

Process for preparing a chlorohydrin by chlorinating a polyhydroxylated
aliphatic hydrocarbon

The present patent application claims the benefit of patent application
FR 05.05120 and of patent application EP 05104321.4, both filed on
20 May 2005, and of provisional US patent applications 60/734659, 60/734627,
60/734657, 60/734658, 60/734635, 60/734634, 60/734637 and 60/734636, all
5 filed on 8 November 2005, the content of all of which is incorporated here by
reference.

The present invention relates to a process for preparing a chlorohydrin,
more specifically to a process for preparing a chlorohydrin by chlorinating a
polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon.

10 Chlorohydrins are reaction intermediates in the preparation of epoxides.
Dichloropropanol, for example, is a reaction intermediate in the preparation of
epichlorohydrin and of epoxy resins (Kirk-Othmer Encyclopedia of Chemical
Technology, Fourth Edition, 1992, Vol. 2, page 156, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.).

According to known processes it is possible to obtain dichloropropanol in
15 particular by hypochlorinating allyl chloride, by chlorinating allyl alcohol and by
hydrochlorinating glycerol. This latter process has the advantage that the
dichloropropanol can be obtained starting from fossil raw materials or from
renewable raw materials, and it is known that natural petrochemical resources,
from which the fossil materials are obtained, such as petroleum, natural gas or
20 coal, for example, are limited in their terrestrial availability.

Application WO 2005/054167 of SOLVAY SA describes a process for
preparing dichloropropanol by reacting glycerol with hydrogen chloride in the
presence of a catalyst such as adipic acid as catalyst. In this process the
dichloropropanol is separated from the other products of the reaction and the
25 latter are recycled to the glycerol chlorination reactor. It is possible to take off a
fraction of these other reaction products via a purge and to subject said fraction
to various treatment prior to possible discharge. Discharge does not constitute a
solution which is acceptable from an environmental standpoint. Moreover, the
extra cost associated with the pre-discharge treatment may be prohibitive for the
30 economics of the process.

The objective of the invention is to provide a process for preparing a chlorohydrin that does not exhibit these drawbacks.

The invention accordingly provides a process for preparing a chlorohydrin, comprising the following steps :

- 5 (a) a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof whose alkali metal and/or alkaline earth metal content is less than or equal to 5 g/kg, a chlorinating agent and an organic acid are reacted so as to give a mixture containing at least chlorohydrin and other compounds
- 10 (b) at least part of the mixture obtained in step (a) is subjected to one or more treatments in steps subsequent to step (a)
- (c) at least one of the steps subsequent to step (a) consists in oxidation at a temperature greater than or equal to 800°C.

It has been found that, by using, in step (a) of the process, a
15 polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof which has an alkali metal and/or alkaline earth metal content of less than or equal to 5 g/kg it is possible to subject a part of the mixture obtained in step (a) to oxidation at a temperature greater than or equal to 800°C, and to obtain the following advantages :

- 20 1) recovery of the chlorinating agent;
- 2) recovery of the useful energy content of the compounds of the reaction mixture;
- 3) reduction in the amount and toxicity of the compounds for discharge.

Without wishing to be bound by any particular theoretical explanation, it is
25 thought that the oxidation at a temperature greater than or equal to 800°C can be conducted under satisfactory conditions because the formation of deposits in the oxidation plant and the risk of degradation to its refractory materials are reduced as a result of the low alkali metal and/or alkaline earth metal content of the compounds burnt.

30 The term "polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon" refers to a hydrocarbon which contains at least two hydroxyl groups attached to two different saturated carbon atoms. The polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon may contain, but is not limited to, from 2 to 60 carbon atoms.

Each of the carbons of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon bearing
35 the hydroxyl functional group (OH) cannot possess more than one OH group and must have sp³ hybridization. The carbon atom carrying the OH group may be

primary, secondary or tertiary. The polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon used in the present invention must contain at least two sp^3 -hybridized carbon atoms carrying an OH group. The polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon includes any hydrocarbon containing a vicinal diol (1,2-diol) or a vicinal triol (1,2,3-triol), including the higher, vicinal or contiguous orders of these repeating units. The definition of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon also includes, for example, one or more 1,3-, 1,4-, 1,5- and 1,6-diol functional groups. The polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon may also be a polymer such as polyvinyl alcohol. Geminal diols, for example, are excluded from this class of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbons.

The polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbons may contain aromatic moieties or heteroatoms, including, for example, heteroatoms of halogen, sulphur, phosphorus, nitrogen, oxygen, silicon and boron type, and mixtures thereof.

Polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbons which can be used in the present invention comprise, for example, 1,2-ethanediol (ethylene glycol), 1,2-propanediol (propylene glycol), 1,3-propanediol, 1-chloro-2,3-propanediol (chloropropanediol), 2-chloro-1,3-propanediol (chloropropanediol), 1,4-butanediol, 1,5-pentanediol, cyclohexanediols, 1,2-butanediol, 1,2-cyclohexanedimethanol, 1,2,3-propanetriol (also known as "glycerol" or "glycerin"), and mixtures thereof. With preference the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon used in the present invention includes, for example, 1,2-ethanediol, 1,2-propanediol, 1,3-propanediol, chloropropanediol and 1,2,3-propanetriol, and mixtures of at least two thereof. More preferably the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon used in the present invention includes, for example, 1,2-ethanediol, 1,2-propanediol, chloropropanediol and 1,2,3-propanetriol, and mixtures of at least two thereof. 1,2,3-Propanetriol or glycerol is the most preferred.

The esters of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon may be present in the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon and/or may be produced in the process for preparing the chlorohydrin and/or may be prepared prior to the process for preparing the chlorohydrin. Examples of esters of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon comprise ethylene glycol monoacetate, propanediol monoacetates, glycerol monoacetates, glycerol monostearates, glycerol diacetates and mixtures thereof.

