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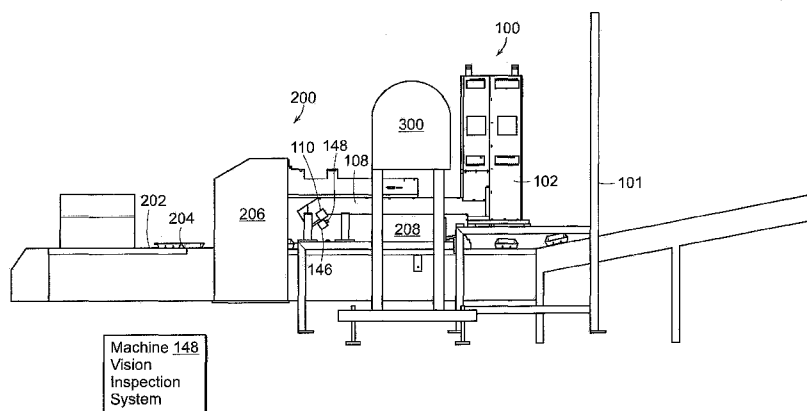


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: A method for marking an egg shell wherein a laser beam is directed onto the egg shell so as to discolor an outer layer of the egg shell without etching substantially into layers of the egg shell underneath the outer layer. The laser delivers a spot with a power density below about 2000 watts/sq. in. and a depth of an etching of the egg caused by the laser marking process does not exceed about 25 microns. InkJet printing may be added to the laser marking process or used instead of laser marking. Eggs may be marked in-carton, on a packer conveyor or on an apparatus fed by a packer conveyor, with eggs uniformly oriented in the package prior to (and after) printing. Marking is done in-carton, on-conveyor whether the marking is by laser, by ink, or both.

WO 2011/091011 A1