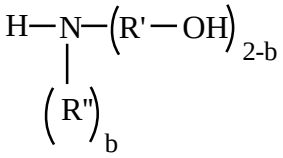
WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method comprising: (a) deprotonating a mono- or dialkanol amine with a deprotonating agent while continuously removing water formed from the reaction; and (b) reacting the deprotonated mono- or dialkanolamine with one or more C_4 to C_{75} fatty acid monoalcohol esters to provide a mono- or dialkanol amide.

2. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the mono- or dialkanol amine of the deprotonated mono- or dialkanol amine is of the general formula:



wherein R' is a divalent alkylene group having from 2 to 10 carbon atoms, R'' is hydrogen or an alkyl group having from 1 to 6 carbon atoms and b is 0 or 1.

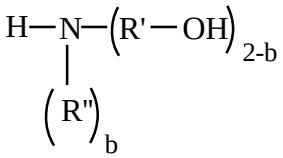
3. The method according to Claims 1-3, wherein the one or more C_4 to C_{75} fatty acid monoalcohol esters are a fatty acid methyl ester, fatty acid ethyl ester, fatty acid propyl ester, fatty acid butyl ester, or mixtures thereof.

4. The method according to Claims 1-3, wherein the fatty acid of the fatty acid monoalcohol ester is a fatty acid derived from beef tallow oil, lard oil, palm oil, castor oil, cottonseed oil, corn oil, peanut oil, soybean oil, sunflower oil, olive oil, whale oil, menhaden oil, sardine oil, coconut oil, palm kernel oil, babassu oil, rape oil, soya oil, or mixtures thereof.

5. The method according to Claims 1-3, wherein the fatty acid of the ester is a fatty acid derived from coconut oil and the monoalcohol of the ester is selected from the group

consisting of methanol, ethanol, propanol, propan-2-ol, isopropanol, butanol, sec-butanol, tert-butanol, and 2-ethyl-hexanol.

6. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the mono- or dialkanol amine possesses the general formula:



wherein R’ is a divalent alkylene group having from 2 to 10 carbon atoms, R’’ is hydrogen or an alkyl group having from 1 to 6 carbon atoms and b is 0 or 1, and the deprotonating agent is a strong base.

7. The method according to Claims 1 or 6, wherein the deprotonating agent is a hydroxide base selected from potassium hydroxide or sodium hydroxide.

8. The method according to Claims 1, 6, or 7, wherein the mono- or dialkanol amine is reacted with the deprotonating agent in a molar ratio of mono- or dialkanol amine to deprotonating agent of about 0.1:1 to about 100:1.

9. The method according to Claims 1 or 6-8, wherein the mono- or dialkanol amine is diethanol amine and the ester is a fatty acid methyl ester.

10. The method according to Claims 1 or 6-9, wherein the mono- or dialkanol amine is selected from the group consisting of monoethanolamine, diethanolamine, propanolamine, isopropanolamine, dipropanolamine, di-isopropanolamine, butanolamine, aminoethylaminoethanol and combinations thereof and the fatty acid of the fatty acid ester is

a fatty acid derived from beef tallow oil, lard oil, palm oil, castor oil, cottonseed oil, corn oil, peanut oil, soybean oil, sunflower oil, olive oil, whale oil, menhaden oil, sardine oil, coconut oil, palm kernel oil, babassu oil, rape oil, soya oil, or mixtures thereof.

11. The method according to Claims 1-5, wherein the deprotonated mono- or dialkanol amine is reacted with the ester in a molar ratio of deprotonated mono- or dialkanol amine to ester of about 0.1:1 to about 10:1.

12. The method according to Claims 1 or 6-10, wherein the mono- or dialkanol amine is reacted with the deprotonating agent at a temperature of 30 to 300°C.

13. The method according to Claims 1-12, wherein the deprotonated mono- or dialkanol amine is reacted with the ester at a temperature of 30 to 150°C.

14. The method according to Claims 1 or 6-10, wherein the resulting product is substantially free of any by-products.