The term "chlorohydrin" is used here in order to describe a compound containing at least one hydroxyl group and at least one chlorine atom attached to different saturated carbon atoms. A chlorohydrin which contains at least two hydroxyl groups is also a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon. Accordingly the starting material and the product of the reaction may each be chlorohydrins. In that case the "product" chlorohydrin is more chlorinated than the starting chlorohydrin, in other words has more chlorine atoms and fewer hydroxyl groups than the starting chlorohydrin. Preferred chlorohydrins are chloroethanol, chloropropanol, chloropropanediol, dichloropropanol and mixtures of at least two thereof. Dichloropropanol is particularly preferred. Chlorohydrins which are more particularly preferred are 2-chloroethanol, 1-chloropropan-2-ol, 2-chloropropan-1-ol, 1-chloropropane-2,3-diol, 2-chloropropane-1,3-diol, 1,3-dichloropropan-2-ol, 2,3-dichloropropan-1-ol and mixtures of at least two thereof.

The polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, or the mixture thereof in the process according to the invention may be obtained starting from fossil raw materials or starting from renewable raw materials, preferably starting from renewable raw materials.

By fossil raw materials are meant materials obtained from the processing of petrochemical natural resources, such as petroleum, natural gas and coal, for example. Among these materials preference is given to organic compounds containing 2 and 3 carbon atoms. When the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon is glycerol, allyl chloride, allyl alcohol and "synthetic" glycerol are particularly preferred. By "synthetic" glycerol is meant a glycerol generally obtained from petrochemical resources. When the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon is ethylene glycol, ethylene and "synthetic" ethylene glycol are particularly preferred. By "synthetic" ethylene glycol is meant an ethylene glycol generally obtained from petrochemical resources. When the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon is propylene glycol, propylene and "synthetic" propylene glycol are particularly preferred. By "synthetic" propylene glycol is meant a propylene glycol generally obtained from petrochemical resources.

By renewable raw materials are meant materials obtained from the processing of renewable natural resources. Among these materials preference is given to "natural" ethylene glycol, "natural" propylene glycol and "natural" glycerol. "Natural" ethylene glycol, propylene glycol and glycerol are obtained

for example by conversion of sugars by thermochemical processes, it being possible for these sugars to be obtained starting from biomass, as described in "Industrial Bioproducts : Today and Tomorrow", Energetics, Incorporated for the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable
5 Energy, Office of the Biomass Program, July 2003, pages 49, 52 to 56. One of these processes is, for example, the catalytic hydrogenolysis of sorbitol obtained by thermochemical conversion of glucose. Another process is, for example, the catalytic hydrogenolysis of xylitol obtained by hydrogenation of xylose. The xylose may for example be obtained by hydrolysis of the hemicellulose present
10 in maize fibres. By "natural glycerol" or "glycerol obtained from renewable raw materials" is meant, in particular, glycerol obtained during the production of biodiesel or else glycerol obtained during conversions of animal or vegetable oils or fats in general, such as saponification, transesterification or hydrolysis reactions.

15 Among the oils which can be used in the process of the invention, mention may be made of all common oils, such as palm oil, palm kernel oil, copra oil, babassu oil, former or new (low erucic acid) colza oil, sunflower oil, maize oil, castor oil and cotton oil, peanut oil, soya bean oil, linseed oil and crambe oil, and all oils obtained, for example, from sunflower plants or colza plants obtained by
20 genetic modification or hybridization.

It is also possible to employ used frying oils, various animal oils, such as fish oils, tallow, lard and even squaring greases.

Among the oils used mention may also be made of oils which have been partly modified by means, for example, of polymerization or oligomerization,
25 such as, for example, the "stand oils" of linseed oil and of sunflower oil, and blown vegetable oils.

A particularly suitable glycerol may be obtained during the conversion of animal fats. Another particularly suitable glycerol may be obtained during the production of biodiesel. A third, very suitable glycerol may be obtained during
30 the conversion of animal or vegetable oils or fats by transesterification in the presence of a heterogeneous catalyst, as described in documents FR 2752242, FR 2869612 and FR 2869613. More specifically, the heterogeneous catalyst is selected from mixed oxides of aluminium and zinc, mixed oxides of zinc and titanium, mixed oxides of zinc, titanium and aluminium, and mixed oxides of
35 bismuth and aluminium, and the heterogeneous catalyst is employed in the form of a fixed bed. This latter process can be a process for producing biodiesel.

The latter process has at least two advantages over the processes based on saponification, transesterification or hydrolysis reactions which do not employ a heterogeneous catalyst. The first advantage is that the contamination of the glycerol with alkali metal and/or alkaline earth metal elements is reduced. These elements originate, for example, from the homogeneous basic reagents used in the transesterification or saponification reactions (alkaline bases) or originate from operations of neutralizing, using alkaline bases, the acidic homogeneous catalysts used during transesterification or acidic hydrolysis reactions. The use of heterogeneous catalysts as described above makes it possible substantially to reduce the contamination of the glycerol with alkali metal and alkaline earth metal elements, and also with other metallic elements. The second advantage is that the contamination of the glycerol with non-glyceric organic matter is reduced. This non-glyceric matter includes, for example, carboxylic acids, salts of carboxylic acids, fatty acid esters such as mono-, di- and triglycerides and the esters of fatty acids with the alcohols used in the transesterification.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon may be as described in the patent application entitled "Process for preparing chlorohydrin by converting polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbons", filed in the name of SOLVAY SA on the same day as the present application, and the content of which is incorporated here by reference.

Particular mention is made of a process for preparing a chlorohydrin wherein a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof whose total metal content, expressed in elemental form, is greater than or equal to 0.1 µg/kg and less than or equal to 1000 mg/kg is reacted with a chlorinating agent.

In the process according to the invention it is preferred to use glycerol obtained starting from renewable raw materials.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof may be a crude product or a purified product, such as are specifically disclosed in application WO 2005/054167 of SOLVAY SA, from page 2 line 8 to page 4 line 2.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the alkali metal and/or alkaline earth metal content of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture

thereof is less than or equal to 5 g/kg, often less than or equal to 1 g/kg, more particularly less than or equal to 0.5 g/kg and in certain cases less than or equal to 0.01 g/kg. The alkali metal and/or alkaline earth metal content of the glycerol is generally greater than or equal to 0.1 µg/kg.

5 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention the alkali metals are generally lithium, sodium, potassium and cesium, often sodium and potassium, and frequently sodium.

