

METHOD FOR MIXING FLUIDS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

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The present description relates to mixing fluids. In particular, but not exclusively, it relates to mixing fluids effectively by injecting fresh fluid feed into a spiral stream of recycled fluid feed.

- 10 The method is useful e.g. in chemical processes where corrosive fresh fluid feeds are mixed into a recycled fluid feed. Particular use is found in processing hydrocarbons, such as diesel range hydrocarbons from renewable source of biological origin, e.g. from bio oils and fats. The invention is also useful in controlling temperature profile of the reactor.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

- Environmental interests and an increasing demand for diesel fuel drive fuel producers to employ more intensively renewable sources in the manufacture of diesel fuel. In the manufacture of diesel fuels based on biological raw materials, i.e. 20 renewable and bio diesel, the main interest has thus far concerned vegetable oils and animal fats comprising triglycerides of fatty acids. Long, straight and mostly saturated hydrocarbons of fatty acids correspond chemically to the hydrocarbons present in diesel fuels.

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- Plant oils and fats, as well as animal oils and fats typically contain 0-30 wt-% of free fatty acids, FFA. FFAs are formed during enzymatic hydrolysis of triglycerides especially when oil seeds are kept in humid atmosphere. Free fatty acids can also be formed during purification of bio oils and fats, especially during caustic wash, i.e. 30 alkali catalyzed hydrolysis.

The fatty acid composition, size and saturation degree may vary considerably in feed stocks from different origins. The melting point of bio oil or fat is mainly a

consequence of the saturation degree. Fats are more saturated than liquid oils and require less hydrogen for hydrogenation of double bonds.

Free fatty acids are very corrosive because of their acidity. They attack against materials they are in contact with which may cause corrosion on equipment used in processes involving FFAs, such as piping and reactors.

FFAs also promote undesirable side reactions. Unsaturated feeds and free fatty acids in bio oils and fats promote the formation of heavy molecular weight compounds, which may cause plugging of the preheating section and decrease catalyst activity and life. Double bonds in unsaturated FFAs also promote various other side reactions, such as oligomerisation/polymerization, cyclisation/aromatisation and cracking reactions. These reactions cause many problems in the process and deactivate catalysts, increase hydrogen consumption and reduce diesel yield.

Fatty acids may also promote the formation of heavy compounds. The boiling range of these heavy compounds is different from the range of diesel fuel and may shorten the life of isomerisation catalyst. Due to the free fatty acids contained in bio oils and fats, the formation of heavy molecular weight compounds are significantly increased compared to triglyceridic bio feeds which have only low amount of free fatty acids (<1%).

EP1741768A1 describes a process for the manufacture of diesel range hydrocarbons wherein a feed is hydrotreated in a hydrotreating step and isomerised in an isomerization step and a feed comprising fresh feed containing more than 5 w-% of free fatty acids and at least one diluting agent is hydrotreated at a reaction temperature of 200-400 °C, in a hydrotreating reactor in the presence of catalyst, and the volume ratio of the diluting agent to fresh feed is 5-30:1. Hydrodeoxygenation, HDO, step is disclosed as a hydrogenolysis process for removing oxygen from oxygen containing compounds and FFA-feeds.

Free fatty acids are corrosive and they can attack against materials of unit or catalyst and promote some side reactions. Free fatty acids react very efficiently with metal impurities producing metal carboxylates, which promote undesirable side reaction chemistry.

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The corrosiveness of FFAs present in renewable sources of hydrocarbons has limited use of renewable sources in manufacturing diesel fuel. The high concentration of FFAs in fresh feeds prevents feeding high concentrations of fresh feed into recycle feed without exposing e.g. feed system, heat exchanger and reactor to corrosion.

10 The risk of corrosion is particularly high above the reaction bed where fresh feed is mixed with the recycle, such as at HDO.

Corrosion rate is affected by factors such as materials used in the process, operating temperature, organic acid concentration and sulphide formation.

