

ULTRAFILTRATION OF POLYISOOLEFIN COPOLYMERS

Field

This application relates to polyisooolefin copolymers, in particular to the ultrafiltration of polyisooolefin copolymers, for example butyl rubbers.

5 Background

Poly(isobutylene-co-isoprene), or IIR, is a synthetic elastomer commonly known as butyl rubber which has been prepared since the 1940's through the random cationic copolymerization of isobutylene with small amounts of isoprene (1-5 mole %). As a result of its molecular structure, IIR possesses superior air impermeability, a high loss modulus,
10 oxidative stability and extended fatigue resistance.

Butyl rubber is understood to be a copolymer of an isooolefin and one or more, preferably conjugated, multiolefins as comonomers. Commercial butyl comprises a major portion of isooolefin and a minor amount, usually not more than 2.5 mol %, of a conjugated multiolefin. Butyl rubber or butyl polymer is generally prepared in a slurry process using
15 methyl chloride as a diluent and a Friedel-Crafts catalyst as part of the polymerization initiator. This process is further described in U.S. Patent No. 2,356,128 and Ullmanns Encyclopedia of Industrial Chemistry, volume A 23, 1993, pages 288-295.

Halogenation of butyl rubber produces reactive allylic halide functionality within the elastomer. Conventional butyl rubber halogenation processes are described in, for
20 example, Ullmann's Encyclopedia of Industrial Chemistry (Fifth, Completely Revised Edition, Volume A231 Editors Elvers, et al.) and/or "Rubber Technology" (Third Edition) by Maurice Morton, Chapter 10 (Van Nostrand Reinhold Company © 1987), particularly pp. 297-300.

The presence of allylic halide functionalities allows for nucleophilic alkylation
25 reactions. It has been recently shown that treatment of brominated butyl rubber (BIIR) with nitrogen and/or phosphorus based nucleophiles, in the solid state, leads to the generation of IIR-based ionomers with interesting physical and chemical properties (see: Parent JS, Liskova A, Whitney RA, Resendes R. Journal of Polymer Science, Part A: Polymer Chemistry 43, 5671-5679, 2005; Parent JS, Liskova A, Resendes R. Polymer
30 45, 8091-8096, 2004; Parent JS, Penciu A, Guillen-Castellanos SA, Liskova A, Whitney RA. Macromolecules 37, 7477-7483, 2004). The ionomer functionality is generated from the reaction of a nitrogen or phosphorus based nucleophile and the allylic halide sites in

the halogenated butyl rubber to produce a ammonium or phosphonium ionic group respectively. The physical properties of these halogenated butyl based ionomers, such as green strength, modulus, filler interactions etc., are superior to those of their non-ionomeric counterpart.

5 Butyl rubber production produces small amounts of cyclic oligomers as side products. Such cyclic oligomers may be undesirable in certain applications of butyl rubber, for example in pharmaceutical seals, closures, medical devices and food grade applications, therefore a reduction in cyclic oligomer levels in the butyl rubber may be desirable. Furthermore, such cyclic oligomers may themselves find utility in certain
10 applications such as precursors for the production of lubricants and traction fluids, therefore obtaining the cyclic oligomers themselves may also be desirable.

It is known from United States Patent US 7,071,292 and European Patent Publication EP 2610296 that solutions of nitrile rubber and other elastomers in an organic solvent may be purified by ultrafiltration methods. Impurities removed by these processes
15 include emulsifiers, organic and/or inorganic salts or acids such as fatty acids and resins, water, unreacted initiator residues and/or decomposition products, stabilizers, molecular weight regulators, monomers, processing agents, such as flocculants, oligomeric components with a molecular weight of less than 2000 g/mol and transition metal catalysts for the hydrogenation or metathesis, oxidizing and/or reducing agents and/or
20 components of these transition metal catalysts, oxidizing and/or reducing agents preferred impurities are fatty acids, fatty acid esters and Na, K, Ca salts of fatty acids, or resin acids, stabilizers, flocculants water, catalyst components, and ligands.

There remains a need for a method of separating polyisoolefin elastomers, especially butyl rubber, from other components of a polyisoolefin elastomer solution,
25 preferably while retaining sufficient levels of stabilizers in the polyisoolefin elastomer.

Summary

There is provided a method of separating a polyisoolefin elastomer from non-polymeric components in an organic solvent, the method comprising filtering a solution of the polyisoolefin elastomer and non-polymeric components in an organic solvent through
30 a semipermeable ultrafiltration membrane to substantially retain the polyisoolefin elastomer in a retentate and provide the non-polymeric components in a permeate.

There is further provided a permeate produced by the method.

There is further provided a retentate produced by the method.

The present method is particularly useful for separating a polyisooolefin copolymer (e.g. butyl rubber) from oligomers (e.g. C_{13} and C_{21} cyclic oligomers) produced during the production of the polyisooolefin copolymer. Unlike the ultrafiltration of nitrile polymers as described in US 7,071,292 and EP 2610296, the present method surprisingly results in stabilizers being retained in the retentate along with the polyisooolefin elastomer, thereby obviating the need to produce the polyisooolefin elastomer in the presence of an excess of stabilizer or to add extra stabilizer during or after the ultrafiltration. The polyisooolefin produced by the method has a desirably low cyclic oligomer content of less than about 400 ppm, more desirably less than about 200 ppm, even more desirably less than about 100 ppm.

Further, in contrast to commonly understood ultrafiltration processes, the present method results in higher permeate flux through the membrane as concentration of the polyisooolefin elastomer in the solution increases up to a concentration limit. It is normally thought that as polymer concentration increases from 0 wt.%, flux through the membrane reduces due to pore blockage.

Furthermore, the purified polyisooolefin elastomer in the retentate has a molecular weight that can be substantially unchanged even when ultrafiltration is conducted at elevated temperature.

Additionally, the permeate is substantially free of polyisooolefin elastomer and useful as an industrial intermediate or in other applications.

Further features will be described or will become apparent in the course of the following detailed description. It should be understood that each feature described herein may be utilized in any combination with any one or more of the other described features, and that each feature does not necessarily rely on the presence of another feature except where evident to one of skill in the art.

Brief Description of the Drawings

For clearer understanding, preferred embodiments will now be described in detail by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 depicts a graph showing feed temperature as function of time during ultrafiltration (UF) experiments (Examples 9-12).

Fig. 2 depicts a graph of parameter α as a function of crossflow velocity for Examples 9-12.

Fig. 3 depicts a graph showing flux data points for flux measured at 2 m/s for different elastomer concentrations.

5 Detailed Description

Unpurified polyisooolefin elastomer contains the polyisooolefin elastomer, initiator residue, oligomer side products (e.g. cyclic oligomers, for example C₁₃ and C₂₁ cyclic oligomers), optionally stabilizers (e.g. antiagglomerants and acid scavengers), optionally antioxidants and other impurities depending on the exact process used to make the polyisooolefin elastomer. Some of these components form a homogeneous solution in an organic solvent, while others stay particulate in an organic solvent.

