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(54) Title: PROCESS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF CARBOXYLIC ACID ESTERS

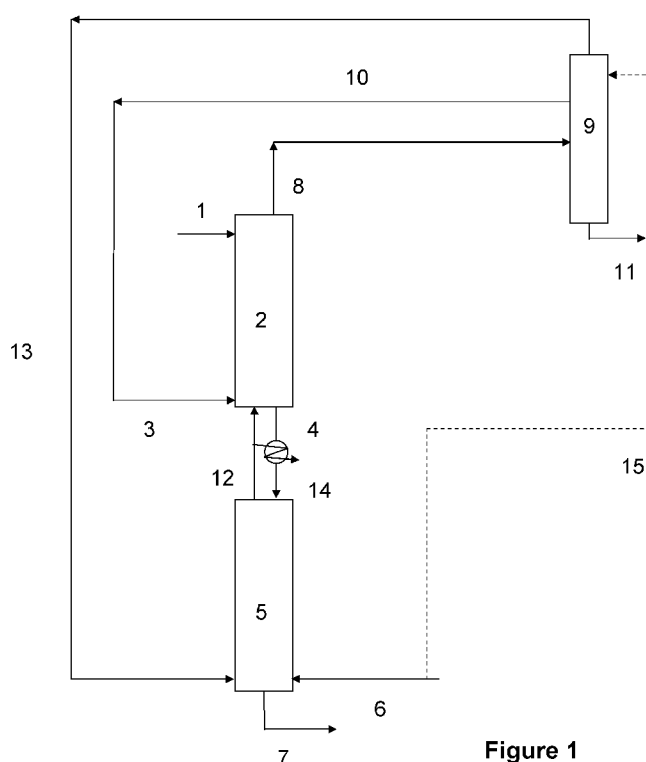


Figure 1

(57) Abstract: A process for the production of carboxylic acid esters by reaction of a carboxylic acid component and an alcohol component, said process comprising: feeding a liquid carboxylic acid stream to an upper section of a reaction zone maintained under esterification conditions; feeding an alcohol vapour stream to a lower section of the reaction zone; allowing the carboxylic acid stream to pass in countercurrent to the alcohol stream to form a liquid product stream comprising product ester; withdrawing a refiner stream from at or near the top of the reaction zone comprising unreacted alcohol; water and ether by-product; passing the refiner stream to a refining zone and treating said stream to reduce the water content thereof to form an ether-containing stream having a water content that is lower than that of the upper stream removed from the reaction zone; and recycling the ether-containing stream from step (e) to the reaction zone. Apparatus for this process is also described.



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