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Undesired oxygen may be removed from fatty acids or their esters by deoxygenation reactions. The deoxygenation of bio oils and fats, which are oils and fats based on biological material, to produce hydrocarbons suitable as diesel fuel products, may be carried out by catalytic hydrotreating.

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During hydrotreating, particularly hydrodeoxygenation, oxygen containing groups are reacted with hydrogen and removed as water formed in the reaction. This reaction requires rather high amounts of hydrogen. Due to the highly exothermic nature of these reactions, the control of reaction heat is extremely important. Impure plant
25 oil/fat or animal fat/oil, high reaction temperatures, insufficient control of reaction temperature or low hydrogen availability in the feed stream may cause unwanted side reactions, such as cracking, polymerisation, ketonisation, cyclisation and aromatisation, and coking of the catalyst. These side reactions also decrease the yield and the properties of the obtained diesel fraction.

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EP1741768A1 also describes an improved process for the manufacture of diesel range hydrocarbons from bio oils and fats, wherein the hydrotreatment of triglyceride

feedstock containing free fatty acids is carried out using dilution of fresh feed and reduced reaction temperature. The dilution agent is selected from hydrocarbons and recycled product of the process i.e. product recycle or mixtures thereof. A ratio of at least 5:1 (recycle:fresh) significantly decreased the formation of high molecular weight products, when the feedstock containing 10 wt-% of free fatty acids (calculated from fresh oil) was used. Thus using at least 5:1 or 4:1 recycle ratio and reduced reaction temperature, free fatty acids can be processed without the need for deacidification and high quality hydrocarbons suitable for the diesel fuel pool were obtained.

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When a feedstock with high levels of FFAs or other organic acids is used, the system must be protected from corrosion. In particular the feed system, heat exchanger, and/or reactors are affected most as they are the first to be in contact with the feed with the highest FFA content. Controlling corrosion by corrosion-resistant materials is possible but results into high costs and extensive modifications of the units of the refinery.

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Corrosion prevention has previously been achieved by cladding the exposed surfaces, adding a corrosion inhibitor, anti-corrosion agents, or changing the materials (corrosion resistant material) used in the exposed surfaces. These methods are known for example from US2012053377.

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US20120216450 describes a method of converting feeds from renewable sources in co-processing with a petroleum feed using a catalyst based on nickel and molybdenum.

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US8440875 describes a method of making a diesel fuel from a renewable feedstock. Ammonia or an amine compound is used to neutralize the organic acids in the renewable feedstock. The ammonia or amine compound must be removed from the product mixture before the isomerization zone so that it does not affect the isomerization catalyst. The use of ammonia or amine compounds could allow for the metallurgy reductions in the process equipment.

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US20120255233 discloses a process for conversion of FFA containing oils to biodiesel by converting high FFA containing feed stocks (FFA 20-85%) without pretreatment or purification to biodiesel in the presence of macro reticular and gel
5 type acidic heterogeneous resin followed by transesterification in presence of homogeneous basic catalyst and separation of biodiesel and glycerin.

FR2989006A1 discloses a catalytic reactor with a quench device provided with tangential injection of a quench fluid.

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Despite some attempts in the field to allow mixing corrosive fresh fluid feeds into recycled fluid feeds, there still remains a need for new methods and apparatuses that allow efficient mixing of the fresh and recycled feeds without need for extensive protection or diluting or neutralising agents. In particular high FFA feeds in
15 manufacturing diesel range hydrocarbons from renewable source have previously been impossible to feed into recycled process stream in a cost-effective way without extensive use of additional neutralising or diluting agents, conversion, or protection of reactor parts by protective layers.

20 It is an object of the invention to at least alleviate the above shortcomings of the prior art by providing a mixing method and a fluid mixer according to the aspects of the invention at least for reducing the corrosion problem in reactor systems and/or for enabling increasing the FFA content in the feed of HDO reactor.

