

26 JAN 2000

METHOD OF MANUFACTURING SOLID ELECTROLYTIC CAPACITORS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the field of methods of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors (hereafter referred to as "solid capacitors") using conducting polymer as solid electrolyte. In particular, the present invention relates to the field of methods of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors to provide an anode foil whose characteristics of the anodized film degrade to a lesser extent during the formation process of the MnO_2 layer which becomes the base of the conducting polymer layer to the following process.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

A conventional method of manufacturing solid capacitors is described next with reference to drawings. Fig. 5 shows a perspective, partly in section, illustrating the configuration of a solid capacitor. In Fig. 5, after the surface of an aluminum foil 1, which acts as the anode (positive electrode), is roughened by etching, an anodized film is formed on the surface of the roughened aluminum foil 1 through anodization. An insulative resist 11 separates the aluminum foil 1 into an anode and cathode (negative electrode). The cathode is made by sequentially laminating a MnO_2 layer 12, polypyrrole layer 13 which becomes the conducting polymer layer, graphite layer 14, and silver paint layer 15. A solid capacitor element is configured as described above.

A single or multi-laminated solid capacitor element as configured above is molded with a packaging resin 17 (not illustrated) after terminal members 16A and 16B are connected to the anode and cathode. This completes the solid capacitor.

In the conventional method of manufacturing solid capacitors as above, the aluminum foil 1, the initial material, is generally provided in the form of a strip of predetermined length wound around a reel. The aluminum foil 1 wound around one reel is considered as one lot, and is successively supplied to the above series of processes. Accordingly, if the characteristics of the aluminum foil vary significantly in the processes relatively close to raw materials, the product yield may drop in the conventional manufacturing method.

More specifically, during the process of forming the MnO_2 layer 12 on an anodized film of the aluminum foil 1 in Fig. 5, a strip of the aluminum foil 1 is successively immersed in and removed from a solution containing manganese salts. The manganese salt is then thermally decomposed to form the MnO_2 layer 12 on the surface. This process has a marked detrimental effect on the anodized film already formed on the aluminum foil 1, often resulting in damage to some parts of the anodized film.

Accordingly, another anodization step is implemented after the MnO_2 layer formation process in order to repair the damaged anodized film. However, this repair process is not always sufficient. Considering the degradation in characteristics of the anodized film on an aluminum foil (hereinafter referred as characteristics of the aluminum foil) 1 during the MnO_2 layer formation process, the entire lot of aluminum foil 1 rolled on the reel may not be reliably input to the following MnO_2 layer formation process.

The present invention aims to offer a method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors that allows the reliable input of the entire lot of aluminum foil, on which an anodized film is formed, to the MnO_2 layer formation process, and also to improve the product yield.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The method of manufacturing solid capacitors comprises the steps of :
sampling a part of aluminum foil, on which an anodization film is formed on its surface, from the lot;
forming the MnO_2 layer on this sample;
inspecting the sampled aluminum foil on which the MnO_2 layer is formed using a predetermined inspection method; and
determining whether to input the lot from which the aluminum foil is sampled to the MnO_2 layer formation process.

The present invention thus eliminates defective aluminum foil being found after inputting the entire lot of aluminum foil to the MnO_2 layer formation process. This allows to stably and inexpensively to manufacture solid electrolytic capacitors with high reliability without loss in costs and efficiency.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a flow chart of a method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors in accordance with a first exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 2 illustrates a concept of a method for inspecting samples.

Fig. 3 illustrates characteristics of samples measured in the inspection.

Fig. 4 illustrates characteristics of samples measured in the inspection in accordance with a second exemplary embodiment.

Fig. 5 is a perspective, partly in section, illustrating the configuration of a conventional solid electrolytic capacitor including the first exemplary embodiment of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Exemplary embodiments of the present invention are described in detail with reference to drawings.

First exemplary embodiment

Fig. 1 shows a flow chart of a method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors in a first exemplary embodiment of the present invention. As shown in Fig. 1, an anodized film is formed on the surface of a strip of aluminum foil 1 having a predetermined length, which comprises one lot, by roughening the surface of the aluminum foil 1 and then anodizing it. A part of the aluminum foil 1 whose surface is anodized is sampled and designated as sample 1A. The sample 1A is dipped in a solution containing manganese salts, removed from the solution, and thermally decomposed to form a MnO_2 layer on the surface of the sample 1A. The formation of the MnO_2 layer on the sample 1A is implemented under the same conditions as those for the MnO_2 layer formation process in the product process.