The method of the present invention involves subjecting a solution of unpurified polyisooolefin elastomer in an organic solvent to ultrafiltration. The ultrafiltration is used to separate some of the components of the solution in the presence of dissolved elastomer. To this end, the elastomer contained in the solution, as well as the other components, are preferably passed one or more times under pressure over a semipermeable membrane, which permits passage of the solvent, as well as homogeneously dissolved other components contained in the solvent (permeate), but retains the dissolved elastomer (retentate). In this way, the elastomer-depleted permeate may be collected separately from the elastomer-rich retentate. Or, in another way of viewing the method, the oligomer-rich permeate may be separated from the oligomer-depleted retentate. Isolating oligomer-depleted elastomer from the retentate may be accomplished in any suitable manner, for example evaporation of the solvent, steam stripping, finishing or dry finishing.

For the ultrafiltration membrane, it is possible to use any semipermeable and durable size exclusion barrier known in the art of ultrafiltration or nanofiltration. Ultrafiltration membranes which have a highly porous outer layer (support layer) and further more finely porous inner layers (separating layer) are preferred. The highly porous outer layer may be a fabric or nonwoven or a ceramic substructure. The term "highly porous" is intended to mean an average pore diameter of the outer layer in the range of more than about 500 nm. The inner layers are symmetric or asymmetric membranes of suitable polymers applied to the outer layers, or a further more finely porous ceramic layer. The inner layers are more finely porous than their respective outer layer. The pore diameters of the inner layers may also become continuously smaller from the outside

inwards. The average pore size of the inner layers, or of at least one inner layer, lies in the range of about 0.5 - 200 nm, preferably in the range of about 1 - 50 nm. The exclusion limit of such a membrane being used, which contains outer and inner layers, therefore also lies in the range of about 0.5 - 200 nm. The membrane may furthermore have a thin
5 range of about 1 - 50 nm. The membrane may furthermore have a thin separating layer on the surface, which optionally contains ionic groups.

Suitable polymeric membrane materials for both the outer layer and the inner layer of the membrane include polysulfones, polyether sulfones, polyamides, polyimides (also silicone-coated polyimides), polyether ketones, polyureas, polyurethanes,
10 polyvinylidene difluoride, cellulose acetates, cellulose nitrates, polycarbonates, polyacrylonitrile and polyepoxides. Membranes based on oxides, carbonates, carbides and nitrides of the elements aluminum, antimony, barium, beryllium, bismuth, boron, hafnium, cobalt, manganese, magnesium, nickel, silicon, thorium, titanium, tungsten and zirconium, sometimes mixed, are typically used as ceramic components.

15 Ultrafiltration membranes are generally provided in modules. Any commercially available type of module may be employed. For continuous ultrafiltration methods, suitable membrane modules include, for example, plate modules, coil modules, tube modules, capillary modules and multichannel modules, which may optionally be supported by integrated flow spoilers.

20 Various ultrafiltration techniques may be employed. In a preferred embodiment, the solution of unpurified polyisoolefin elastomer and other components is subjected to crossflow filtration to get high flux. The method may be carried out either batch or continuously. A continuous method is preferred. In a continuous method, membrane modules may be operated in a cascade fashion. The other components may thus be
25 removed stepwise and different concentrations of other components in the elastomer solution may be targeted.

Pressures under which the ultrafiltration may be performed may be in a range of about 1-80 bar, preferably about 2-50 bar. The separated filtrate (permeate) contains the other components, and may be replaced by fresh solvent if the intention is to avoid
30 concentrating the elastomer solution to be extracted (retentate). An advantage with this method is that the residual concentration of the other components in the purified elastomer can be adjusted in any desired way through the amount of solvent replaced. Preferably, the ultrafiltration is performed at constant volume in which fresh organic

solvent is added to the retentate to maintain a constant volume of retentate throughout the ultrafiltration.

Maintaining a high flux in a crossflow filtration technique requires a high crossflow velocity. High elastomer concentration in the solution is desirable, but high viscosity
5 resulting from high molecular weight polyisooolefin elastomer at high concentration is undesirable. Crossflow filtration at elevated temperature allows processing at high concentration and lower viscosity, thus ultrafiltration at an elevated operating temperature is preferred. The operating temperature is preferably at most about 150°C, more preferably in a range of about 40-130°C. An upper limit (increasing concentrations) may
10 be placed on the concentration of the elastomer in the solution to be treated by ultrafiltration by the increasing viscosity. This in turn depends on the molecular weight and the monomer composition of the elastomer. In order to reduce the viscosity of the elastomer solution, it is advantageous to heat the solution. The concentration limit of the solution to be separated is preferably in a range of about 2-40 wt.% based on total weight
15 of the solution, more preferably about 5-20 wt.%. The crossflow velocity preferably provides a flow rate of the retentate past the membrane of not less than about 0.5 m/s. Slower flow rates may result in concentration polarization and a drop in permeate flux rate if there are high elastomer concentrations of more than 3 wt.%. A crossflow rate in a range of about 0.5-10 m/s is preferred, more preferably 0.5 to 5 m/s, even more
20 preferably 0.5 to 2 m/s.

Some polyisooolefin elastomers require the presence of stabilizers to prevent degradation or other microstructural or molecular weight changes. Further, certain polyisooolefin elastomers are particularly sensitive to the presence of hydrogen halide, and unwanted microstructural and/or molecular weight changes in the elastomer can be
25 accelerated at elevated temperatures. For example, although bromination of butyl rubber at moderate temperature (e.g. room temperature, 25°C) can result in a brominated polymer with a high proportion of secondary allylic bromine, and minor amounts of tertiary, isomerization to a primary allylic structure increases at elevated temperatures, and isomerization at elevated temperature is also increased in an acidic environment.
30 Therefore, especially when ultrafiltration is performed at elevated temperature, the presence of one or more suitable stabilizers in the retentate is desired.

Thus, it is a particularly advantageous aspect of the present method that ultrafiltration may be performed at elevated temperature in the presence of non-permeating stabilizers, resulting in an efficient ultrafiltration process in which the retentate
35 contains purified polyisooolefin elastomer while retaining at least one of the one or more

stabilizers, and the permeate is homogeneous and contains other components that were impurities to the polyisolefin elastomer where some of the other components may be products unto themselves (e.g. cyclic oligomers).

5 The one or more stabilizers are preferably acid scavengers and/or antiagglomerants. The stabilizers are preferably particulate solids that do not dissolve in the solution of elastomer in the organic solvent, or non-permeating liquids (e.g. pure liquids or solutions) that are immiscible with the solution of elastomer in the organic solvent. The one or more stabilizers is preferably retained in the retentate in an amount of about 80 wt.% or more, more preferably about 90 wt.% or more, yet more preferably
10 about 95 wt.% or more, based on the weight of the original amount of stabilizer, thereby affording a permeate that is essentially free of the stabilizer.

