

PROCESS FOR PREPARING A HYDROTREATING CATALYST

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a process for preparing hydrotreating catalyst.

Background of the Invention

5 In the catalytic hydroprocessing of hydrocarbon feedstocks, such as crude oil, distillates and residual crude oil fractions, catalyst compositions containing hydrogenation metals are used to promote desulfurization and denitrogenation reactions and thereby provide for the
10 removal of organic sulfur and organic nitrogen compounds from the hydrocarbon feedstocks. The processes involve contacting catalyst particles with a hydrocarbon feedstock under conditions of elevated temperature and pressure and in the presence of hydrogen to convert
15 sulfur components of the feedstock to hydrogen sulfide and nitrogen components of the feedstock to ammonia. The hydrogen sulfide and ammonia subsequently are removed to give the hydrotreated product.

 Hydrotreating catalysts comprise hydrogenation metal
20 components on a refractory oxide. The hydrogenation metal components are generally Group VI metal components such as molybdenum and/or tungsten and Group VIII metal components such as nickel and/or cobalt. The porous refractory oxide support material can typically be
25 alumina. Promoters such as phosphorus may also be used as a component of the hydroprocessing catalyst.

 There is a continuous interest in further improving the performance of these catalysts.

 A method which can lead to improved performance is
30 treating a carrier with a solution containing catalytically active metal and an organic ligand and

subsequently drying the treated carrier. By not calcining such dried catalyst, an improved performance can be attained as mentioned in publications such as EP-A-0482818, WO-A-96/41848, WO 2009/020913 and WO 2012/021389. The preparation of catalysts which are only dried but not calcined is relatively complex and cumbersome in actual commercial practice.

The aim of the present invention is to find a process which is relatively easy to apply while providing a hydrotreating catalyst having good activity in the manufacture of low sulphur and nitrogen fuels such as ultra low sulphur diesels.

Summary of the invention

It has now been found that this aim can be attained by treating a carrier with a metal containing impregnation solution further containing gluconic acid.

Accordingly, the present invention relates to a process for preparing hydrotreating catalyst comprising of from 5 wt% to 50 wt% of molybdenum, of from 0.5 wt% to 20 wt% of cobalt and of from 0 to 5 wt% of phosphorus, all based on total dry weight of catalyst, which process comprises

(a) treating a nickel containing carrier with molybdenum, cobalt and of from 1 to 60 %wt of gluconic acid, based on weight of carrier, and optionally phosphorus,

(b) optionally drying the treated carrier at a temperature of from 40 to 200 °C, and

(c) calcining the treated and optionally dried carrier at a temperature of from 200 to 650 °C to obtain the calcined treated carrier.

In accordance with the present process hydrotreating catalysts can be prepared with the help of a relatively

simple process involving a limited number of process steps. Besides the easy manufacture, the invention has the advantage that the catalysts obtained were found to have a high activity in hydrodesulphurization.

5 Detailed description of the invention

Suitable examples of nickel containing carriers include silica, alumina, titania, zirconia, silica-alumina, silica-titania, silica-zirconia, titania-alumina, zirconia-alumina, silica-titania and
10 combinations of two or more thereof provided that these contain nickel. The carrier preferably is nickel containing alumina, more preferably alumina containing of from 0.1 to 5 %wt of nickel, more specifically of from 0.2 to 3 %wt of nickel, calculated as metal on total
15 amount of dry carrier.

The porous catalyst carrier may have an average pore diameter in the range of from 5 to 35 nm, measured according to test ASTM D-4222. The total pore volume of the porous refractory oxide is preferably in the range of
20 from 0.2 to 2 ml/gram.

The surface area of the porous refractory oxide, as measured by the B.E.T. method, generally exceeds 100 m²/gram, and it is typically in the range of from 100 to 400 m²/gram. The surface area is to be measured by the
25 B.E.T. method according to ASTM test D3663-03.

The catalyst contains catalytically active metals on the carrier. These catalytically active metals are molybdenum in combination with cobalt. It is preferred that additionally phosphorus is present. Therefore, the
30 treated alumina carrier preferably consists of molybdenum, phosphorus, gluconic acid and cobalt.

The metal component can be the metal per se or any component containing the metal, including but not limited

to metal oxides, metal hydroxides, metal carbonates and metal salts.