After the MnO_2 layer is formed on the surface of the sample 1A, inspection shown in Fig. 2 is applied to the sample 1A as a test specimen.

Fig. 2 is a conceptual drawing illustrating the inspection method for the sample 1A. As shown in Fig. 2, the sample 1A and cathode plate 3 are immersed into the electrolytic solution 2 contained in a test vessel 4. A power source 5 is connected to both sample 1A and cathode plate 3. This inspection equipment is designed to measure the current flowing from the sample 1A to the cathode plate 3 when the potential of the sample 1A is swept at a constant rate from 0 V.

Fig. 3 shows an example of the inspection results. A curve 6 in Fig. 3 shows the measured characteristics of the sample 1A, and a curve 7 shows the characteristics of the sample 1A before the MnO_2 layer is formed. It is apparent from Fig. 3 that the anodized film is significantly damaged as a result of forming the MnO_2 layer on the surface of the aluminum foil where the anodized film is already formed. Damage to the anodized film allows a large current to flow even if the same voltage is applied, as shown in Fig. 3, which indicates that the characteristics of the aluminum foil have degraded. These changes in characteristics differ among different lots of aluminum.

The present invention thus specifies the current level (Points B and C) before and after the formation of the MnO_2 layer at a predetermined voltage as shown by Point A on the X axis in Fig. 3. Acceptable aluminum lots are identified using this change in the current level or the upper limit of the current level (Point C) after the formation of the MnO_2 layer as a control level. Only lots determined as acceptable are input to the next process. Those determined as defectives are rejected, and not input to the next process.

As described above, lots which are accepted based on the inspection results of the sample 1A are used in the series of processes comprising formation of the MnO_2 layer, conducting polymer layer, and cathode conductor layer, lead wire connection, and molding (the step of dividing a strip of aluminum foil 1 into pieces is omitted in Fig. 1) to complete the solid capacitor as shown in Fig. 5.

The solid capacitor as manufactured above demonstrates reliable characteristics. More specifically, a degree of degradation in characteristics of the aluminum foil in the MnO_2 formation process is confirmed to be negligible before the aluminum foil 1 is actually input to the MnO_2 layer formation process which has the largest degradative effect on the characteristics of the aluminum foil 1. A sampling inspection of a small portion of aluminum foil 1 enables it to be confirmed that the entire lot of sampled aluminum foil 1 is non-defective, thus safeguarding the manufacturing yield.

Since the quality of aluminum foil within the same lot is stable nowadays, the acceptable performance of final products may be assured by evaluating a small portion of the samples. The first exemplary embodiment describes the case of sampling one piece. To assure an even higher yield rate, test pieces may be sampled from several areas of the foil.

The first exemplary embodiment also describes the case of forming the MnO_2 layer as a base layer for the conducting polymer layer. However, other than MnO_2 , conductive or semiconductive metal oxides including tin, zinc, tungsten, nickel, and vanadium may be used independently or as composite oxides for the base layer. If a non-aqueous solvent is used, a highly conductive metal oxide such as ruthenium oxide may also be used.

Second exemplary embodiment

A second exemplary embodiment is described with reference to Fig. 4. A point which differs from the first exemplary embodiment is an inspection method of the sample 1A sampled from each lot of aluminum foil 1. Other points are the same as those in the first exemplary embodiment, and thus only the point different is described below. Descriptions of other points are omitted.

The concept of the inspection method is the same as that shown in Fig 2 described in the first exemplary embodiment. In this exemplary embodiment, however, a predetermined current is applied between the sample 1A and cathode plate 3 for a given period of time, and final voltage is measured.

Fig. 4 shows an example of measurement results. A curve 8 shows the characteristics of the sample 1A and a curve 9 shows the characteristics of the sample 1A before forming the MnO_2 layer.