For example, in case of the ultrafiltration of halogenated polyisolefin elastomers, it is desirable to choose an acid scavenger that remains in the retentate, but does not pass over into the permeate and therefore eliminates the need for replenishment of acid
15 scavenger or the need for a separation process to remove excess acid scavenger from the permeating solvent. Use of such an acid scavenger reduces isomerization and molecular weight degradation during the ultrafiltration process at room temperature but especially at elevated temperature, for example at a temperature in a range of about 10-190°C, 40-185°C, 50-180°C, or 60-175°C, particularly about 40-150°C (for example 40-
20 130°C), more particularly about 60-140°C, even more particularly about 70-125°C, yet more particularly about 75-115°C.

Acid scavengers are particularly preferred stabilizers. Generally suitable is any scavenger that is capable of reacting with hydrogen halide, but does not interfere with subsequent utility of the polyisolefin elastomer, or can be removed from the elastomer
25 prior to eventual end use. Useful acid scavengers include, for example, alkali metal or alkaline earth metal carboxylates, epoxides, metal oxides, metal hydroxides inorganic salts of strong bases and weak acids or mixtures thereof.

For metal carboxylates, the metal portion of the metal carboxylate can be an alkali or alkaline earth metal. Thus, particularly suitable carboxylates are those of sodium, magnesium or calcium. The carboxylic acid from which the carboxylate is derived can be
30 mono- or poly-carboxylic. Thus, suitable mono-carboxylic acids are the C₄ to C₂₀ mono-carboxylic acids such as caproic, caprylic, pelargonic, myristic, palmitic, oleic, stearic and 2-ethyl hexanoic acids. Also suitable is naphthenic acid. A particularly preferred metal carboxylate is calcium stearate (CaSt).

Suitable epoxides are the products formed by epoxidizing esters and glycerides of C₈-C₂₄ unsaturated fatty acids, for example esters found in soybean oil, castor oil, linseed oil, safflower oil, etc. Preferred specific polyethers of this class include epoxidized soybean oil (ESBO) and epoxidized linseed oil (sold under the trademarks Drapex™ 6.8 and Drapex™ 10.4, respectively). Other suitable epoxides are monomeric low molecular weight, e.g., C₂-C₇, monofunctional epoxides, such as ethylene epoxide, propylene epoxide, butylene epoxide, etc. Preferred low molecular weight monofunctional epoxides include ethylene epoxide, propylene epoxide and butylene epoxide. Also suitable are aryl substituted alkyl epoxide, for example 1,2-epoxyethylbenzene, i.e., styrene epoxide.

10 Metal oxides or hydroxides suitable as scavengers include those wherein the metal is selected from Group IIA of the Periodic Table. Particularly suitable are Ca(OH)₂, CaO, Mg(OH)₂, MgO, and hydrotalcite (e.g. Hycite™, DHT4A).

Suitable examples of inorganic salts of strong bases and weak acids include carbonates and bicarbonates of sodium, potassium and calcium.

15 As mentioned above, the acid-scavenger may also be added to the retentate as non-permeating solutions that are immiscible with the solution of polymer in the organic solvent. Preferable solutions are aqueous solutions of compounds that produce a pH > 7 when dissolved in water, such as metal hydroxides, inorganic salts of weak acids and mixtures thereof. More preferred are metal hydroxides, carbonates and bicarbonates, 20 wherein the metal is selected from Group IA of the periodic table.

The acid scavenger should be present in an amount which is effective to react with the hydrogen halide by-product formed during halogenation, taking into consideration reaction kinetics, e.g., temperature in the region in which the scavenger must react, the time available for the reaction compared to the potential for the acid halide to cause an undesirable side reaction (e.g. addition or degradation or isomerization), the use of 25 additional means to remove hydrogen halide from the process (e.g., gas scrubbing, particularly in a process for halogenation of neat polymer), etc. Some limited experimentation, well within the skill of those in the art, will readily determine the effective amount of scavenger to be used in the particular circumstances at hand. As a general 30 guide it will be recognized that in the absence of other means of removing hydrogen halide (e.g., gas scrubbing), one equivalent of scavenger is required at equilibrium per equivalent of hydrogen halide generated, but that as a practical matter up to about two to three times the theoretical amount can be used effectively. Where supplementary means are provided for hydrogen halide removal or where the effect of the hydrogen halide on

the polymer is not particularly negative, as little as one-half or one-quarter the theoretical amount can be used effectively.

It is desirable that the molecular weight of the polyisooolefin polymer is relatively unchanged by the ultrafiltration process. The molecular weight decrease of polyisooolefin polymer following ultrafiltration is desirably less than 15%, more desirably less than 10%, even more desirably less than 5%. The choice of acid scavenger has been found to have an effect on molecular weight of the butyl polymer in the retentate. It is desirable to use a solid phase acid scavenger or a combination of a solid phase and liquid phase acid scavenger in order to reduce any tendency for molecular weight decrease due to ultrafiltration. In particular, use of a solid phase metal carboxylate has been found desirable. Combinations of a solid phase metal carboxylate and liquid phase metal oxide or hydroxide have been found particularly desirable.

In the ultrafiltration method, the unpurified polyisooolefin elastomer is provided in an organic solvent. The organic solvent may be the same solvent medium in which the unpurified polyisooolefin elastomer was produced, or the unpurified polyisooolefin elastomer may be separated from the original reaction medium and reconstituted in the same of different organic solvent. As choice for the organic solvents, it is possible to use all organic solvents and/or solvent mixtures in which the polyisooolefin elastomer and other components to be removed are homogeneously dissolved at >90 wt.% under the processing conditions. Solvents include all hydrocarbon aromatic and/or aliphatic solvents, halogenated solvents as well as cyclic ethers. Hexane, pentane, isohexane, isopentane, toluene, benzene, chlorobenzene, chloroform, methyl chloride, methylene chloride, tetrahydrofuran or mixtures of these solvents are preferred. Hexane, pentane, isohexane, isopentane are more preferred. Hexane is most preferred. The solution of unpurified polyisooolefin elastomer in an organic solvent may be referred to as cement.

A person skilled in the art would be able to identify suitable concentrations of unpurified polyisooolefin elastomer in the cement. The concentration may be in a range of about 1-30 wt.% of unpurified polyisooolefin elastomer in the solvent, more preferably 5-25 wt.%, yet more preferably about 10-22 wt.%, wherein 100 wt.% corresponds to the weight of elastomer and organic solvent.

The cement may optionally contain an aqueous phase. The water content may be in a range of about 1-60 wt.%, wherein 100 wt.% refers to the total weight of the solution (aqueous phase, organic solvent, elastomer). In one embodiment, the water content is in a range of about 1-40 wt.%, preferably about 2-20 wt.%, more preferably about 3-15

wt.%. In another embodiment the water content is in a range of about 20-60 wt.%, preferably about 40-60 wt.%, more preferably about 45-60 wt.%.