For cobalt, the metal component preferably is chosen from the group consisting of acetates, formates, citrates, oxides, hydroxides, carbonates, nitrates, sulfates, and two or more thereof. Preferably, the cobalt component is a metal nitrate.

For molybdenum, preferred metals salts are molybdenum oxides and molybdenum sulphides. More preferred are salts additionally containing ammonium, such as ammonium heptamolybdate and ammonium dimolybdate.

The phosphorus compound that is used preferably is chosen from the group consisting of acids of phosphorus, such as metaphosphoric acid, pyrophosphoric acid, orthophosphoric acid and phosphorous acid, and precursors of an acid of phosphorus. The precursor is a phosphorus-containing compound capable of forming at least one acidic hydrogen atom in the presence of water. Preferred precursors are phosphorus oxide and phosphorus. The preferred acid of phosphorus is orthophosphoric acid (H_3PO_4).

The cobalt can be present in the hydrotreating catalyst in an amount in the range of from 0.5 wt% to 20 wt%, preferably from 1 wt% to 15 wt%, and, most preferably, from 2 wt% to 12 wt%, based on metal on total dry weight of the hydrotreating catalyst.

The molybdenum can be present in the hydrotreating catalyst in an amount in the range of from 5 wt% to 50 wt%, preferably from 8 wt% to 40 wt%, and, most preferably, from 10 wt% to 30 wt%, based on metal on total dry weight of catalyst.

The phosphorus preferably is present in the hydrotreating catalyst in an amount in the range of from

0.1 to 5 wt%, preferably from 0.2 wt% to 5 wt%, and, more preferably, from 0.5 to 4.5 wt%, based on phosphorus on total dry weight of catalyst. Most preferably, the amount of phosphorus is of from 1.5 to 3.5 %wt, based on total dry weight of catalyst.

The metals generally will be present in the form of an oxide or sulfide. For determining the metal content, it is assumed that they are present in the form of the metal per se independent of their actual form or state. The dry weight is the weight assuming that all volatile compounds such as water and gluconic acid have been removed. The dry weight can be determined by keeping the catalyst at a temperature of 400 °C for at least 2 hours. For the calculation of phosphorus content, phosphorus is assumed to be present as the element independent of its actual form.

The amount of gluconic acid preferably is of from 2 to 40 %wt of gluconic acid, based on weight of dry carrier, more preferably of from 3 to 30 %wt, more specifically of from 4 to 20 %wt.

A preferred hydrotreating catalyst consists of from 0.5 wt% to 20 wt% of cobalt, of from 5 wt% to 50 wt% of molybdenum and of from 0.1 to 5 wt% of phosphorus on a carrier consisting of alumina and of from 0.1 to 5 wt% of nickel.

The catalytically active metals, gluconic acid and phosphorus preferably are incorporated in the carrier by treating the carrier with a solution containing these components. Most preferably, the components are added by pore volume impregnation with a solution containing these components. It is preferred that all components are present in a single solution, most preferably an aqueous solution. It can be that not all components can be

combined in a single impregnating solution for example because of stability problems. In such instance, it can be preferred to use two or more solutions with optionally a drying step in between.

5 The present invention involves treating the carrier with gluconic acid. This can be either gluconic acid or a salt of gluconic acid or an ester of gluconic acid which ester forms gluconate in the solution. If a solution is used for treating the carrier, the solution generally
10 will contain a salt of gluconic acid possibly besides gluconic acid per se. For the present invention, treating the carrier with a salt of gluconic acid also is considered to be treating the carrier with gluconic acid. Preferably, the solution for treating the carrier is
15 prepared by adding gluconic acid to the solvent.

 Preferably, the ratio of weight amount of gluconic acid to the total weight amount of cobalt and molybdenum deposited on the carrier is of from 0.1 to 5, more specifically of from 0.1 to 3, more specifically of from
20 0.2 to 3, more preferably of from 0.3 to 2.5, more preferably of from 0.5 to 2, more preferably of from 0.6 to 1.8, most preferably of from 0.7 to 1.5.