 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the lithium content of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of
10 polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof is generally less than or equal to 1 g/kg, often less than or equal to 0.1 g/kg and more particularly less than or equal to 2 mg/kg. This content is generally greater than or equal to 0.1 µg/kg.

 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the
15 sodium content of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof is generally less than or equal to 1 g/kg, often less than or equal to 0.1 g/kg and more particularly less than or equal to 2 mg/kg. This content is generally greater than or equal to 0.1 µg/kg.

20 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the potassium content of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof is generally less than or equal to 1 g/kg, often less than or equal to 0.1 g/kg and more particularly less than or equal to 2 mg/kg. This content is generally greater than or equal to
25 0.1 µg/kg.

 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the rubidium content of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof is generally less
30 less than or equal to 1 g/kg, often less than or equal to 0.1 g/kg and more particularly less than or equal to 2 mg/kg. This content is generally greater than or equal to 0.1 µg/kg.

 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the cesium content of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof is generally less
35 than or equal to 1 g/kg, often less than or equal to 0.1 g/kg and more particularly

less than or equal to 2 mg/kg. This content is generally greater than or equal to 0.1 µg/kg.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention the alkaline earth metal elements are generally magnesium, calcium, strontium and
5 barium, often magnesium and calcium and frequently calcium.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the magnesium content of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof is generally less than or equal to 1 g/kg, often less than or equal to 0.1 g/kg and more particularly
10 less than or equal to 2 mg/kg. This content is generally greater than or equal to 0.1 µg/kg.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the calcium content of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof is generally less
15 than or equal to 1 g/kg, often less than or equal to 0.1 g/kg and more particularly less than or equal to 2 mg/kg. This content is generally greater than or equal to 0.1 µg/kg.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the strontium content of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof is generally less
20 than or equal to 1 g/kg, often less than or equal to 0.1 g/kg and more particularly less than or equal to 2 mg/kg. This content is generally greater than or equal to 0.1 µg/kg.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the barium content of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof is generally less
25 than or equal to 1 g/kg, often less than or equal to 0.1 g/kg and more particularly less than or equal to 2 mg/kg. This content is generally greater than or equal to 0.1 µg/kg.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention the alkali and/or alkaline earth metals are generally present in the form of salts, frequently in the form of chlorides, sulphates and mixtures thereof. Sodium chloride is the most often encountered.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic
35 hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof may contain elements other than alkali

metals and alkaline earth metals. Among such elements consideration may be given to sulphur, iron, nickel, chromium, copper, lead, arsenic, cobalt, titanium, vanadium, tin, tellurium, cadmium, antimony, mercury, selenium, zinc, aluminium, phosphorus and nitrogen. These elements may be located in the second portion obtained in step (b). Within the glycerol the sulphur content is generally less than or equal to 500 mg/kg and the nitrogen content is generally less than or equal to 500 mg/kg. The amount of metallic elements other than alkali metals and alkaline earth metals is generally less than or equal to 1 mg/kg for each of these elements, preferably less than or equal to 0.5 mg/kg.

10 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the chlorinating agent may be as described in application WO 2005/054167 of SOLVAY SA, from page 4 line 25 to page 6 line 2.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the chlorinating agent may be hydrogen chloride as described in application
15 WO 2005/054167 of SOLVAY SA, from page 4 line 30 to page 6 line 2.

Particular mention is made of a chlorinating agent which may be aqueous hydrochloric acid or hydrogen chloride which is preferably anhydrous. The hydrogen chloride may originate from a process for pyrolysing organic chlorine compounds, such as, for example, from a vinyl chloride production, from a process for producing 4,4-methylenediphenyl diisocyanate (MDI) or toluene diisocyanate (TDI), from metal pickling processes or from the reaction of an
20 inorganic acid such as sulphuric or phosphoric acid with a metal chloride such as sodium chloride, potassium chloride or calcium chloride.

In one advantageous embodiment of the process for preparing a
25 chlorohydrin according to the invention, the chlorinating agent is gaseous hydrogen chloride or an aqueous solution of hydrogen chloride, or a combination of the two.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the hydrogen chloride may be an aqueous solution of hydrogen chloride or may be preferably anhydrous hydrogen chloride, obtained from a plant for producing allyl chloride and/or for producing chloromethanes and/or a chlorinolysis plant and/or a plant for high-temperature oxidation of chlorine compounds, as described in the application entitled "Process for preparing a chlorohydrin by reacting a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon with a chlorinating agent",
30 filed in the name of SOLVAY SA on the same day as the present application, and the content of which is incorporated here by reference.
35

Particular mention is made of a process for preparing a chlorohydrin from a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, from an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or from a mixture thereof, and from a chlorinating agent, the chlorinating agent comprising at least one of the following compounds :

- 5 nitrogen, oxygen, hydrogen, chlorine, an organic hydrocarbon compound, an organic halogen compound, an organic oxygen compound and a metal.

Particular mention is made of an organic hydrocarbon compound which is selected from saturated or unsaturated aliphatic and aromatic hydrocarbons and mixtures thereof.

- 10 Particular mention is made of an unsaturated aliphatic hydrocarbon which is selected from acetylene, ethylene, propylene, butene, propadiene, methylacetylene and mixtures thereof, of a saturated aliphatic hydrocarbon which is selected from methane, ethane, propane, butane and mixtures thereof and of an aromatic hydrocarbon which is benzene.

- 15 Particular mention is made of an organic halogen compound which is an organic chlorine compound selected from chloromethanes, chloroethanes, chloropropanes, chlorobutanes, vinyl chloride, vinylidene chloride, monochloropropenes, perchloroethylene, trichloroethylene, chlorobutadienes, chlorobenzenes and mixtures thereof.

- 20 Particular mention is made of an organic halogen compound which is an organic fluorine compound selected from fluoromethanes, fluoroethanes, vinyl fluoride, vinylidene fluoride and mixtures thereof.

Particular mention is made of an organic oxygen compound which is selected from alcohols, chloroalcohols, chloroethers and mixtures thereof.

- 25 Particular mention is made of a metal selected from alkali metals, alkaline earth metals, iron, nickel, copper, lead, arsenic, cobalt, titanium, cadmium, antimony, mercury, zinc, selenium, aluminium, bismuth and mixtures thereof.