25 SUMMARY

The present inventors have surprisingly found an effective method of mixing fluids and a fluid mixer. Accordingly, the first aspect of the invention provides a method of mixing fluids in a fluid mixer, the fluid mixer comprising a first inlet, a second inlet, an
30 outlet, and a substantially cylindrical mixing chamber, the mixing chamber comprising a wall, a top plate, and a bottom plate, and the method comprising

- a. passing a first fluid stream into the mixing chamber through the first inlet, the first inlet having openings in the top plate and inside the mixing chamber, an outer wall of the first inlet extending to the wall of the mixing chamber and descending to the bottom of the mixing chamber;
- 5 b. providing a spiral stream of the first fluid inside the mixing chamber through the first inlet, the first inlet descending to the mixing chamber in the form of a ramp or a pipe, and forming an asymmetry to the cylindrical shape to enhance spiral stream in the mixing chamber;
- c. injecting through the second inlet, and tangential to the wall of the mixing
10 chamber, a second fluid into the spiral stream of the first fluid such that the concentration of the second fluid decreases towards the wall of the mixing chamber; and
- d. directing the spiral stream of the fluids to the exterior of the mixing chamber as a vortex through the outlet, the outlet being provided in the bottom plate, and
15 the outlet being concentric with the spiral flow axis.

According to another aspect there is provided a fluid mixer for mixing fluids comprising

- a. a substantially cylindrical mixing chamber being defined by a wall, a top plate,
20 and a bottom plate;
- b. a first inlet for passing a first fluid stream into the mixing chamber, the first inlet having openings in the top plate and inside the mixing chamber, an outer wall of the first inlet extending to the wall of the mixing chamber and descending to the bottom of the mixing chamber, the first inlet being configured to provide a
25 spiral stream of the first fluid inside the mixing chamber, the first inlet descending to the mixing chamber in the form of a ramp or a pipe, and forming an asymmetry to the cylindrical shape to enhance spiral stream in the mixing chamber;
- c. a second inlet for injecting tangentially to the wall of the mixing chamber a
30 second fluid into the spiral stream of the first fluid such that the concentration of the second fluid decreases towards the wall of the mixing chamber, the

second inlet optionally comprising a nozzle with an inner sleeve for protecting the second inlet from corrosion; and

- d. an outlet in the bottom plate, the fluid mixer being configured to direct the spiral stream of the fluids to the exterior of the mixing chamber as a vortex through the outlet, the outlet being concentric with the spiral flow axis.

An advantage of the method and the fluid mixer is the capability to effectively mix into the first fluid a second fluid. The second fluid may have a high concentration of at least one corrosive agent. Prior processes involving mixing corrosive fluids have required protecting reactors by expensive protecting layers. Alternatively, corrosive fluids have been injected in low concentrations to avoid contact of high concentration of corrosive agents with the mixer or reactor surfaces, in particular the mixing chamber walls. The effective mixing of the present method removes the need for extensive protecting layers in the reactor shell and in the main distributor (below the quench box). Additionally, extensive use of diluting fluids can be avoided. With prior technology only fresh feed with FFA contents of less than about 10% has been possible without additional protection from corrosion.

Without limiting to these advantages, the present method enables mixing second fluid having high concentration FFAs. High FFA content of some hydrocarbon sources of biological origin has previously limited extensive use of highly feasible feedstocks in refinery. The increased use of feedstocks with higher FFA content has a positive impact on feasibility of refinery units. The method is especially advantageous in HDO reactor optionally involving multiple beds. The method allows using high FFA raw material streams that are inexpensive and attractive sources for bio fuel production, but which have previously been difficult or impossible to use because of their corrosive nature. The present mixing method allows up to 100% FFA content in the second fluid.

Further, an advantage of the method is efficient mixing of the fluid streams into a more homogeneous stream which helps to maintain optimal temperature profile in the reactor and helps to avoid unwanted side reactions.

The mixing method and the fluid mixer according to the invention allows an assembly which is very compact, making the fluid mixer suitable to be installed, and the mixing method to be used, in existing reactors with few modifications in the reactor. The compact structure is particularly advantageous in multibed reactors having several points of injection for the fresh fluid comprising a corrosive agent.

