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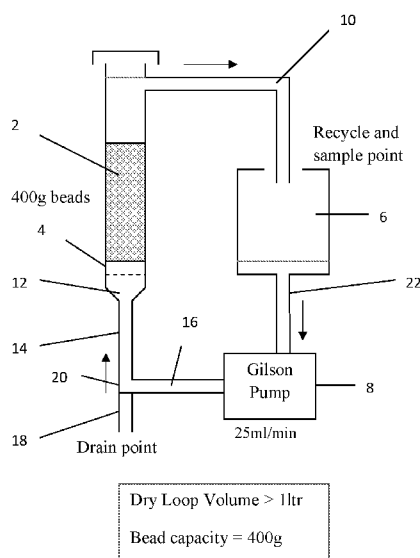
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(54) Title: A PROCESS FOR PRODUCTION OF A SILICA-SUPPORTED ALKALI METAL CATALYST

Figure 1



(57) **Abstract:** A process for regenerating a silica-supported depleted alkali metal catalyst is described. The level of alkali metal on the depleted catalyst is at least 0.5 mol% and the silica support is a zero-gel. The process comprises the steps of contacting the silica supported depleted alkali metal catalyst with a solution of a salt of the alkali metal in a solvent system that has a polar organic solvent as the majority component. A re-impregnated catalyst prepared by the process of the invention any comprising a silica zero-gel support and a catalytic metal selected from an alkali metal in the range 0.5-5 mol % on the catalyst, wherein the surface area of the silica support is $<180\text{m}^2/\text{g}$ is also described. The invention is applicable to a process for preparing an ethylenically unsaturated acid or ester comprising contacting an alkanolic acid or ester of the formula $\text{R}^1\text{-CH}_2\text{-COOR}^3$, with formaldehyde or a suitable source of formaldehyde.