- Mention is made more particularly of a process wherein the chlorinating agent is obtained at least partly from a process for preparing allyl chloride and/or a process for preparing chloromethanes and/or a process of chlorinolysis and/or a process for oxidizing chlorine compounds at a temperature greater than or equal to 800°C.
- 30

- In one particularly advantageous embodiment of the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the hydrogen chloride is an aqueous solution of hydrogen chloride and does not contain gaseous hydrogen chloride.
- 35

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the reaction of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof with the chlorinating agent may be carried out in a reactor as described in application
5 WO 2005/054167 of SOLVAY SA on page 6 lines 3 to 23.

Mention is made particularly of a plant made of or covered with materials which are resistant, under the reaction conditions, to the chlorinating agents, particularly to hydrogen chloride. Mention is made more particularly of a plant made of enamelled steel or of tantalum.

10 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the reaction of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof with the chlorinating agent may be carried out in apparatus which is made of or covered with materials that are resistant to chlorinating agents, as described in the patent
15 application entitled "Process for preparing a chlorohydrin in corrosion-resistant apparatus", filed in the name of SOLVAY SA on the same day as the present application, and the content of which is incorporated here by reference.

Particular mention is made of a process for preparing a chlorohydrin that includes a step in which a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a
20 polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof is subjected to reaction with a chlorinating agent containing hydrogen chloride and to at least one other step carried out in an apparatus made of or covered with materials resistant to the chlorinating agent, under the conditions in which that step is realized. Mention is made more particularly of metallic materials such as
25 enamelled steel, gold and tantalum and of non-metallic materials such as high-density polyethylene, polypropylene, poly(vinylidene fluoride), polytetrafluoroethylene, perfluoroalkoxyalkanes and poly(perfluoropropyl vinyl ether), polysulphones and polysulphides, and unimpregnated and impregnated graphite.

30 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the reaction of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof with the chlorinating agent may be carried out in a reaction medium, as described in the application entitled "Continuous
35 Process for Preparing Chlorohydrins", filed in the name of SOLVAY SA on the

same day as the present application, and the content of which is incorporated here by reference.

Particular mention is made of a continuous process for producing chlorohydrin in which a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof is reacted with a
5 polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof is reacted with a chlorinating agent and an organic acid in a liquid reaction medium whose steady-state composition comprises polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon and esters of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon for which the sum of the amounts, expressed in moles of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, is greater than
10 1.1 mol % and less than or equal to 30 mol %, the percentage being based on the organic part of the liquid reaction medium.

The organic part of the liquid reaction medium consists of all of the organic compounds of the liquid reaction medium, in other words the compounds whose molecule contains at least one carbon atom.

15 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the reaction of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof and the chlorinating agent may be carried out in the presence of a catalyst as described in application WO 2005/054167 of SOLVAY SA from page 6 line 28 to page 8
20 line 5.

Mention is made particularly of a catalyst based on a carboxylic acid or on a carboxylic acid derivative having an atmospheric boiling point of greater than or equal to 200°C, especially adipic acid and derivatives of adipic acid.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the
25 reaction of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof and the chlorinating agent may be carried out at a catalyst concentration, temperature and pressure and for residence times as described in the application WO 2005/054167 of SOLVAY SA from page 8 line 6 to page 10 line 10.

30 Mention is made particularly of a temperature of at least 20°C and not more than 160°C, of a pressure of at least 0.3 bar and not more than 100 bar and of a residence time of at least 1 h and not more than 50 h.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the
35 reaction of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof with the

chlorinating agent may be carried out in the presence of a solvent as described in application WO 2005/054167 of SOLVAY SA at page 11 lines 12 to 36.

Mention is made particularly of organic solvents such as a chlorinated organic solvent, an alcohol, a ketone, an ester or an ether, a non-aqueous solvent
5 which is miscible with the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, such as chloroethanol, chloropropanol, chloropropanediol, dichloropropanol, dioxane, phenol, cresol and mixtures of chloropropanediol and dichloropropanol, or heavy products of the reaction such as at least partially chlorinated and/or esterified oligomers of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon.

10 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the reaction of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon with the chlorinating agent may be carried out in the presence of a liquid phase comprising heavy compounds other than the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, as described in the application entitled " Process for preparing a chlorohydrin in a liquid
15 phase ", filed in the name of SOLVAY SA on the same day as the present application, and the content of which is incorporated here by reference.

Particular mention is made of a process for preparing a chlorohydrin wherein a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof is subjected to reaction with a
20 chlorinating agent in the presence of a liquid phase comprising heavy compounds other than the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon and having a boiling temperature under a pressure of 1 bar absolute of at least 15°C more than the boiling temperature of the chlorohydrin under a pressure of 1 bar absolute.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention the
25 reaction of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof with the chlorinating agent is preferably carried out in a liquid reaction medium. The liquid reaction medium may be a single-phase or multi-phase medium.

The liquid reaction medium is composed of all of the dissolved or
30 dispersed solid compounds, dissolved or dispersed liquid compounds and dissolved or dispersed gaseous compounds at the temperature of the reaction.

The reaction medium comprises the reactants, the catalyst, the solvent, the impurities present in the reactants, in the solvent and in the catalyst, the reaction intermediates, the products and the by-products of the reaction.

35 By reactants are meant the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon and the chlorinating agent.

Among the impurities present in the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon mention may be made of carboxylic acids, salts of carboxylic acids, esters of fatty acid with the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, esters of fatty acids with the alcohols used in the transesterification, and inorganic salts
5 such as alkali metal or alkaline earth metal sulphates and chlorides.

When the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon is glycerol, the impurities in the glycerol that may be mentioned include carboxylic acids, salts of carboxylic acids, fatty acid esters such as mono-, di- and triglycerides, esters of fatty acids with the alcohols used in the transesterification and inorganic salts
10 such as alkali metal or alkaline earth metal sulphates and chlorides.

Among the reaction intermediates mention may be made of monochlorohydrins of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon and their esters and/or polyesters, the esters and/or polyesters of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon and the esters of polychlorohydrins.
15

When the chlorohydrin is dichloropropanol, the reaction intermediates that may be mentioned include glycerol monochlorohydrin and its esters and/or polyesters, the esters and/or polyesters of glycerol and the esters of dichloropropanol.

The ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon may therefore be, at each instance, a reactant, an impurity of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a reaction intermediate.
20

By products of the reaction are meant the chlorohydrin and water. The water may be the water formed in the chlorination reaction and/or water introduced into the process, for example via the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon and/or the chlorinating agent, as described in the application
25 WO 2005/054167 of SOLVAY SA at page 2 lines 22 to 28 to page 3 lines 20 to 25, at page 5 lines 7 to 31 and at page 12 lines 14 to 19.

Among the by-products mention may be made for example of the partially chlorinated and/or esterified oligomers of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon.
30

When the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon is glycerol, the by-products that may be mentioned include, for example, the partially chlorinated and/or esterified oligomers of glycerol.

The reaction intermediates and the by-products may be formed in the different steps of the process, such as, for example, during the step of preparing the chlorohydrin and during the steps of separating off the chlorohydrin.
35

The liquid reaction medium may therefore contain the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the chlorinating agent in solution or dispersion in the form of bubbles, the catalyst, the solvent, the impurities present in the reactants, in the solvent and in the catalyst, such as dissolved or solid salts, for example, the
5 reaction intermediates, the products and the by-products of the reaction.

Steps (a), (b) and (c) of the process according to the invention may be carried out in batch mode or in continuous mode. It is preferred to carry out all of the steps in continuous mode.

In the preparation process according to the invention, the organic acid may
10 be a product originating from the process for preparing the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, or a product not originating from this process. In this latter case the product in question may be an organic acid which is used in order to catalyse the reaction of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon with the chlorinating agent, and/or an acid generated in the process for preparing the
15 chlorohydrin. Consideration is given, for example, to acids generated starting from aldehydes present in the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or formed during the preparation of the chlorohydrin. The organic acid may also be a mixture of an organic acid originating from the process for preparing the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, and an organic acid not originating
20 from the process for preparing the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon.

In the process according to the invention, the esters of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon may originate from the reaction between the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon and the organic acid, before, during or within the steps which follow the reaction with the chlorinating agent.

In the process according to the invention, the separation of the
25 chlorohydrin and of the other compounds from the reaction mixture may be carried out in accordance with the methods as described in the application WO 2005/054167 of SOLVAY SA from page 12 line 1 to page 16 line 35 and page 18 lines 6 to 13. These other compounds are those mentioned above and
30 include unconsumed reactants, the impurities present in the reactants, the catalyst, the solvent, the reaction intermediates, the water and the by-products of the reaction.

Particular mention is made of separation by azeotropic distillation of a water/chlorohydrin/chlorinating agent mixture under conditions which minimize
35 the losses of chlorinating agent, followed by isolation of the chlorohydrin by decantation.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the isolation of the chlorohydrin and of the other compounds from the reaction mixture may be carried out in accordance with methods of the kind described in patent application EP 05104321.4, filed in the name of SOLVAY SA on
5 20/05/2005 and the content of which is incorporated here by reference. A separation method including at least one separating operation intended to remove the salt from the liquid phase is particularly preferred.

Particular mention is made of a process for preparing a chlorohydrin by reacting a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a
10 polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof with a chlorinating agent wherein the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof that is used comprises at least one solid or dissolved metal salt, the process including a separation operation intended to remove part of the metal salt. Mention is made
15 more particularly of a process for preparing a chlorohydrin by reacting a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof with a chlorinating agent wherein the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof that is used comprises at least one chloride
20 and/or a sodium and/or potassium sulphate and in which the separating operation intended to remove part of the metal salt is a filtering operation. Particular mention is also made of a process for preparing a chlorohydrin wherein (a) a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof is subjected to reaction with a chlorinating
25 agent in a reaction mixture, (b) continuously or periodically, a fraction of the reaction mixture containing at least water and the chlorohydrin is removed, (c) at least a part of the fraction obtained in step (b) is introduced into a distillation step and (d) the reflux ratio of the distillation step is controlled by providing water to the said distillation step. Mention is made very particularly of a process for
30 preparing a chlorohydrin wherein (a) a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof is subjected to reaction with hydrogen chloride in a reaction mixture, (b) continuously or periodically, a fraction of the reaction mixture containing at least water and chlorohydrin is removed, (c) at least part of the fraction obtained in
35 step (b) is introduced into a distillation step in which the ratio between the hydrogen chloride concentration and the water concentration in the fraction

introduced into the distillation step is smaller than the hydrogen chloride/water concentration ratio in the binary azeotropic hydrogen chloride/water composition at the distillation temperature and pressure.

5 In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the separation of the chlorohydrin and of the other compounds from the reaction mixture from chlorination of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon may be carried out in accordance with methods as described in the application entitled "Process for preparing a chlorohydrin", filed in the name of SOLVAY SA on the same day as the present application, and the content of which is incorporated
10 here by reference.

Particular mention is made of a process for preparing a chlorohydrin which comprises the following steps : (a) a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof is reacted with a chlorinating agent and an organic acid so as to give a mixture containing
15 the chlorohydrin and esters of the chlorohydrin, (b) at least part of the mixture obtained in (a) is subjected to one or more treatments subsequent to step (a), and (c) the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon is added to at least one of the steps subsequent to step (a), in order to react at a temperature greater than or equal to 20°C with the esters of the chlorohydrin, so as to form, at least partly,
20 esters of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon. Mention is made more particularly of a process in which the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon is glycerol and the chlorohydrin is dichloropropanol.

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the separation of the chlorohydrin and the other compounds from the reaction
25 mixture from chlorination of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon may be carried out in accordance with methods as described in the application entitled "Process for preparing a chlorohydrin starting from a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon", filed in the name of SOLVAY SA on the same day as the present application, and the content of which is incorporated here by reference.

30 Particular mention is made of a process for preparing chlorohydrin by reacting a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof with a chlorinating agent in a reactor which is supplied with one or more liquid streams containing less than 50 % by weight of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, of the
35 ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or of the mixture thereof relative to the weight of the entirety of the liquid streams introduced into the reactor.