The present mixing method and fluid mixer are particularly advantageous when used in hydrotreating where product recycle or another dilution agent in the hydrotreatment step is used as the first fluid and the second fluid comprises fresh feed with high FFA content.

The fluid mixer allows effective mixing without using mixing blades or similar for mixing the fluids. The fluid mixer can be implemented as a compact unit that can be easily fitted into reactors.

DEFINITIONS

FFA – Free fatty acids
HDO – Hydrodeoxygenation

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

Fig. 1 illustrates the fluid mixer design and the streamlines entering from the mixing chamber and injected through the injection nozzle.

Fig. 2 FFA mass fraction field for the design of Fig. 1 scaled 0-12 w-% of FFA, with a 50 w-% concentration of FFA in the injected fluid.

Fig. 3 discloses FFA mass fraction field for the design of Fig. 1 scaled 0-12 w-% of FFA, with a 80 w-% concentration of FFA in the injected fluid.

Fig. 4 discloses FFA mass fraction field for the design of Fig. 1 scaled 0-12 w-% of FFA, with a 100 w-% concentration of FFA in the injected fluid.

5 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a novel mixing method and a fluid mixer. The modified mixing chamber reduces the corrosion problem and allows using increased FFA content in the fresh feed and in the mixed feed exiting the mixing chamber.

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Most of the information related to the organic acid corrosion mechanism in high temperatures without water phase has been obtained from the studies related to naphthenic acid corrosion (NAC). Fatty acids, similar to naphthenic acids, are carboxylic acids and therefore the corrosion reactions for them are similar. Because
 15 fatty acids are protic solvents and they can solvate anions, impurities can have an effect on the corrosion mechanism. Without being bound to nay theory, the main corrosion reaction for carboxylic acids is considered to be

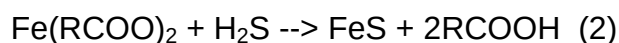


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Because the corrosion product is very soluble in hot hydrocarbon stream, there is usually no protective film or corrosion scale on steel surfaces of the system. The soluble corrosion product can react with H_2S present in the process to form poorly soluble FeS deposits that cause plugging problems.

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Without being bound to any theory, formation of FeS deposits may occur according to the reaction



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Feed nozzle of the second fluid, as well as internal piping including quench box for the second catalyst bed can become in contact with fresh feed at high temperatures.

The mixing chamber has substantially cylindrical shape. Cylindrical shape is preferred as it enhances spiral flow inside the mixing chamber. However, the first inlet forms asymmetry to the cylindrical shape as the inlet enters the mixing chamber near the wall of the mixing chamber, as is seen in Fig. 1. Consequently, the shape of the mixing chamber is not perfectly cylindrical.

The first inlet provides a spiral stream of the first fluid inside the mixing chamber. The first inlet is in the form of a pipe or a ramp, which descends from outside the mixing chamber through the top plate and to the bottom of the mixing chamber, thereby forming a curved passage for the first fluid to enter the mixing chamber near the wall of the mixing chamber. The spiral movement of the first fluid flow initially continues near the wall of the mixing chamber until the flow reaches the entry point of the first fluid, i.e. the end of the first inlet. After this point the stream begins the second round of rotation and continues the second and subsequent cycles closer to the center of the mixing chamber, thus forming a spiral stream. The stream continues spiral movement inside the mixing chamber as the first fluid enters through the first inlet, as well as the geometry of the mixing chamber, cause the stream to rotate and flow towards the center of the mixing chamber wherein the outlet in the bottom plate is situated at the center of the mixing chamber.

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The second fluid is injected tangential to the wall of the mixing chamber. The tangential injection may be accomplished by injecting the second fluid through a fluid inlet nozzle directed downstream. The second inlet may enter the mixing chamber through the wall of the mixing chamber, e.g. as a pipe with a nozzle which opens into the stream of the first fluid. As the second fluid is injected inside the spiral stream of the first fluid, the concentration of the second fluid decreases towards the wall of the mixing chamber as it mixes with the first fluid flowing around the second inlet, as well as flowing between the second inlet and the wall of the mixing chamber. The concentration of the second fluid at the wall of the mixing chamber may be as low as below 1 wt-%.