Herein, "unpurified polyisoolefin elastomers" is intended to mean all polyisoolefin elastomers which can be prepared by carbocationic polymerization and optionally subsequent halogenation, or other functionalization. Elastomers which are more than 90% soluble at a concentration of more than 2 wt.% in organic solvents and/or solvent mixtures are particularly preferred.

The term "purified polyisoolefin elastomers" is intended to mean the same groups of elastomers as for "unpurified polyisoolefin elastomers", the purified elastomers having an impurity level reduced to about 50%, preferably reduced to about 25%, more preferably reduced to about 10%, more preferably reduced to about 5% or more compared to the unpurified elastomers. Unpurified elastomers are generally used in a dissolved form and the purified elastomers are generally obtained in a dissolved form.

While the terms "unpurified polyisoolefin elastomers" and "purified polyisoolefin elastomers" are used herein, one skilled in the art recognizes that other components of being separated from the polyisoolefin elastomers may possess commercial utility and are therefore also considered products of the separation. Thus, while purification of the polyisoolefin elastomers is one goal of the separation, purification of other components, for example cyclic oligomers, is also a goal of the separation method.

Elastomers are preferably polyisoolefin copolymers, for example butyl polymers. Butyl polymers are generally derived from at least one isoolefin monomer, at least one multiolefin monomer and/or β -pinene, and optionally further copolymerizable monomers.

The butyl polymer is not limited to a special isoolefin. However, isoolefins within the range of from 4 to 16 carbon atoms, preferably 4-7 carbon atoms, such as isobutene, 2-methyl-1-butene, 3-methyl-1-butene, 2-methyl-2-butene, 4-methyl-1-pentene and mixtures thereof are preferred. More preferred is isobutene (isobutylene).

The butyl polymer is not limited to a special multiolefin. Every multiolefin copolymerizable with the isoolefin known by the skilled in the art can be used. However, multiolefins within the range of from 4-14 carbon atoms, such as isoprene, butadiene, 2-methylbutadiene, 2,4-dimethylbutadiene, piperylene, 3-methyl-1,3-pentadiene, 2,4-hexadiene, 2-neopentylbutadiene, 2-methyl-1,5-hexadiene, 2,5-dimethyl-2,4-hexadiene, 2-methyl-1,4-pentadiene, 2-methyl-1,6-heptadiene, cyclopenta-diene, methylcyclopentadiene, cyclohexadiene, 1-vinyl-cyclohexadiene and mixtures thereof,

preferably conjugated dienes, are used. Isoprene is more preferably used. The butyl polymer useful in the present invention may include a co-monomer other than the above referenced multiolefins, such as an alkyl-substituted vinyl aromatic co-monomer, including but not limited to a C₁-C₄ alkyl substituted styrene, for example para-methylstyrene.

5 As optional monomers, any monomer copolymerizable with the isoolefins and/or dienes known by the skilled in the art can be used. α -methyl styrene, p-methyl styrene, chlorostyrene, cyclopentadiene and methylcyclopentadiene are preferably used. Indene and other styrene derivatives may also be used. β -pinene can also be used as a co-monomer for the isoolefin. The butyl polymer can include, for example, random
10 copolymers of isobutylene, isoprene and para-methyl styrene.

 Preferably, the monomer mixture comprises from about 80% to about 99% by weight of an isoolefin monomer and from about 1% to 20% by weight of a multiolefin and/or β -pinene monomer. More preferably, the monomer mixture comprises from about 85% to about 99% by weight of an isoolefin monomer and from about 1% to 15% by
15 weight of a multiolefin monomer. If the monomer mixture comprises the optional monomer copolymerizable with the isoolefins and/or dienes, the monomer mixture preferably comprises from about 80% to about 99% by weight of a monomer, from about 0.5% to about 5% by weight of a multiolefin monomer and from about 0.5% to about 15% by weight of the optional monomer. More preferably, the monomer mixture comprises
20 from about 85% to about 99% by weight of an isoolefin monomer, from about 0.5% to about 5% by weight of a multiolefin monomer and from about 0.5% to about 10% by weight of the optional monomer.

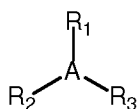
 The butyl polymer can then be subjected to a halogenation process in order to produce a halobutyl polymer. Bromination or chlorination can be performed according to
25 the process known by those skilled in the art, for example, the procedures described in Rubber Technology, 3rd Ed., Edited by Maurice Morton, Kluwer Academic Publishers, pp. 297 – 300 and further documents cited therein.

 During halogenation of a butyl polymer containing conjugated dienes, such as isoprene, some or all of the multiolefin content of the butyl polymer is converted to allylic
30 halides. The total allylic halide content of the halobutyl polymer may not exceed the starting multiolefin content of the parent butyl polymer. The allylic halide sites allow for reacting with and attaching a nucleophile to the halobutyl polymer. For halobutyl polymers containing no allylic halides, for example, halobutyl polymers derived from isobutylene and styrenic monomers, benzylic halides, formed by halogenation of the styrenic

monomer, may be reacted to form the ionomer rather than allylic halides. The same logic would therefore apply to benzylic halides as allylic halides; the total amount of ionomeric moieties cannot exceed the available amount of benzylic halides.

5 The ultrafiltered polyisooolefin elastomer solution (retentate) produced in the method herein may be subject to degassing and spray drying or coagulation in water with subsequent drying, dry finishing, as a powder, crumbs or in bale form with an impurity level which is up to 99 wt.% less than the impurity level in relation to the unpurified elastomer. Other drying methods such as boiling down, film evaporation or freeze drying are also possible.

10 Optionally, in the case of purified halobutyl polymer, allylic halide or benzylic halide sites of the halobutyl polymer may be reacted with at least one nitrogen or phosphorus containing nucleophile to form a butyl ionomer. The nitrogen or phosphorus containing nucleophile may have the following formula,



15 wherein:

A is a nitrogen or phosphorus; and,

R1, R2 and R3 are selected from the group consisting of linear or branched C₁-C₁₈ alkyl substituents, an aryl substituent which is monocyclic or composed of fused C₄-C₈ rings, and/or a hetero atom selected from, for example, B, N, O, Si, P, and S.

20 In general, the appropriate nucleophile will contain at least one neutral nitrogen or phosphorus center which possesses a lone pair of electrons which is both electronically and sterically accessible for participation in nucleophilic substitution reactions. Suitable nucleophiles include trimethylamine, triethylamine, triisopropylamine, tri-n-butylamine, trimethylphosphine, triethylphosphine, triisopropylphosphine, tri-n-butylphosphine, triphenylphosphine
 25 2-dimethylaminoethanol, 1-dimethylamino-2-propanol, 2-(isopropylamino)ethanol, 3-dimethylamino-1-propanol, N-methyldiethanolamine, 2-(diethylamino)ethanol, 2-dimethylamino-2-methyl-1-propanol, 2-[2-(dimethylamino)ethoxy]ethanol, 4-(dimethylamino)-1-butanol, N-ethyldiethanolamine, triethanolamine, 3-diethylamino-1-propanol, 3-(diethylamino)-1,2-propanediol, 2-[[2-(dimethylamino)ethyl]methylamino]ethanol,
 30 4-diethylamino-2-butyne-1-ol, 2-(diisopropylamino)ethanol, N-butyldiethanolamine, N-tert-butyldiethanolamine, 2-

(methylphenylamino)ethanol, 3-(dimethylamino)benzyl alcohol, 2-[4-(dimethylamino)phenyl]ethanol, 2-(N-ethylanilino)ethanol, N-benzyl-N-methylethanolamine, N-phenyldiethanolamine, 2-(dibutylamino)ethanol, 2-(N-ethyl-N-m-toluidino)ethanol, 2,2'-(4-methylphenylimino)diethanol, tris[2-(2-methoxyethoxy)ethyl]amine, and 3-(dibenzylamino)-1-propanol and mixtures thereof.