More particular mention is made of a process comprising the following steps :
(a) a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof is reacted with a chlorinating agent so as to give at least one mixture containing the chlorohydrin, water and the
5 chlorinating agent, (b) at least a fraction of the mixture formed in step (a) is removed, and (c) the fraction removed in step (b) is subjected to an operation of distillation and/or stripping wherein the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon is added in order to isolate, from the fraction removed in step (b), a mixture containing water and the chlorohydrin and exhibiting a reduced chlorinating
10 agent content as compared with the fraction removed in step (b).

In the process for preparing a chlorohydrin according to the invention, the separation of the chlorohydrin and of the other compounds from the reaction mixture from chlorination of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon may be carried out in accordance with methods as described in the application entitled
15 " Process for converting polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbons into chlorohydrins ", filed in the name of SOLVAY SA on the same day as the present application, and the content of which is incorporated here by reference. Particular mention is made of a process for preparing a chlorohydrin that comprises the following steps : (a) a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an
20 ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof is reacted with a chlorinating agent so as to give a mixture containing the chlorohydrin, chlorohydrin esters and water, (b) at least a fraction of the mixture obtained in step (a) is subjected to a distillation and/or stripping treatment so as to give a portion concentrated in water, in chlorohydrin and in chlorohydrin esters,
25 and (c) at least a fraction of the portion obtained in step (b) is subjected to a separating operation in the presence of at least one additive so as to obtain a moiety concentrated in chlorohydrin and in chlorohydrin esters and containing less than 40 % by weight of water.

The separating operation is more particularly a decantation.

30 In the process according to the invention, when the chlorohydrin is chloropropanol, it is generally employed in the form of a mixture of compounds comprising the isomers of 1-chloropropan-2-ol and 2-chloropropan-1-ol. This mixture generally contains more than 1 % by weight of the two isomers, preferably more than 5 % by weight and particularly more than 50 %. The
35 mixture commonly contains less than 99.9 % by weight of the two isomers, preferably less than 95 % by weight and more particularly less than 90 % by

weight. The other constituents of the mixture may be compounds originating from the processes for preparing the chloropropanol, such as residual reactants, reaction by-products, solvents and, in particular, water.

The mass ratio of the isomers, 1-chloropropan-2-ol and
5 2-chloropropan-1-ol, is commonly greater than or equal to 0.01, preferably greater than or equal to 0.4. This ratio is commonly less than or equal to 99 and preferably less than or equal to 25.

In the process according to the invention, when the chlorohydrin is chloroethanol, it is generally employed in the form of a mixture of compounds
10 comprising the 1-chloroethan-2-ol isomer. This mixture generally contains more than 1 % by weight of the isomer, preferably more than 5 % by weight and particularly more than 50 %. The mixture commonly contains less than 99.9 % by weight of the isomer, preferably less than 95 % by weight and more particularly less than 90 % by weight. The other constituents of the mixture may
15 be compounds originating from the processes for preparing the chloroethanol, such as residual reactants, reaction by-products, solvents and, in particular, water.

In the process according to the invention, when the chlorohydrin is chloropropanediol, it is generally employed in the form of a mixture of
20 compounds comprising the isomers of 1-chloropropane-2,3-diol and 2-chloropropane-1,3-diol. This mixture generally contains more than 1 % by weight of the two isomers, preferably more than 5 % by weight and particularly more than 50 %. The mixture commonly contains less than 99.9 % by weight of the two isomers, preferably less than 95 % by weight and more particularly less
25 than 90 % by weight. The other constituents of the mixture may be compounds originating from the processes for preparing the chloropropanediol, such as residual reactions, reaction by-products, solvents and, in particular, water.

The mass ratio between the 1-chloropropane-2,3-diol and 2-chloropropane-1,3-diol isomers is commonly greater than or equal to 0.01, preferably greater than or equal to 0.4. This ratio is commonly less than or equal
30 to 99 and preferably less than or equal to 25. In the process according to the invention, when the chlorohydrin is dichloropropanol, it is generally employed in the form of a mixture of compounds comprising the isomers of 1,3-dichloropropan-2-ol and 2,3-dichloropropan-1-ol. This mixture generally
35 contains more than 1 % by weight of the two isomers, preferably more than 5 % by weight and in particular more than 50 %. The mixture commonly contains

less than 99.9 % by weight of the two isomers, preferably less than 95 % by weight and more particularly less than 90 % by weight. The other constituents of the mixture may be compounds originating from the processes for preparing the dichloropropanol, such as residual reactants, reaction by-products, solvents and,
5 in particular, water.

The mass ratio between the 1,3-dichloropropan-2-ol and 2,3-dichloropropan-1-ol isomers is commonly greater than or equal to 0.01, often greater than or equal to 0.4, frequently greater than or equal to 1.5, preferably greater than or equal to 3.0, more preferred greater than or equal to 7.0 and
10 with very particular preference greater than or equal to 20.0. This ratio is commonly less than or equal to 99 and preferably less than or equal to 25.

The chlorohydrin obtained in the process according to the invention may include a heightened amount of halogenated ketones, in particular of chloroacetone, as described in the patent application FR 05.05120 of 20/05/2005,
15 filed in the name of the applicant, and the content of which is incorporated here by reference. The halogenated ketone content may be reduced by subjecting the chlorohydrin obtained in the process according to the invention to an azeotropic distillation in the presence of water or by subjecting the chlorohydrin to a dehydrochlorination treatment as described in this application from page 4 line 1
20 to page 6 line 35.

Particular mention is made of a process for preparing an epoxide wherein halogenated ketones are formed as by-products and which comprises at least one treatment of removal of at least a portion of the halogenated ketones formed. Mention is made more particularly of a process for preparing an epoxide by
25 dehydrochlorinating a chlorohydrin of which at least one fraction is prepared by chlorinating a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof, a treatment of dehydrochlorination and a treatment by azeotropic distillation of a water/halogenated ketone mixture, which are intended to remove at least a
30 portion of the halogenated ketones formed, and a process for preparing epichlorohydrin wherein the halogenated ketone formed is chloroacetone.

The chlorohydrin obtained in the process according to the invention may be subjected to a dehydrochlorination reaction in order to produce an epoxide, as described in the patent applications WO 2005/054167 and FR 05.05120, both
35 filed in the name of SOLVAY SA.