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The mixed fluids exit the mixing chamber through an outlet in the bottom plate as a vortex. The outlet is provided in the bottom plate and it is concentric with both the spiral flow axis to achieve enhanced mixing.

- 5 In an example embodiment the outlet opens into a reactor comprising a wall. As the mixed fluids exit the mixing chamber, the rotational stream of fluids forms a vortex which extends inside the reactor below the fluid mixer essentially concentrically with the reactor. As is seen in Fig. 1, efficient mixing of the fluids is obtained and, consequently, very high concentrations of corrosive agents, such as FFA, in the
10 second fluid can be injected without exposing the fluid mixer wall directly to the corrosive second fluid. The opening of the outlet may be circular and concentric to the mixing chamber.

In an example embodiment the first inlet has a height corresponding to the height of
15 the mixing chamber at the end of the inlet entering the mixing chamber. In an embodiment the inlet is a ramp and the cross section of the ramp opening is rectangular having the base and the top edges that are longer than the side edges. The circumferential length of the first inlet, such as a ramp, is less than a full circle, preferably one fourth of a circle. In another embodiment the inlet is tubular, i.e. a
20 pipe. In yet another embodiment the first inlet is a tangentially directed downcomer.

In an example embodiment the second inlet may comprise a nozzle with an inner sleeve in particular if the temperature is high, such as exceeds approx. 225°C. This provides additional protection for the second inlet to prevent corrosion caused by the
25 corrosive agent while it is injected into the recycle feed and before it is effectively mixed with the recycle feed by the present fluid mixer, making it less corrosive.

In an example embodiment the second fluid comprises an agent which is corrosive. The corrosive nature of the second fluid may affect the walls of the mixing chamber,
30 the reactor walls, or both. The corrosive nature of the second fluid prevents injecting it in high concentration directly inside the mixing chamber or to the reactor in high concentrations without using the present method to effectively mix the fluids.

Consequently, in prior methods the ratio of the recycle feed to the fresh feed must have been kept high because ineffective mixing of the feeds has made it necessary to keep the amount of the corrosive fresh feed low as a precaution in order to control exposure of the system to corrosive agents in the fresh feed.

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In an example embodiment the volume ratio of the first fluid to the second fluid in the fluid stream exiting the mixing chamber is from 1:1 to 15:1, preferably from 3:1 to 6:1, such as 1:1, 2:1, 3:1, 4:1, 5:1, 6:1, 7:1, 8:1, 9:1, 10:1, 11:1, 12:1, 13:1, 14:1 or 15:1.

- 10 The first fluid may preferably be fed from 50 to 300 t/h, such as 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, 110, 120, 130, 140, 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210, 220, 230, 240, 250, 260, 270, 280, 290 or 300 t/h. The second fluid may preferably be fed from 0.5 to 60 t/h, such as 0.5, 0.6, 0.7, 0.8, 0.9, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55 or 60 t/h. The flow rates of the first and the
- 15 second fluid may be selected such that the above mentioned volume ratios for the first and the second fluids are obtained. In case of multiple beds the feed of the second fluid may be divided accordingly depending on the number of beds: for two beds, and a total flow rate of 60 t/h for the second fluid, 30 t/h feeds for each bed may be used; for three beds the second fluid feed may be divided into three 20 t/h
- 20 feeds for each bed, accordingly. Optionally the flow rate of the second feed may vary in the individual beds of a multibed reactor as long as the total flow rate of the second feed is kept within the above range.

- In an example embodiment the second fluid comprises free fatty acids as a corrosive
- 25 agent up to 100 % w/w, preferably up to 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, or 95 % w/w.

