possible to obtain a bulking sheet ; and
- the sheet produced is not compressed at the wet end of the machine so as to maintain its permeability.

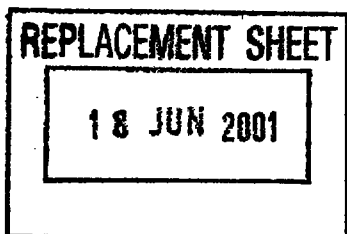
15 Preferably, according to the invention, the permeability is maximized by subjecting the paper sheet produced, before it is dried, to a textiling treatment which consists in locally displacing the fibres by means of fluid jets or knives through a mesh having a coarse texture or through a perforated cylinder of the rotary printing cylinder type, or screen-printing type, so as to form patterns having a central region of high air permeability surrounded by a region with lower permeability.

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In such a case of textiling treatment, the latter may have the consequence either of leaving in the central part only a small minority of fibres or of possibly producing a true perforation containing no fibres.

25 Such a treatment may be carried out on machines of known type, for example of the type forming the subject-matter in particular of FR-A-2,625,937.

Optionally, in order to improve the rear strength of the paper, it may be envisaged to incorporate synthetic or artificial fibres into the cellulose pulp, and to do so in an
30 amount of 5 to 25 %, _____

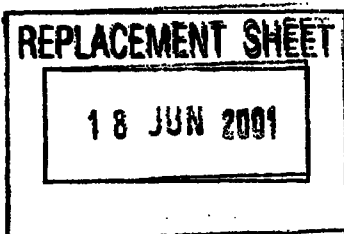


surface of the textiles, particularly in the case of fine textiles ;

- because of its uniformity, such a sheet ensures that the thickness of the mat is more homogeneous, which consequently means better cutting of the textile ;
- the uniformity of the sheet also ensures an overall smaller thickness because of the absence of bumps and hollows, thereby making it possible to envisage increasing the number of textile layers in the mat ; and
- finally and above all, it is possible to use such a support whatever the type of fabric forming part of the stack, whereas previously, it was necessary to use ranges of perforated paper having different characteristics.

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6. Use of a paper sheet according to one of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that the paper sheet is obtained by a method which consists :

- in producing a filter paper directly on a paper machine, without any special modification, and in such a way that :

- 5 • during the preparation of the pulp, the cellulose fibres (wood pulp) are individualized without refining them excessively so as to maintain the maximum permeability ;
- the said pulp is fed to the machine with a very low concentration of less than one gram per litre, thus making it possible to obtain a bulking
- 10 sheet ; and
- the sheet produced is not compressed at the wet end of the machine so as to maintain its permeability.

7. Use of a sheet according to claim 6, characterized in that synthetic, artificial or

15 natural fibres are incorporated into the cellulose pulp, thus making it possible to improve the tear strength of the paper and having a complementary effect of aerating the sheet, and consequently of improving the permibility.

8. Use of a sheet according to claim 7, characterized in that the synthetic or

20 artificial fibres are incorporated in an amount of 5 to 25 %.

9. Use of a sheet according to one of claims 6 to 8, characterized in that an additional binder is incorporated into the said sheet during its manufacture, making it possible to achieve chemical bonding, which improves the mechanical properties.

