

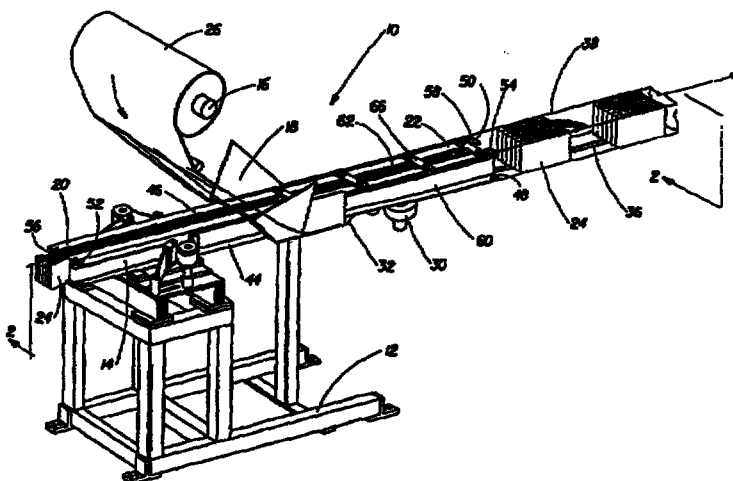
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International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification⁶ : B65B 9/06, 63/02	A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 97/20737 (43) International Publication Date: 12 June 1997 (12.06.97)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/US96/15701 (22) International Filing Date: 1 October 1996 (01.10.96) (30) Priority Data: 08/566,200 1 December 1995 (01.12.95) US (71) Applicant: THE PROCTER & GAMBLE COMPANY [US/US]; One Procter & Gamble Plaza, Cincinnati, OH 45202 (US). (72) Inventor: KINER, Robert, Samuel; 22503 Sawdon Ridge, Guilford, IN 47022 (US). (74) Agents: REED, T., David et al.; The Procter & Gamble Company, 5299 Spring Grove Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45217 (US).		(81) Designated States: AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GE, HU, IL, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, UZ, VN, ARIPO patent (KE, LS, MW, SD, SZ, UG), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG). Published <i>With international search report. Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i>

(54) Title: **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR FEEDING RESILIENTLY COMPRESSED ARTICLES TO A FORM/FILL/SEAL MACHINE**



(57) Abstract

A method and apparatus for feeding resiliently compressed articles into a form/fill/seal machine. The method includes steps of receiving horizontally compressed articles into an infeed end of a pair of conveyor belts (60, 62), continuously conveying the compressed articles to a discharge end, continuously forming a plastic film around the pair of cantilevered conveyor belts without the stack of articles exerting expansion force against the plastic film, forming and sealing a closed tube, and releasing the stack of compressed articles into the closed tube only after the seal has sufficient strength to maintain the stack of articles compressed. The pair of conveyor belts (60, 62) has rigid conveyor backing members (44, 46) and cantilevered ends (48, 50) with a discharge pulley (54, 58) mounted at each cantilevered end. At least one tie bar connects the backing members near the cantilevered ends in order to resist the expansion force of one or more stacks of resiliently compressed articles between the conveyor belts.