 In step (b) the treated carrier can be dried before the calcination of step (c). Whether drying indeed should
25 be carried out and if so, under what conditions, depends on the amount of volatile components present and on the subsequent calcination conditions. Generally, drying will be carried out during of from 0.1 to 6 hours at a temperature of from 40 to 200 °C, more specifically
30 during of from 0.5 to 4 hours at a temperature of from 100 to 200 °C.

 The calcination of step (c) preferably is carried out during of from 0.1 to 6 hours at a temperature of from

200 to 650 °C, more specifically during of from 0.5 to 4 hours at a temperature of from 250 to 600 °C, more specifically of from 280 to 550 °C.

Without wishing to be bound to any theory, it is believed that the improved performance is due to the interaction between catalytically active metal, carrier and gluconic acid. It is believed that the interaction leads to smaller metal oxide particles upon calcination which smaller particle size is maintained during sulphidation.

The calcined treated carrier preferably is sulphided before being used in hydrotreating. Therefore, the process of the present invention preferably further comprises (d) sulphiding the calcined treated carrier to obtain the hydrotreating catalyst.

After sulphidation, which can be carried out in-situ or ex-situ, it is considered to be a catalyst ready for commercial use.

The present invention also provides a process for hydrotreating a sulphur-containing hydrocarbon feedstock which process comprises contacting the hydrocarbon feedstock at a hydrogen partial pressure from 1 to 70 bar and a temperature of from 200 to 420 °C with a catalyst obtained in accordance with the present invention.

Sulphidation of the calcined treated carrier can be done using any conventional method known to those skilled in the art. Thus, the calcined treated carrier can be contacted with a gaseous stream containing hydrogen sulphide and hydrogen. In another embodiment, the calcined treated carrier is contacted with a sulphur-containing compound which is decomposable into hydrogen sulphide, under the contacting conditions of the invention. Examples of such decomposable compounds

include mercaptans, CS₂, thiophenes, dimethyl sulfide (DMS), and dimethyl disulphide (DMDS). A further and preferred option is to accomplish sulphidation by contacting the composition, under suitable sulphurization treatment conditions with a hydrocarbon feedstock that contains a sulphur-containing compound. The sulphur-containing compound of the hydrocarbon feedstock can be an organic sulphur compound, particularly, one which is typically contained in petroleum distillates that are processed by hydrodesulphurization methods. Typically, the sulphiding temperature is in the range of from 150 to 450 °C, preferably, from 175 to 425 °C, and, most preferably, from 200 to 400 °C.

The sulphiding pressure can be in the range of from 1 bar to 70 bar, preferably, from 1.5 bar to 55 bar, and, most preferably, from 2 bar to 45 bar.

The present invention is explained in more detail in the following examples.

Examples

Example 1 - Cobalt/molybdenum containing catalyst

Commercial carriers were prepared by extruding pseudo-boehmite into 1.3 mm trilobes and drying and calcining these to provide alumina carrier as described in Table 1. For the preparation of carrier 1, the pseudo-boehmite was mixed with 1 %wt of nickel powder before extrusion.

The average pore diameter was measured according to ASTM test D-4222. The surface area was measured according to ASTM test D-366303. The nickel content is the weight of metal on total weight of dry carrier.

Table 1 - Alumina carrier properties

Property	Carrier 1	Carrier 2	Carrier 3
Nickel content (%wt)	1	0	0
Calcination temperature (°C)	485	660	535
BET Surface Area (m ² /g)	320	240	300
Average Pore Diameter (nm)	8	11	9

The metal components of the catalyst were incorporated into the carrier by pore volume impregnation to yield the following metals composition (weight of metal based on total dry weight of catalyst): 14%wt Mo, 3.5%wt Co, 2.25%wt P. The impregnation solution included phosphoric acid, cobalt carbonate, molybdenum trioxide and gluconic acid. The total volume of the resulting solution was equal to 98% of the water pore volume of the alumina carrier. The gluconic acid concentration in the impregnation solution ranged from 10 to 25 %wt corresponding with a gluconic acid content of from 9 to 12.5 %wt based on carrier.

The impregnated carrier was then dried at 110 °C for 2 hours and subsequently calcined for 2 hours at a temperature above 300 °C to remove gluconic acid.

The following catalysts were obtained.