The amount of nucleophile reacted with the butyl polymer may be in the range of from 0.05 to 5 molar equivalents, more preferably 0.5 to 4 molar equivalents and even more preferably 1 to 3 molar equivalents based on the total molar amount of allylic or benzylic halide present in the halobutyl polymer.

The halobutyl polymer and the nucleophile can be reacted for about 0.5 to 90 minutes. When the reaction takes place in an extruder, the reaction is preferably from 10 to 120 seconds minutes, more preferably from 20 to 60 seconds. When the reaction takes place in an internal mixer, the reaction is preferably from 1 to 15 minutes, more preferably from 1 to 4 minutes. In other cases, the reaction takes considerably longer, for example from greater than 15 to 90 minutes, preferably 20 to 60 minutes. A temperature range of 80 to 200 °C is desirable.

As stated above, the nucleophile reacts with the allylic or benzylic halide functionality of the halobutyl polymer resulting in units of ionomeric moieties where the allylic or benzylic halide functionality existed on the halobutyl polymer. The total content of ionomeric moiety in the butyl ionomer may not exceed the starting amount of allylic or benzylic halide in the halobutyl polymer; however, residual allylic halides, benzylic halides and/or residual multiolefins may be present. In embodiments of the present invention where substantially all of the allylic or benzylic halides sites are reacted with the nucleophile, a butyl ionomer is formed. In embodiments where less than all the allylic or benzylic halide sites are reacted with the nucleophile, a partially halogenated butyl ionomer is formed.

The butyl ionomer can be prepared from a halogenated butyl polymer having from 1.2 to 2.2 mol % of the multiolefin monomer. Additionally, the ionomer can be prepared from a halogenated butyl polymer having a higher multiolefin content, for example greater than 2.5 mol%, preferably greater than 3.5 mol%, more preferably greater than 4.0 mol%. The preparation of a suitable high multiolefin butyl polymer is described in Canadian patent application CA 2,418,884, which is incorporated herein by reference.

The resulting ionomers preferably possess at least 0.5 mol%, preferably at least 0.75 mol%, more preferably at least 1.0 mol%, yet more preferably at least 1.5 mol% of the ionomeric moiety. Residual allylic halides may be present in an amount of from 0.1 mol% up to an amount not exceeding the original allylic halide content of the halobutyl polymer used to produce the butyl ionomer. Residual multiolefin may be present in an amount of from 0.1 mol% up to an amount not exceeding the original multiolefin content of the butyl polymer used to produce the halobutyl polymer. Typically, the residual multiolefin content of the ionomer is at least 0.4 mol%, preferably at least 0.6 mol%, more preferably at least 1.0 mol%, yet more preferably at least 2.0 mol%, still more preferably at least 3.0 mol%, even more preferably at least 4.0 mol%.

The purified polyisoolefin in the retentate, whether or not subjected to halogenation or ionomer formation processes, may be re-inforced with a suitable filler to enhance certain desirable physical properties, such as tensile strength, viscosity, hardness, permeability, etc. Suitable fillers are selected from those that do not impart undesirable residues or otherwise adversely affect the polyisoolefin for use in the aforementioned "clean" applications. Examples of suitable fillers include silica, silicates, high aspect ratio or nano-sized versions thereof, and other suitable clean fillers. The selection of filler for imparting desired physical properties while retaining clean characteristics is within the purview of persons skilled in the art.

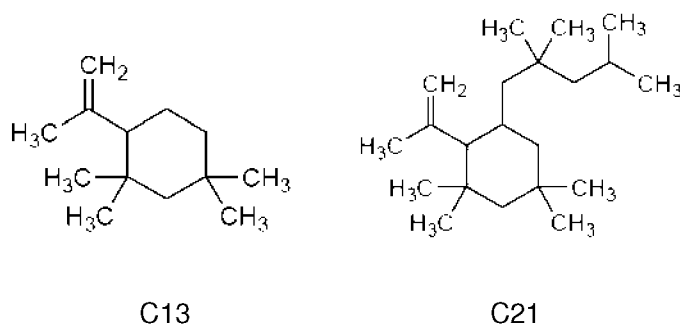
In another embodiment, the purified polyisoolefin elastomer or ionomer thereof may be cured by any suitable method, for example sulfur-based curatives, peroxide-based curatives, ZnO curatives, resin cure systems or UV light. A typical sulfur-based curing system comprises: (i) a metal oxide, (ii) elemental sulfur and (iii) at least one sulfur-based accelerator. The use of metal oxides as a component in the curing system is well known in the art. A suitable metal oxide is zinc oxide, which is typically used in the amount of from about 1 to about 10, preferably from about 2 to about 5, parts by weight per hundred parts by weight polymer in the composition. Elemental sulfur, comprising component (ii) of the preferred curing system is typically used in amounts of from about 0.2 to about 10 parts by weight per hundred parts by weight polymer in the composition. Suitable sulfur-based accelerators (component (iii) of the preferred curing system) are typically used in amounts of from about 0.5 to about 3 parts by weight, per hundred parts by weight polymer in the composition. Non-limiting examples of useful sulfur-based accelerators may be selected from the thiuram sulfides such as tetramethyl thiuram disulfide (TMTD), the thiocarbamates such as zinc dimethyl dithiocarbamate (ZDC) and

the thiazyl and benzothiazyl compounds such as mercaptobenzothiazyl disulfide (MBTS). Preferably, the sulphur based accelerator is mercaptobenzothiazyl disulfide.

The cured article may contain further auxiliary products for polymers (e.g. rubbers), such as reaction accelerators, vulcanizing accelerators, vulcanizing acceleration
5 auxiliaries, antioxidants, foaming agents, anti-aging agents, heat stabilizers, light stabilizers, ozone stabilizers, processing aids, plasticizers, tackifiers, blowing agents, dyestuffs, pigments, waxes, extenders, organic acids, inhibitors, metal oxides, and activators such as triethanolamine, polyethylene glycol, hexanetriol, etc., which are known to the rubber industry. The rubber aids are used in conventional amounts that
10 depend, *inter alia*, on the intended use. The cured article may also contain mineral and/or non-mineral fillers. Conventional amounts are from 0.1 to 50 wt%, based on rubber. Further information on vulcanization processes may be obtained in Encyclopedia of Polymer Science and Engineering, Vol. 17, s. 666 et seq. (Vulcanization).