- In an example embodiment the second fluid comprises one or more free fatty acid distillates such as palm fatty acid distillate and/or soya free fatty acid distillate; one or
- 30 more free fatty acid containing bio based feedstock such as crude and refined palm based oil, technical corn oil, tall oil, seed oil, animal fat, waste cooking oil, jatropha curcas oil, fish oil, microbial oil, and/or algae oil; by-products from fatty acid methyl

ester and bio based chemicals production and/or oil derived from ligno-cellulosic biomass; and/or one or more lower molecular weight acids containing bio based feedstock such as pyrolysis oil and/or sludge palm oil.

- 5 In an example embodiment the flow rate of the first fluid is higher than the flow rate of the second fluid at the points of entry of the fluids into the mixing chamber such that the fluids rotate inside the mixing chamber primarily because of the momentum of the first fluid. Preferably the flow inside the mixing chamber is controlled by injecting the second fluid into and concurrent to the first fluid such that the second fluid does not
10 touch the wall of the mixing chamber.

In an example embodiment the flow rates of the first and the second fluid are selected such that the spiral flow rotates at 0.5-2.0 r/s inside the mixing chamber.

- 15 In an example embodiment the second fluid is injected into the first fluid through an opening in a nozzle which is surrounded by the first fluid. The first fluid streams through the mixing chamber in a spiral stream and surrounds the space into which the second fluid is injected, thereby protecting the mixing chamber wall from the corrosive agents present in the second fluid. The nozzle for the second fluid may be
20 positioned inside the mixing chamber such that the nozzle directs the second fluid inside the rotating stream which originates predominantly or exclusively from the first fluid.

- In an example embodiment the height of the mixing chamber is smaller than its
25 diameter, preferably the height to diameter ratio is from 0.006 to 0.3, most preferably from 0.03 to 0.15, such as 0.006, 0.007, 0.008, 0.009, 0.01, 0.015, 0.02, 0.025, 0.026, 0.027, 0.028, 0.029, 0.03, 0.031, 0.032, 0.033, 0.034, 0.035, 0.04, 0.045, 0.05, 0.055, 0.06, 0.065, 0.07, 0.075, 0.08, 0.085, 0.09, 0.095, 0.1, 0.11, 0.12, 0.13, 0.14, 0.141, 0.142, 0.143, 0.144, 0.145, 0.146, 0.147, 0.148, 0.149, 0.15, 0.151,
30 0.152, 0.153, 0.154, 0.155, 0.156, 0.157, 0.158, 0.159, 0.16, 0.17, 0.18, 0.19, 0.2, 0.21, 0.22, 0.23, 0.24, 0.25, 0.26, 0.27, 0.28, 0.29 or 0.3. Thus, the mixing can be

accomplished with a fluid mixer which is compact and the mixer or mixing chamber can be installed into existing reactors having limited space.

In an example embodiment the method is for mixing fluids in a downflow reactor or in
5 a reactor comprising multiple beds.

In an example embodiment the method is for mixing FFA containing renewable hydrocarbon source of biological origin as the second fluid and incoming process feed as the first stream to feed reactants into a HDO reactor.

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In an example embodiment the second fluid comprises up to 100% FFA, preferably up to 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, or 95 % w/w. The method produces very efficient mixing and allows feeding second fluids comprising high concentration of corrosive agent, such as FFA.

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In one aspect the substantially cylindrical mixing chamber of the fluid mixer is defined by a wall, a top plate, and a bottom plate. The fluids are mixed inside this defined space by the effect of the rotating first fluid into which the second fluid is injected.

20 The fluid mixer is configured to direct the spiral stream of the fluids to the exterior of the mixing chamber as a vortex through the outlet in the bottom plate, the outlet being concentric with the spiral vortex axis.

As the second fluid is injected inside the first fluid and tangentially to the wall of the
25 mixing chamber, the second fluid does not significantly contact the wall of the mixing chamber. The second fluid may comprise a corrosive agent which may corrode the wall. It is thus advantageous to avoid contacting the second fluid with the wall of the mixing chamber in order to prevent corrosion in said wall. The flow of the second fluid may be controlled such that sufficient mixing is obtained, depending on the type of
30 the second fluid, as well as e.g. the particular shape of the mixing chamber. The inlet for the second fluid may enter the mixing chamber through the wall of the mixing chamber.