Table 2 - Co/Mo catalysts

Catalyst	Carrier	Amount of gluconic acid (%wt on carrier)	Calcination temperature	Compacted bulk density (g/ml)
A	1	12.5	300	0.73
B	1	12.5	400	0.74
C	1	12.5	450	0.74
Comparative a	3	9	400	0.72
Comparative b	2	12.5	400	0.76
Comparative c	3	12.5	400	0.72

Example 2 - Catalyst activities

Trickle flow micro-reactors were used to test the desulfurization activity of the catalysts according to the invention compared with a commercial reference catalyst Comparative catalyst I containing similar amounts of cobalt and molybdenum and having a compact bulk density of 0.72 ml/g.

The compositions were conditioned and sulphided by contacting them with a liquid hydrocarbon containing sulfur spiking agent to provide a sulfur content of 2.5 %wt. The process conditions used in these tests comprise a gas to oil ratio of 300 Nl/kg, a pressure of 40 bar and a liquid hourly space velocity of 1 h⁻¹. The weight average bed temperature (WABT) was adjusted to a temperature in the range of 340 to 380 °C.

The feed used in the tests is a full range gas oil containing 1.28 %wt of sulphur.

The process conditions and feed properties are

representative of typical ultra-low sulfur diesel (ULSD) operations.

Rate constants were determined for each of the compositions assuming a reaction order of 1.25. The relative volumetric activity (RVA) for each of the compositions according to the invention was determined relative to the Comparative Catalyst I. The temperature required to obtain a product containing 10 ppm of sulphur is given in Table 3. The lower temperature required to achieve this sulphur content and the higher RVA show that the catalysts according to the present invention have improved performance over comparative commercial catalyst I.

Table 3 - Hydrodesulphurization activity

	Temperature required for 10 ppm S (°C)	RVA (%)
Comparative Catalyst I	368.7	100
A	361.8	124
B	361.9	123
C	363.6	117
Comparative a	365.1	112
Comparative b	367.0	105
Comparative c	371.0	93

CLAIMS

1. A process for preparing a hydrotreating catalyst, wherein said hydrotreating catalyst comprises from 5 wt% to 50 wt% molybdenum, from 0.5 wt% to 20 wt% cobalt, and from 0 to 5 wt% phosphorus, all based on total dry weight of said hydrotreating catalyst, which process comprises:

(a) providing a nickel-containing carrier extrudate, comprising alumina and from 0.1 to 5 wt% nickel, calculated as metal and based on said nickel-containing carrier extrudate, wherein said nickel-containing carrier extrudate is prepared by mixing said nickel with pseudo-boehmite to provide a mixture, extruding said mixture to provide an extrudate, and drying and calcining said extrudate to provide said nickel-containing carrier extrudate;

(b) treating said nickel containing carrier extrudate with a gluconic acid solution, comprising molybdenum, cobalt, phosphorus, and an amount of gluconic acid to provide from 2 to 40 wt% gluconic acid on said nickel containing carrier extrudate, to thereby provide a treated carrier;

(c) drying said treated carrier at a temperature of from 40 to 200 °C to thereby provide a treated and dried carrier; and

(d) calcining said treated and dried carrier at a temperature of from 200 to 650 °C to obtain said hydrotreating catalyst.

2. A process according to claim 1, wherein the amount of gluconic acid in said gluconic acid solution is from 3 to 30 %wt.

3. A process according to claim 1, wherein said hydrotreating catalyst contains phosphorus in an amount from 1.5 to 3.5 %wt.

4. A process according to claim 1, in which the hydrotreating catalyst comprises from 1 wt% to 15 wt% cobalt, from 8 wt% to 40 wt% molybdenum and from 0.1 to 5 wt% phosphorus.

5. A process according to claim 1, in which the ratio of weight of gluconic acid to the total weight of cobalt and molybdenum deposited on the carrier before calcination is of from 0.1 to 5.

6. A process according to claim 1 which process further comprises:
(e) sulphiding the hydrotreating catalyst to obtain a sulphided hydrotreating catalyst.

7. A process for hydrotreating a sulphur-containing hydrocarbon feedstock which process comprises contacting the hydrocarbon feedstock at a hydrogen partial pressure from 1 to 70 bar and a temperature of from 200 to 420 °C with a catalyst obtained according to claim 6.