The term "epoxide" is used herein to describe a compound containing at least one oxygen bridged on a carbon-carbon bond. Generally speaking, the carbon atoms of the carbon-carbon bond are adjacent and the compound may contain atoms other than carbon atoms and oxygen atoms, such as hydrogen atoms and halogens. The preferred epoxides are ethylene oxide, propylene oxide and epichlorohydrin.

The dehydrochlorination of the chlorohydrin may be carried out as described in the application entitled " Process for preparing an epoxide starting from a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon and a chlorinating agent ", filed in the name of SOLVAY SA on the same day as the present application, and the content of which is incorporated here by reference.

Particular mention is made of a process for preparing an epoxide wherein a reaction mixture resulting from the reaction between a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof with a chlorinating agent, the reaction mixture containing at least 10 g of chlorohydrin per kg of reaction mixture, is subjected to a subsequent chemical reaction without intermediate treatment.

Mention is also made of the preparation of an epoxide that comprises the following steps : (a) a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof is reacted with a chlorinating agent and an organic acid so as to form the chlorohydrin and chlorohydrin esters in a reaction mixture containing the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, water, the chlorinating agent and the organic acid, the reaction mixture containing at least 10 g of chlorohydrin per kg of reaction mixture, (b) at least a fraction of the reaction mixture obtained in step (a), this fraction having the same composition as the reaction mixture obtained in step (a), is subjected to one or more treatments in steps subsequent to step (a), and (c) a basic compound is added to at least one of the steps subsequent to step (a) in order to react at least partly with the chlorohydrin, the chlorohydrin esters, the chlorinating agent and the organic acid so as to form the epoxide and salts.

The process for preparing the chlorohydrin according to the invention, may be integrated within an overall plan for preparation of an epoxide, as described in the application entitled " Process for preparing an epoxide starting from a chlorohydrin ", filed in the name of SOLVAY SA on the same day as the present application, and the content of which is incorporated here by reference.

Particular mention is made of a process for preparing an epoxide that comprises at least one step of purification of the epoxide formed, the epoxide being at least partly prepared by a process of dehydrochlorinating a chlorohydrin, the latter being at least partly prepared by a process of chlorinating a
5 polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof.

In a first embodiment of the process according to the invention a part of the mixture obtained in step (a) is withdrawn and this part is subject to oxidation at a temperature greater than or equal to 800°C during the withdrawal.

10 In a second embodiment of the process according to the invention a part of the mixture obtained in step (a) is withdrawn and at least part of the mixture obtained in step (a) is subjected to one or more treatments in steps subsequent to step (a) so as to give one or more treated parts, and at least one of the treated parts is subjected to oxidation at a temperature greater than or equal to 800°C.

15 The treatment of step (b) may be a separating operation, for example a decantation operation, or a filtration, centrifugation, extraction, washing, evaporation, stripping, distillation, adsorption or absorption operation or combinations of at least two thereof.

By oxidation is meant a reaction in the presence of at least one oxidizing
20 agent. The oxidizing agent may be selected from water, oxygen, oxides of chlorine, oxides of nitrogen, mixtures thereof with one another and their mixtures with nitrogen.

The oxidation temperature is greater than or equal to 800°C and more particularly greater than or equal to 1000°C. This temperature is generally less
25 than or equal to 10 000°C and often less than or equal to 1500°C, frequently less than or equal to 1450°C and more particularly less than or equal to 1400°C. High-temperature oxidation is generally carried out at a pressure which is generally greater than or equal to 0.1 bar, often greater than or equal to 0.5 bar and more particularly greater than or equal to 0.8 bar. This pressure is generally
30 less than or equal to 3 bar, preferably less than or equal to 2.5 bar and frequently less than or equal to 1 bar. The duration of the oxidation reaction is generally greater than or equal to 1.0 s, often greater than or equal to 1.5 s and more particularly greater than or equal to 1 s. This duration is generally less than or equal to 20 s, frequently less than or equal to 15 s and in particular less than or
35 equal to 10 s. An example of an oxidation process at a temperature greater than or equal to 800°C is that in which organic chlorine compounds and oxygen

compounds in the form of carbon dioxide, hydrogen chloride and water are oxidized. Another example of an oxidation process at a temperature greater than or equal to 800°C is that in which organic chlorine compounds and oxygen compounds are oxidized in a plasma at a temperature which is generally greater
5 than or equal to 3000°C.

In the process according to the invention the chlorinating agent, hydrogen chloride for example, generated in step (c) may be recycled to step (a) after optional processing. This processing may consist for example in an operation of absorption in an aqueous solution, followed by optional partial desorption of
10 gaseous hydrogen chloride. This recycling is particularly advantageous when the chlorinating agent contains hydrogen chloride.

A description of high-temperature oxidation processes may be found in the reference "Ullmann's Encyclopedia of Industrial Chemistry, Fifth, Completely Revised Edition, 1985, Volume A13, pages 292-293".

15 In the process according to the invention, the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon is preferably glycerol and the chlorohydrin is preferably dichloropropanol.

When the chlorohydrin is dichloropropanol, the process according to the invention may be followed by preparation of epichlorohydrin by
20 dehydrochlorination of dichloropropanol, and the epichlorohydrin may be used in the production of epoxy resins.

Figure 1 shows a particular scheme of plant which can be used for implementing the separating process according to the invention.

A reactor (4) is supplied in continuous mode or in batch mode with a
25 polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof, via line (1), and with catalyst via line (2); chlorinating agent is supplied in continuous mode or in batch mode via line (3); a distillation column (6) is supplied via line (5) with vapours produced in reactor (4); a stream is taken off from column (6) via line (7) and is introduced
30 into a condenser (8); the stream obtained from the condenser is introduced via line (9) into a phase separator (10), in which aqueous and organic phases are separated. A fraction of the separated aqueous phase is optionally recycled via line (11) to the top of the column in order to maintain the reflux. Fresh water may be introduced into line (11) via line (12). The production of chlorohydrin is
35 distributed between the organic phase taken off via line (14) and the aqueous phase taken off via line (13). The residue from column (6) may be recycled to

reactor (4) via line (15). A fraction of the heavy products is taken off from reactor (4) via the purge (16) and is introduced via line (17) into an evaporator (18), in which a partial operation of evaporation is conducted, for example, by heating or by gas scavenging with nitrogen or with water vapour; the gaseous phase containing the majority of the chlorinating agent from stream (17) is recycled via line (19) to column (6) or via line (20) to reactor (4); a distillation or stripping column (22) is supplied with the liquid phase coming from stripping apparatus (18) via line (21); and the major part of the chlorohydrin is recovered at the top of column (22) via line (23).