The purified polyisooolefin and the cured article may be used as components of
15 pharmaceutical containers, such as closures for parenteral (I.V.) vials, closures for injection vials, closures for vials containing freeze dried pharmaceutical products, closures for blood collection tubes or other diagnostic tubes, plungers and plunger tips for syringes, discs and gaskets, intravenous drug delivery components and like applications. Additionally, purified polyisooolefin and the cured article may be used in medical devices,
20 objects with food and drink contact, such as seals and gaskets in bottle caps, objects or components of objects used in cell and tissue culture. Further, the purified polyisooolefin may be used as an elastomer in gum base in the production of chewing gum.

While one result of the present method is the purification of the polyisooolefin elastomer to reduce the content of oligomers, e.g. cyclic oligomers, therein, another
25 important result is that the oligomers are also purified and may be subsequently used for various applications. In the production of butyl rubber, C_{13} (1-isopropenyl-2,2,4,4-tetramethylcyclohexane, $C_{13}H_{24}$) and C_{21} (1,1,5,5-tetramethyl-2-(1-methylethenyl)-3-(2,2,4-trimethylpentyl)-cyclohexane, $C_{21}H_{40}$) cyclic oligomers having the following structures are produced:



These cyclic oligomers are unsaturated. As described in US 2003/0216264, the entire contents of which is herein incorporated by reference, saturated substituted cyclohexane derivatives that are useful as lubricants and traction fluids may be produced via hydrogenation of respective unsaturated precursors (oligomers). These unsaturated precursors are the cyclic oligomers formed during the production of the polyisoolefin elastomers. The majority of these oligomers remain in the finished rubber product, although they do not serve a specific purpose. The present method is therefore also a process for the simultaneous production of oligomer-depleted high-molecular weight polyisoolefin elastomer and butyl-rubber-free oligomers that are useful as precursors for lubricants and traction fluids. The cyclic oligomers may also be halogenated.

Examples:

Polyisoolefin Properties

The polyisoolefin used was butyl rubber, a copolymer of isobutylene and isoprene (IIR). The IIR had a multiolefin content of 1.8 wt% and a Mooney viscosity (ML(1+8) @ 125 °C) of 51. Halogenated butyl rubber comprised brominated butyl rubber (BrIIR) having a bromine content of 1.8 wt% and a Mooney viscosity (ML(1+8) @ 125 °C) of 32.

Characterization of butyl rubber

Molecular weights were determined by gel permeation chromatography in tetrahydrofuran and reported in kg mol⁻¹. Calcium and total bromine content was measured by X-ray fluorescence, and results are reported in ppm and wt.%, respectively. Calcium stearate (CaSt) and epoxidized soybean oil (ESBO) contents were determined from infrared spectra, and results are reported in wt.%. The content of sterically hindered phenolic anti-oxidant (Irganox™ 1010) was determined by HPLC, results are reported in wt.%. Microstructure was determined of respective signals from ¹H NMR spectra of the

elastomers, and results for the exo-Br and rearranged allylic halide units are reported in mol%.

Quantification of oligomers in butyl rubber

An aliquot of butyl rubber is dissolved in hexane (about 12 wt.% or less). Then
5 acetone is added to the solution (same volume than hexane), which leads to the precipitation of the elastomer. The supernatant is then decanted from the precipitate and filtered. The oligomer concentration is then determined by gas chromatography using dodecane and eicosane as standards. The oligomer level in butyl rubber is calculated from the concentration determined by gas chromatography (GC) as ratio between total
10 oligomer mass and total elastomer mass in a given sample and reported as parts per million (ppm) in the following.

Constant volume diafiltration

Constant volume diafiltration was performed on a membrane filtration setup acquired from Evonik – Membrane Extraction Technology. This setup consists of a
15 holding tank from which a butyl rubber solution was recirculated over the filtration membranes via a gear pump. The retentate loop was pressurized to a selected pressure with nitrogen by a pressure regulator. Hexane was added to the holding tank via an HPLC pump with the same rate than permeate flow. The permeate line was open to atmospheric pressure. Permeate collection took place on a scale.

20 The membranes used were either two cells containing disks of flat-sheet membranes, (wherein each cell had an active membrane area of 51 cm² with an EMET PuraMemS600™ membrane installed), or a housing for a tubular ceramic membrane (ATECH Innovation GmbH, 10 mm outer diameter, 6 mm inner diameter, 50 cm length, 5 kDa molecular weight cut-off).

25 The collection scale was shielded from air flow with a transparent box and connected to a computer for data logging using the BalanceLink™ software (Mettler Toledo).

In constant volume diafiltration examples the amount of permeate generated is expressed as the fraction between the volume of the permeate at the end and the volume
30 of the retentate at the beginning. This ratio is also known as the diafiltration coefficient D.

Concentration via Ultrafiltration

This experiment was carried out identical to constant volume diafiltrations, however, the addition of fresh solvent was omitted leading to an increase of elastomer concentration as solvent permeates.

5 *Examples 1 and 2*

Constant volume diafiltration was performed to separate butyl rubber from cyclic oligomers. For Examples 1 and 2, a stock solution was prepared by dissolving 120 g of BrIIR in 700 g hexanes.

For Example 1, an aliquot of the solution was subjected to steam coagulation and
10 mill-drying. The resulting elastomer had an oligomer content of 1690 ppm.

For Example 2, an aliquot of the stock solution (54 g BrIIR, 315 g hexane, 541 mL retentate volume at beginning) was subjected to constant volume diafiltration using a flat-sheet PuraMemS600™ membrane (102 cm² membrane area, permeate flow was between 0.5 to 0.6 mL/min) over 30 hours at a transmembrane pressure of 10 to 14 bar.
15 A total of 660 g permeate (1010 mL) was collected (diafiltration coefficient of 2.1). Then the retentate solution was subjected to steam coagulation and mill-drying. The resulting elastomer had an oligomer content of 431 ppm. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1.

	Example 1	Example 2
Total oligomers	1690	431
ppm Ca	1135	1146
wt.% CaSt	2.84	2.77
wt.% ESBO	1.28	0.80
wt.% Irganox™ 1010	0.0350	0.0020
M_n [kg mol ⁻¹]	165	136
M_w [kg mol ⁻¹]	498	432
M_z [kg mol ⁻¹]	1042	888
mol% exo-Br	0.75	0.73
mol% CH ₂ -Br	0.12	0.14

Comparing Example 1 to Example 2, it can be seen that the diafiltration resulted in a dramatic reduction in total oligomers in the butyl rubber, while maintaining almost the same levels of calcium stearate (CaSt).

Examples 3 and 4

- 5 Examples 1 and 2 were used as base elastomers and used for the compounding of a typical pharmastopper formulation according to

Table 2. MDR data (according to ASTM D5289) for these compounds at 160 °C is shown in Table 3.