The opening in the bottom plate of the mixing chamber directs the spiral flow of the fluids outside the mixing chamber. As the fluids exit the mixing chamber to exterior, a vortex of the fluids is formed in which the mixing of the fluids continues with the content of the fluids in the reactor space. When the outlet opens into a reactor being concentric with the mixing chamber.

In one aspect the second inlet is directed downstream and separated from the wall of the mixing chamber. This further enhances mixing and avoids direct contact between the wall and the second fluid.

In one aspect the outlet is circular and has a diameter smaller than the diameter of the mixing chamber. This yields efficient discharge of the fluids and enhances spiral stream inside the mixing chamber.

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In one aspect the second fluid comprises a corrosive agent. In one aspect the corrosive agent is renewable feedstock having more than 10% FFA. The FFA content may be as high as 100%.

20 In one aspect the fluid mixer is for use in the mixing method.

In one aspect the method is for hydrotreating renewable feedstock having more than 10% free fatty acid.

25 In one aspect in the fluid mixing method the above fluid mixer is used.

EXAMPLES

The following examples are provided to illustrate various aspects of the present invention. They are not intended to limit the invention, which is defined by the accompanying claims.

Example 1 – The fluid mixer

The maximum FFA content of the feed was investigated assuming that the whole fluid mixer material can tolerate 100% FFA. The reactor wall material is not changed and no additional protective layers are used in the reactor. Therefore, the fluid mixer is designed such that the FFA content near the reactors walls does not exceed 12 w-%. An embodiment of a fluid mixer according to the invention is shown in Fig. 1.

Example 2

In this example the flow of fluids inside the fluid mixer was simulated. The first fluid enters the mixer at 140 t/h from the top and the second fluid is injected into the stream inside the mixer (see Fig. 1).

In order to increase the FFA concentration in the quench inlet, i.e. the second inlet, the design shown in Fig. 1 was simulated. FFA feed concentrations of 50, 80 and 100 w-% were used. Fig. 2-4 shows the FFA mass fraction in scale 0-12 w-%. Concerning the 12 w-% FFA limit, 100 w-% FFA in the second fluid is acceptable if the walls can tolerate max. 8 w-% or 12 w-% depending on the quench box material.

CFD simulations of the FFA distribution inside the fluid mixer in a HDO reactor were run. The simulations demonstrated that the proposed fluid mixer enables efficient mixing of the first fluid and a corrosive second fluid. Walls can tolerate max. 8 w-% or 12 w-% depending on the quench box material, based on corrosion experiments.

The simulation results show that up to 100% FFA content can be used in the second fluid without contact exceeding the corrosive limit.

Claims

1. A method of mixing fluids in a fluid mixer, the fluid mixer comprising a first inlet, a second inlet, an outlet, and a substantially cylindrical mixing chamber, the mixing chamber comprising a wall, a top plate, and a bottom plate, and the method comprising
 - a. passing a first fluid stream into the mixing chamber through the first inlet, the first inlet having openings in the top plate and inside the mixing chamber, an outer wall of the first inlet extending to the wall of the mixing chamber and descending to the bottom of the mixing chamber;
 - b. providing a spiral stream of the first fluid inside the mixing chamber through the first inlet, the first inlet descending to the mixing chamber in the form of a ramp or a pipe, and forming an asymmetry to the cylindrical shape to enhance spiral stream in the mixing chamber;
 - c. injecting through the second inlet, and tangential to the wall of the mixing chamber, a second fluid into the spiral stream of the first fluid such that the concentration of the second fluid decreases towards the wall of the mixing chamber; and
 - d. directing the spiral stream of the fluids to the exterior of the mixing chamber as a vortex through the outlet, the outlet being provided in the bottom plate, and the outlet being concentric with the spiral flow axis.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the first inlet has a height corresponding to the height of the mixing chamber.
3. The method of claim 1 or 2 wherein the second inlet comprises a nozzle with an inner sleeve for protecting the second inlet from corrosion.
4. The method of any one of claims 1-3 wherein the second fluid comprises an agent which is corrosive.