It is apparent from Fig. 4 that the anodized film is significantly damaged as a result of forming the MnO_2 layer on the surface of the aluminum foil 1 where anodized film is already formed. Withstand voltage of the aluminum foil thus drops even a steady current is applied. The second exemplary embodiment thus specifies a voltage level (Points B and C on the Y axis) before and after forming the MnO_2 layer during the given length of time as shown by Point A on the X axis in Fig. 4. This change in the voltage level or a lower limit of the voltage level (Point B) after the MnO_2 layer is formed is used as a control point for making decision. If the lot of aluminum foil 1 is determined as acceptable, this lot is input to the next process. Those determined as defectives are rejected and not input to the next process.

As described above, the method of manufacturing solid capacitors of the present invention samples a part of a lot of anode foil to be input to the MnO_2 layer formation process, which has the largest degradative effect on the characteristics of the anode foil in a series of manufacturing processes, before inputting the anode foil into this MnO_2 layer formation process. This sample goes through a predetermined inspection after the MnO_2 layer is formed, and whether the lot of sampled piece is input to the next process is determined based on this inspection results. Since a degree of degradation in characteristics of the anode foil during the MnO_2 layer formation process is confirmed to be negligible before the anode foil is actually input to the MnO_2 layer formation process, the present invention enables the manufacturing of solid electrolytic capacitors having both stable performance and quality at good yield.

Reference numerals

- 1 aluminum foil
- 1A sample
- 2 electrolytic solution
- 3 cathode plate
- 4 test vessel
- 5 power source
- 6, 8 characteristics after forming the MnO_2 layer
- 7, 9 characteristics before forming the MnO_2 layer



What is claimed is:

1. A method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors comprising:
sampling a part of a lot of anode foil for solid electrolytic capacitors;
forming a MnO_2 layer on a surface of said sampled anode foil by immersing in said sampled anode foil into a solution containing dissolved manganese salts, removing said sample from said solution, and thermally decomposing said manganese salts;
inspecting said sampled anode foil on which said MnO_2 layer is formed in accordance with a predetermined inspection method; and
determining whether to input said lot of anode foil, from which said sample is taken, to a next process based on said inspection results.
2. The method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors as defined in Claim 1, wherein said anode foil is made of a valve metal, a surface of said valve metal is roughened, and an anodized film is formed on said surface.
3. The method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors as defined in Claim 1, wherein said inspection method comprises the step of measuring a current flowing said sampled anode foil, onto which said MnO_2 layer is formed, when applied voltage is swept at a constant rate in an electrolytic solution.
4. The method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors as defined in Claim 2, wherein said inspection method comprises the step of measuring



a current flowing said sampled anode foil, onto which said MnO_2 layer is formed, when applied voltage is swept at a constant rate in an electrolytic solution.

5. The method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors as defined in Claim 1, wherein said inspection method comprises the step of measuring final voltage when a constant current is applied to said sampled anode foil, onto which said MnO_2 layer is formed, for a given period of time in an electrolytic solution.

6. The method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors as defined in Claim 2, wherein said inspection method comprises the step of measuring final voltage when a constant current is applied to said sampled anode foil, onto which said MnO_2 layer is formed, for a given period of time in an electrolytic solution.

7. The method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors as defined in Claim 1, wherein conditions for forming the MnO_2 layer on a surface of said sample are the same as those for a product process of the solid electrolytic capacitors.

8. The method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors as defined in Claim 2, wherein conditions for forming the MnO_2 layer on a surface of said sample are the same as those for a product process of the solid electrolytic capacitors.



9. The method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors as defined in Claim 3, wherein conditions for forming the MnO_2 layer on a surface of said sample are the same as those for a next step of forming the MnO_2 layer.

10. The method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors as defined in Claim 4, wherein conditions for forming the MnO_2 layer on a surface of said sample are the same as those for a product process of the solid electrolytic capacitors.

11. The method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors as defined in Claim 5, wherein conditions for forming the MnO_2 layer on a surface of said sample are the same as those for a product process of the solid electrolytic capacitors.

12. The method of manufacturing solid electrolytic capacitors as defined in Claim 6, wherein conditions for forming the MnO_2 layer on a surface of said sample are the same as those for a product process of the solid electrolytic capacitors.