10 **Table 2.**

Ingredient	Example 3	Example 4
Example 1	100	0
Example 2	0	100
Polyethylene AC-617A	5	5
Polyfil 80	80	80
Zinc-dibenzyl-dithiocarbamate	1.5	1.5
Zinc oxide (KADOX™ 920) Grade PC 216	3	3

Table 3.

	Example 3	Example 4
M_L [dNm]	2.34	2.05
M_H [dNm]	7.79	6.99
$M_H - M_L$ [dNm]	5.45	4.94
t_{s2} [min]	1.14	1.05
t_{c90} [min]	2.1	1.82

- 15 M_L for Example 4 is lower than that for Example 3. Hence improved processability characteristics are anticipated for the compound from the lower-molecular weight

elastomer. Examples 3 and 4 were furthermore cured at 160 °C for 7 min. 3 g of the cured elastomer was then subjected to Soxhlet extractions in isopropanol (276 and 254 mL, respectively) for 9 and 10 h, respectively. The concentration of oligomers in the extract was determined from GC. These results showed that in Example 3 and 4, 315 and 106 ppm of the mass of rubber ended up as extracted oligomers in the isopropanol phase. Hence the compound prepared from the purified elastomer also shows a lower level of extractables.

Examples 5 and 6

BrIIR and IIR were dissolved in hexane and subjected to constant volume diafiltration experiments using a ceramic single channel membrane with a membrane area of 89 cm² according to conditions summarized in Table 4 at a transmembrane pressure of 4 bar.

Table 4.

	Example 5	Example 6
Starting elastomer	BrIIR	IIR
$y_{\text{IIR, start}}$ [wt. %]	11.6%	10.2%
$y_{\text{IIR, end}}$ [wt. %]	11.6%	10.2%
D	2.06	2.94
$T_{\text{retentate}}$ [°C]	20 - 30 °C	20 - 30 °C
Crossflow velocity m / s	~0.6	~ 0.6
Permeate flux, L / m ² h	8.5	9.0
wt. % ESBO, start	1.16	n.d.
wt. % ESBO, end	0.39	n.d.
wt. % CaSt, start	2.51	1.12
wt. % CaSt, end	2.71	1.08
wt. % Irg.1010, start	0.0353	0.0424
wt. % Irg. 1010, end	0.0042	0.0014
ppm Oligomers, start	1827	1737
ppm Oligomers, end	259	101
Mn, start	145	165
Mn, end	146	167
Mw, start	525	618
Mw, end	491	543
Mz, start	1149	1215
Mz, end	1058	1023

In Example 5 the oligomers were depleted from 1827 to 259 ppm, thus a reduction to 14% from the start of the experiment. Without wishing to be bound by theory, this is in excellent agreement with the theoretical level of oligomers assuming a rejection coefficient of 0, thus $\exp(-2.06) = 13\%$.

In Example 6 the oligomers were depleted from 1737 to 101 ppm, thus a reduction to 6% from the start of the experiment. Without wishing to be bound by theory, this is in excellent agreement with the theoretical level of oligomers assuming a rejection coefficient of 0, thus $\exp(-2.94) = 5\%$.

5 Examples 7 and 8

Solutions of BrIIR (Example 7) and IIR (Example 8) were prepared and then subjected to concentration *via* ultrafiltration using the ceramic membrane described above. Aliquots of the stock solution were dried and subjected to characterization *via* IR, HPLC, GC, GPC and NMR. Then, the retentate was concentrated until the retentate volume was reduced to 42 and 43% of the starting volume by generation of permeate at 4 bar transmembrane pressure, 20 to 35 °C retentate temperature, and a permeate flux of 9 L/m²h. The concentrated retentate was dried and also subjected to characterization. Values for calcium stearate, ESBO, Irganox™ 1010 and oligomer content of the dried elastomers are stated in Table 5. Table 5 shows that the level of calcium stearate in dried elastomer is unaffected by the ultrafiltration, however, the level of oligomers, ESBO and Irganox™ 1010 is decreased. Thus ESBO and Irganox™ 1010 permeate the membrane together with solvent and oligomers.

Table 5.

	Example 7	Example 8
Elastomer	BrIIR	IIR
$y_{\text{IIR, start}}$ [wt.%]	6.2%	5.0%
$y_{\text{IIR, end}}$ [wt.%]	13.8%	11.0%
wt.% CaSt, start	2.56	0.97
wt.% CaSt, end	2.57	0.95
wt.% ESBO, start	1.18	0
wt.% ESBO, end	0.62	0
wt.% Irg.1010, start	0.036	0.044
wt.% Irg. 1010, end	0.019	0.018
ppm Oligomers, start	2123	1588
ppm Oligomers, end	873	710

20 Examples 9-12

These examples were carried out on an ultrafiltration (UF) setup where the holding tank for retentate and feed can be heated. Flux measurements were performed

at temperatures between 90 to 105 °C at various crossflow velocities at 6 bar transmembrane pressure. In these examples an ATECH 1/6 ceramic membrane with 5 kDa MWCO of 25 cm length was used. For Examples 9 and 10, calcium stearate was removed from the rubber stock prior to the UF experiment via centrifugation. In Example 11 aqueous sodium hydroxide was added to the retentate. Experimental parameters are summarized in Table 6. The retentate temperature during these examples is shown in Fig. 1 and ranged from 90 to 105 °C during the flux measurements.

10 **Table 6.**

Example	9	10	11	12
$m(\text{Elastomer} + \text{hexane}) / \text{g}$	2147	2226	2308	2025
$m(\text{aq. NaOH } 1 \text{ wt.}\%) / \text{g}$	0	0	0	87
$V_{\text{ret, end}} / V_{\text{ret, 0}}$	0.91	0.89	0.89	0.91
$y_{\text{IIR, start}}$	11.5%	18.4%	20.4%	24.8%
$y_{\text{IIR, end}}$	12.1%	20.8%	22.5%	26.0%
Calcium stearate	> 90% removed	> 90% removed	Present	Present
ppm Ca, start	76	101	1170	1197
ppm Ca, end	56	102	1173	962
wt.% CaSt, start ($\pm 0.6 \text{ wt.}\%$)	n.d.	n.d.	2.87	2.83
wt.% CaSt, end	n.d.	n.d.	2.76	3.12
wt.% ESBO, start ($\pm 0.033 \text{ wt.}\%$)	2.03	1.78	1.17	1.05
wt.% ESBO, end	1.70	1.32	0.92	0.85

Table 7 shows molecular weight and microstructure properties before and after the UF experiment. Table 8 shows flux data that was measured during experiments Example 9 through Example 12. Furthermore, for each set of operating conditions (y_{IIR} , and v_{CF}) the unitless parameter α was calculated as a gauge for the efficiency of a specific set of process conditions in accordance with Equation 1.

$$\alpha = \frac{y_{\text{IIR}} J}{v_{\text{CF}}} \quad \text{Equation 1}$$

In a UF process, it is desirable to achieve operation at high concentration or at a high flux, hence the values y_{IIR} and J are in the numerator of α . Maintaining a high crossflow velocity is undesirable, as it requires energy, hence v_{CF} is put into the denominator. α values for each set of operating conditions is also summarized in Table 8 and Fig. 2.

