Claims:

1. A process for the preparation of lactic acid and 2-hydroxy-3-butenoic acid or esters thereof from a sugar in the presence of a metallo-silicate material, a metal ion and a solvent, said process comprising contacting the sugar with a metallo-silicate material, wherein the metal ion is selected from one or more of the group consisting of potassium ions, sodium ions, lithium ions, rubidium ions and caesium ions.

2. A process according to claim 1, wherein the metal ion is obtainable by the addition to the process of one or more compounds selected from the group consisting of K_2CO_3, KNO_3, KCl, potassium acetate (CH_3CO_2K), potassium lactate ($CH_3CH(OH)CO_2K$), Na_2CO_3, Li_2CO_3 and Rb_2CO_3.

3. A process according to claims 1 or 2, wherein the metallo-silicate material has a framework structure selected from the group consisting of BEA, MFI, FAU, MOR, FER, MCM and SBA.

4. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the metallo-silicate material comprises an active metal selected from one or more of the group consisting of Sn, Ti, Pb, Zr, Ge and Hf.

5. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the metallo-silicate material is selected from the group consisting of Sn-BEA, Sn-MFI, Sn-FAU, Sn-MCM-41 and Sn-SBA-15.

6. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the sugar is selected from one or more of the group consisting of glucose, fructose, mannose, sucrose, xylose, erythrose, erythrulose, threose and glycolaldehyde.

7. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the solvent is selected from one or more of the group consisting of methanol, ethanol, 1-propanol, 1-butanol and water.

8. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the ester of lactic acid is methyl lactate or ethyl lactate.

9. A process according to claim 8, wherein the yield of methyl lactate is equal to or greater than 69%.

10. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein the metallo-silicate material is prepared using a post synthesis process.

11. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein the process is run as a continuous process.

12. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 11, wherein the metallo-silicate material is prepared by impregnating a de-aluminated or de-boronated zeotype material or mesoporous amorphous silicate material with an active metal.

13. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein the metallo-silicate material is prepared by impregnating a de-aluminated or de-boronated zeotype material or mesoporous amorphous silicate material with an active metal and a metal ion.

14. A metallo-silicate material suitable for preparing lactic acid and 2-hydroxy-3-butenoic acid or esters thereof from a sugar, wherein the metallo-silicate material comprises a metal ion selected from the group consisting of alkaline earth metal ions and alkali metal ions.

15. The metallo-silicate material according to claim 14, wherein the metallo-silicate material comprises a silicon oxide structure and an active metal and wherein the silicon oxide structure comprises M-O-Si bonds.

16. The metallo-silicate material according to claim 15, wherein the active metal is selected from one or more of the group consisting of Sn, Ti, Pb, Zr, Ge and Hf.

17. The metallo-silicate material according to claim 15 or 16, wherein the atomic ratio of silicon to active metal is between 0.008 and 200.

18. The metallo-silicate material according to any one of claims 14 to 17, wherein the metal ions is selected from one or more of the group consisting of potassium ions, sodium ions, lithium ions, rubidium ions and caesium ions.

19. The metallo-silicate material according to any one of claims 15 to 18, wherein the active metal to metal ion ratio is between 1 and 20.

20. Use of the metallo-silicate material according to any one of claims 14 to 19 in the preparation of lactic acid and/or 2-hydroxy-3-butenoic acid or esters thereof from a sugar.