5. The method of any one of claims 1-4 wherein the volume ratio of the first fluid to the second fluid in the fluid stream exiting the mixing chamber is from 1:1 to 15:1, preferably from 3:1 to 6:1.

5 6. The method of any one of claims 1-5 wherein the second fluid comprises

- a. one or more free fatty acid distillates such as palm fatty acid distillate and/or soya free fatty acid distillate,
- b. one or more free fatty acid containing bio based feedstock such as
10 crude and refined palm based oil, technical corn oil, tall oil, seed oil, animal fat, waste cooking oil, jatropha curcas oil, fish oil, microbial oil, and/or algae oil,
- c. by-products from fatty acid methyl ester and bio based chemicals production and/or oil derived from ligno-cellulosic biomass, and/or
- d. one or more lower molecular weight acids containing bio based
15 feedstock such as pyrolysis oil and/or sludge palm oil.

7. The method of any one of claims 1-6 wherein the flow rate of the first fluid is higher than the flow rate of the second fluid.

20 8. The method of any one of claims 1-7 wherein the flow inside the mixing chamber is controlled by injecting the second fluid into and concurrent to the first fluid such that the second fluid does not touch the wall of the mixing chamber.

25 9. The method of any one of claims 1 - 8 wherein the spiral flow rotates from 0.5 to 2 r/s inside the mixing chamber.

10. The method of any one of claims 1-9 wherein the first fluid is fed 50-300 t/h and the second fluid is fed 0.5-20 t/h.

11. The method of any one of claims 1-10 wherein the height of the mixing chamber is smaller than its diameter, preferably the height to diameter ratio is from 0.006 to 0.3, most preferably from 0.03 to 0.15.

5 12. The method of any one of claims 1-11 for mixing fluids in a downflow reactor or in a reactor comprising multiple beds.

13. The method of any one of claims 1-12 for mixing FFA containing renewable hydrocarbon source of biological origin as the second fluid and incoming process feed as the first fluid to feed reactants into a HDO reactor.

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14. The method of any one of claims 1-13 wherein the second fluid comprises up to 100% FFA, preferably up to 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, or 95 % w/w.

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15. A fluid mixer comprising

- a. a substantially cylindrical mixing chamber being defined by a wall, a top plate, and a bottom plate;
 - b. a first inlet for passing a first fluid stream into the mixing chamber, the first inlet having openings in the top plate and inside the mixing chamber, an outer wall of the first inlet extending to the wall of the mixing chamber and descending to the bottom of the mixing chamber, the first inlet being configured to provide a spiral stream of the first fluid inside the mixing chamber, the first inlet descending to the mixing chamber in the form of a ramp or a pipe, and forming an asymmetry to the cylindrical shape to enhance spiral stream in the mixing chamber;
 - c. a second inlet for injecting tangentially to the wall of the mixing chamber a second fluid into the spiral stream of the first fluid such that the concentration of the second fluid decreases towards the wall of the mixing chamber, the second inlet optionally comprising a nozzle with an inner sleeve for protecting the second inlet from corrosion; and
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- d. an outlet in the bottom plate, the fluid mixer being configured to direct the spiral stream of the fluids to the exterior of the mixing chamber as a vortex through the outlet, the outlet being concentric with the spiral flow axis.

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16. The fluid mixer of claim 15 wherein

- a. the second inlet is directed downstream and separated from the wall of the mixing chamber; and/or
- b. the outlet is circular and has a diameter smaller than the diameter of the mixing chamber.

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17. The fluid mixer according to claim 15 or 16 for use in the method of any one of claims 1-15.

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18. The method of any one of claims 1-14 wherein the fluid mixer of claim 15 or 16 is used.