Table 7.

Example	9	10	11	12
Mn, start	140	142	134	153
Mn, end	133	132	133	152
Mn, end / Mn, start	95%	93%	99%	99%
Mw, start	435	447	447	514
Mw, end	419	421	427	514
Mw, end / Mw, start	96%	94%	96%	100%
Mz, start	854	884	889	1017
Mz, end	837	846	827	1014
Mz, end / Mz, start	98%	96%	93%	100%
mol% exo-Br, start	0.78	0.76	0.76	0.72
mol% exo-Br, end	0.67	0.60	0.76	0.72
mol% CH ₂ -Br, start	0.06	0.09	0.12	0.14
mol% CH ₂ -Br, end	0.15	0.21	0.15	0.13

Examples 9 and 10 only contained the soluble acid scavenger ESBO. In these examples a decrease in molecular weights is observed as a result of the ultrafiltration process. Also, the microstructure of the polymer changes, mol% exo-Br decreases and mol% CH₂-Br increases, which is undesirable as this is known to increase the scorch of the elastomer. In Example 11 changes in the molecular weight and microstructure are less pronounced. This is consistent with calcium stearate providing stability during the ultrafiltration process. Example 12 further contains aqueous NaOH as additional acid scavenger. In Example 12 no change in molecular weight and microstructure is observed at all.

Table 8.

Example	y_{IIR} [wt.%]	Crossflow velocity v_{CF} [m/s]	Permeate flux J [L/m ² h]	α [10 ⁻⁷]
9a	11.8 ± 0.3	1.1	7.3 ± 0.2	2.2
9b	11.8 ± 0.3	2.0	10.3 ± 0.6	1.7
9c	11.8 ± 0.3	4.0	16.8 ± 0.3	1.4
9d	11.8 ± 0.3	8.0	28.0 ± 0.8	1.1
10a	19.6 ± 1.2	1.0	10.1 ± 0.0	5.5

10b	19.6 ± 1.2	2.0	18.4 ± 0.5	5.0
10c	19.6 ± 1.2	3.7	23.7 ± 0.7	3.5
10d	19.6 ± 1.2	8.0	34.7 ± 0.0	2.4
11a	21.5 ± 1.1	0.5	6.8 ± 0.1	8.0
11b	21.5 ± 1.1	2.0	18.1 ± 0.3	5.4
11c	21.5 ± 1.1	6.4	27.5 ± 0.0	2.6
12a	25.4 ± 0.6	0.5	5.7 ± 0.2	7.8
12b	25.4 ± 0.6	1.0	9.6 ± 0.0	6.8
12c	25.4 ± 0.6	2.0	12.7 ± 0.4	4.5

It is desirable to operate an ultrafiltration process with the minimum amount of resources (i.e. solvent and energy). Thus, at high concentration and low crossflow velocities while still achieving a high flux. These conditions are summarized in the parameter α . As seen in Fig. 3, the flux surprisingly and unexpectedly shows a maximum at elastomer concentration of around 20 wt.%. Since surprisingly the flux increases with increasing elastomer concentration, the ultrafiltration of butyl rubber in hexane gives high values for α at high elastomer concentrations. It is further surprising, that it is possible to run the process such that the acid scavengers and process aids calcium stearate and/or aqueous sodium hydroxide do not permeate. For example 12a, the permeate was clear and single homogenous phase indicating that the aqueous phase did not permeate the membrane. Thus, it is possible to deplete oligomers while maintaining a constant level of a solid acid scavenger or liquid acid scavenger dissolved in water.

The novel features will become apparent to those of skill in the art upon examination of the description. It should be understood, however, that the scope of the claims should not be limited by the embodiments, but should be given the broadest interpretation consistent with the wording of the claims and the specification as a whole.

Claims:

1. A method of separating a polyisoolefin elastomer from non-polymeric components in an organic solvent, the method comprising filtering a solution of the polyisoolefin elastomer and non-polymeric components in an organic solvent through a semipermeable ultrafiltration membrane to substantially retain the polyisoolefin elastomer in a retentate and provide the non-polymeric components in a permeate.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the non-polymeric components comprise C₁₃ and C₂₁ cyclic oligomers.
3. The method according to claims 1 or 2, wherein the filtering comprises a crossflow ultrafiltration, optionally a constant volume crossflow ultrafiltration, optionally having a crossflow velocity of the solution across the ultrafiltration membrane in a range of from 0.5-10 m/s.
4. The method according to claim 3, wherein crossflow velocity (v_{CF}) of the solution across the ultrafiltration membrane, concentration (y_{IIR}) of the polyisoolefin elastomer in the solution and permeate flux (J) through the ultrafiltration membrane are maintained to satisfy Equation 1:

$$\alpha = \frac{y_{IIR} J}{v_{CF}} \quad \text{Equation 1}$$

where α is a unitless quantity greater than 3×10^{-7} .

5. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein concentration of the polyisoolefin elastomer in the solution is maintained in a range of from 2-40 wt.% based on total weight of the solution.
6. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the filtering is performed at a temperature of from 30-200°C, optionally 40-130°C, optionally at a pressure in a range of from 2-50 bar.
7. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein one or more stabilizers for the polyisoolefin elastomer are present in the organic solvent, the one or more stabilizers comprising particulate solids insoluble in the organic solvent, non-permeating liquids immiscible in the organic solvent, or a combination thereof, wherein at least one of the one or more stabilizers is retained in the retentate in an amount of from about 80-100

wt.% based on weight of the original amount of the at least one stabilizer in the organic solvent, optionally about 95-100 wt.%.

8. The method according to claim 7, wherein the one or more stabilizers comprise an acid scavenger, optionally comprising a metal carboxylate, optionally in the form of a particulate solid, or a metal oxide or hydroxide, optionally comprising calcium stearate or sodium hydroxide, or a mixture of a metal carboxylate and a metal oxide or hydroxide.

9. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein a molecular weight of the polyisooolefin is decreased by less than about 15% during the filtering step.

10. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein the organic solvent comprises hexane, pentane, isohexane, isopentane or any mixture thereof and optionally the solution comprises water in a range of from about 1-60 wt.% based on total weight of the solution.

11. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein the polyisooolefin elastomer is a polyisooolefin copolymer derived from at least one isooolefin monomer and at least one multiolefin monomer and/or β -pinene, optionally being halogenated.

12. A permeate produced by the method according to any one of claims 1 to 11.

13. A retentate produced by the method according to any one of claims 1 to 11.

14. A butyl rubber produced by the method of any one of claims 1 to 11 having a cyclic oligomer content of less than about 400 ppm.