unsaturation, as the one disclosed in EP 302 567 A2, provide the required softening performance, but show high melting points and melt viscosities and therefore require addition of a solvent for handling and processing.

Therefore, there is still a need for fabric softener actives which can be handled and processed without a solvent without compromising storage stability in aqueous dispersion with little change in dispersion viscosity.

It has now been found that fabric softener active compositions based on a bis-(2-hydroxypropyl)-dimethylammonium methylsulphate fatty acid ester made from fatty acids with a specific chain length and a specific degree of unsaturation and having a particular molar ratio of fatty acid moieties to amine moieties, which comprise a specific amount of free fatty acid, provide high softening performance and good storage stability in aqueous dispersion, and at the same time can be handled and processed in a liquid state without addition of a flammable solvent.

In one aspect, there is provided~~The present invention is therefore directed to~~ a fabric softener active composition, comprising a) at least 50 % by weight of a bis-(2-hydroxypropyl)-dimethylammonium methylsulphate fatty acid ester having a molar ratio of fatty acid moieties to amine moieties of from 1.5 to 1.99, an average chain length of the fatty acid moieties of from 16 to 18 carbon atoms and an iodine value of the fatty acid moieties, calculated for the free fatty acid, of from 0.5 to 50, and b) from 0.5 to 5 % by weight fatty acid.

Another aspect provides~~The invention is also directed to~~ a method for making a fabric softening~~such~~ compositions as described above, comprising the steps a)~~of~~ reacting bis-(2-hydroxypropyl)-methylamine with a fatty acid having an average chain length of from 16 to 18 carbon atoms and an iodine value of from 0.5 to 50 in a molar ratio of fatty acid to amine of from 1.51 to 2.1 with removal of water

until the acid value of the reaction mixture is in the range from 1 to 10 mg KOH/g and b)~~further~~ reacting the product of step a) with dimethyl sulphate at a molar ratio of dimethyl sulphate to amine of from 0.90 to 0.97 and preferably from 0.92 to 0.95 until the total amine value of the reaction mixture is in the range from 1 to 8 mg KOH/g.

The fabric softener active composition of the disclosure~~invention~~ comprises at least 50 % by weight of a bis-(2-hydroxypropyl)-dimethylammonium methylsulphate fatty acid ester. The composition preferably comprises from 85 to 99 % by weight of said ester. The use of a methylsulphate salt surprisingly provides both a lower melting point of the composition and a better stability to hydrolysis of an aqueous dispersion of the composition compared to a chloride salt as used in EP 0 293 955 A2 and EP 0 302 567 A2.

The bis-(2-hydroxypropyl)-dimethylammonium methylsulphate fatty acid ester is a mixture of at least one diester of formula $(CH_3)_2N^+(CH_2CH(CH_3)OC(=O)R)_2\ CH_3OSO_3^-$ and at least one monoester of formula $(CH_3)_2N^+(CH_2CH(CH_3)OH)(CH_2CH(CH_3)OC(=O)R)\ CH_3OSO_3^-$, where R is the hydrocarbon group of a fatty acid moiety RCOO. The bis-(2-hydroxypropyl)-dimethylammonium methylsulphate fatty acid ester has a molar ratio of fatty acid moieties to amine moieties of from 1.5 to 1.99 and preferably from 1.85 to 1.99. The specified molar ratio is essential for simultaneously achieving high softening performance and low melting point of the composition. A molar ratio in the range from 1.85 to 1.99 provides high softening performance in the absence of anionic surfactants or at low concentrations of such surfactants. Fabric softener active compositions having such a molar ratio are therefore useful for making rinse cycle softeners intended for use in a laundry washing application where the laundry is rinsed several times after the wash before the rinse cycle