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ABSTRACT

The present invention provides an improved method for the preparation of carboxylic acid esters of alkylene glycol monoalkyl ethers by the acid catalyzed esterification of the monoalkyl ether with a carboxylic acid. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the carboxylic acid and alcohol are reacted in a reactor/column and the resulting ester product is distilled into an overhead decanter/extractor as a single phase. A small amount of solvent, preferably a hydrocarbon is added to the mixture causing the resulting distillate to separate into two phases, one phase containing the desired product, the other containing primarily water. The process described is applicable to both batch and continuous operation and is not constrained by the difficulty of separating closely boiling azeotropes and results in substantially higher production rates than achieved by current processes.