The residue containing heavy compounds is recycled to reactor (4) via line (31); a fraction of these heavy compounds is taken off and is introduced into a pretreatment unit (34) via line (32); the heavy compounds which can be utilized in the process for chlorinating the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon are recycled to reactor (4) via line (35), and the non-utilizable heavy compounds are passed via line (36) into a high-temperature oxidizing unit (37) which is supplied with air via line (38), and from which a stream containing hydrogen chloride is taken off via line (41). The oxidizing unit may be optionally supplied with another stream of combustible substances (39) containing, optionally, chlorine compounds from other preparations, such as the synthesis of chloroalkanes, the synthesis of tetrachloromethane and perchloroethylene by chlorinolysis, and the synthesis of 1,2-dichloroethane. Provision of water or of an aqueous solution of hydrogen chloride may be optionally carried out via line (40) in order to reduce the chlorine content of the stream containing the hydrogen chloride produced. The hydrogen chloride obtained from the high-temperature oxidizing unit (37) is optionally recycled to the chlorinating agent supply of reactor (4) via line (42). The filtering column (25) is in that case short-circuited.

Optionally the heavy compounds obtained from column (22) are passed via line (24) to filtering unit (25), in which the liquid and solid phases are separated; a fraction of the liquid phase is recycled via line (26) to reactor (4). The recycling of the heavy compounds to reactor (4) via line (31) is in that case short-circuited. The solid may be taken off from filtering unit (25) via line (27) in the form of a solid or a solution. Solvents may be added to filtering unit (25) via lines (28) and (29) for washing and/or dissolving the solid, and may be taken off via line (27). A fraction of the liquid phase recycled to reactor (4) via line (26) is taken off and passed to a pretreatment unit (34) via line (33).

Optionally a stream is taken off from purge (16) and introduced via line (30) into filtering unit (25). Stripping apparatus (18) and distillation column (22) are in that case short-circuited.

- 5 Optionally the stream taken off from purge (16) directly supplies pretreatment unit (34). The filtering column is in that case short-circuited.

Optionally the unit for pretreating heavy compounds (34) is short-circuited.

CLAIMS

1. Process for preparing a chlorohydrin, comprising the following steps :
 - (a) a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, an ester of a polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or a mixture thereof whose alkali metal and/or
5 alkaline earth metal content is less than or equal to 5 g/kg, a chlorinating agent and an organic acid are reacted so as to give a mixture containing at least chlorohydrin and other compounds
 - (b) at least part of the mixture obtained in step (a) is subjected to one or more treatments in steps subsequent to step (a)
 - 10 (c) at least one of the steps subsequent to step (a) consists in oxidation at a temperature greater than or equal to 800°C.
2. Process according to Claim 1, wherein the alkali metals and/or alkaline earth metals are present in the form of chlorides, sulphates or mixtures thereof.
3. Process according to Claim 2, wherein the alkali metal chloride is
15 sodium.
4. Process according to Claim 2, wherein the alkali metal chloride is potassium.
5. Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 4, wherein the alkali metal and/or alkaline earth metal content of the polyhydroxylated aliphatic
20 hydrocarbon, of the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or of the mixture thereof is less than or equal to 1 g/kg, preferably less than or equal to 0.5 g/kg and with particular preference less than or equal to 0.01 g/kg.
6. Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 5, wherein the
25 polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon, the ester of polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon or the mixture thereof is obtained starting from renewable raw materials.
7. Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 6, wherein the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon is selected from ethylene glycol,

propylene glycol, chloropropanediol, glycerol and mixtures of at least two thereof.

8. Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 6, wherein the chlorohydrin is selected from chloroethanol, chloropropanol, chloropropanediol,
5 dichloropropanol and mixtures of at least two thereof.

9. Process according to Claim 7 to 8, wherein the polyhydroxylated aliphatic hydrocarbon is glycerol and the chlorohydrin is dichloropropanol.

10. Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 9, wherein the chlorinating agent is a combination of gaseous hydrogen chloride and an aqueous solution of
10 hydrogen chloride, or an aqueous solution of hydrogen chloride.

11. Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 10, according to which, in the subsequent step, a part of the mixture obtained in step (a) is withdrawn and this part is subjected to oxidation at a temperature greater than or equal to 800°C during the withdrawal.

15 12. Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 11, wherein the treatment of step (b) is a separating operation selected from decantation, filtration, centrifugation, extraction, washing, evaporation, stripping, distillation and adsorption operations or combinations of at least two thereof.

20 13. Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 12, wherein the oxidation of step (c) is carried out at a temperature less than or equal to 1500°C, at a pressure greater than or equal to 0.1 and less than or equal to 2 bar and for a duration greater than or equal to 1.5 seconds and less than or equal to 20 seconds.

25 14. Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 13, wherein the oxidation of step (c) is carried out in the presence of at least one oxidizing agent selected from water, oxygen, oxides of chlorine, oxides of nitrogen, mixtures thereof with one another and their mixtures with nitrogen.

15. Process according to Claim 14, wherein a gas containing hydrogen chloride is generated in oxidation step (c).

16. Process according to Claim 15, wherein the hydrogen chloride generated in oxidation step (c) is separated off and recycled to step (a) after optional processing.

5 17. Process according to any one of Claims 1 to 16, wherein steps (a), (b) and (c) are conducted continuously.

18. Process for preparing dichloropropanol, comprising the following steps :

- 10 (a) glycerol whose alkali metal and/or alkaline earth metal content is less than or equal to 5 g/kg, hydrogen chloride and an organic acid are reacted so as to give a mixture containing at least dichloropropanol and by-products
- (b) at least a fraction of the mixture obtained in step (a) is withdrawn and said fraction is subjected to oxidation at a temperature greater than or equal to 1000°C.

15 19. Process according to Claim 9, followed by preparation of epichlorohydrin by dehydrochlorination of dichloropropanol.

20. Process according to Claim 19, wherein the epichlorohydrin is used in the production of epoxy resins.