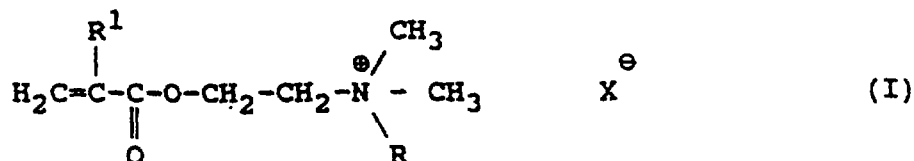


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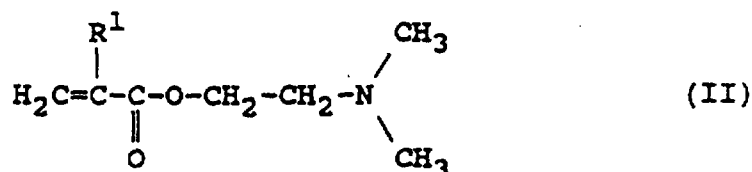
STABILIZED AQUEOUS SOLUTIONS OF UNSATURATED QUATERNARY AMMONIUM SALTS

The present invention relates to aqueous solutions of unsaturated quaternary ammonium salts (hereinafter known as quaternary salts), corresponding to the following formula (I):



in which:

- R^1 represents a hydrogen atom or a methyl radical;
 - R represents a methyl radical or a benzyl radical;
 - X is chosen from Cl , Br , I or $\text{CH}_3\text{-SO}_4$,
- the quaternary salts (I) having been obtained by reaction, in the presence of water, of N,N-dimethylaminoethyl (meth)acrylate of formula (II):



in which R^1 is as defined above,

with a quaternizing agent of formula (III):



in which R and X are also as defined above.

Use is made of aqueous solutions of quaternary salts (I) to prepare polymers intended to act as flocculants in water treatment.

The main problems which are posed during the synthesis of the quaternary salts (I) are, on the one hand, the sensitivity to water of the monomers (II) and, on the other hand, the risks of polymerization of the reaction mixture in the reactor and those of the quaternary salts (I) on storage.

Japanese Patent Applications JP-A-57 109 747 and JP-A-57 109 749 describe a process for stabilizing salts of formula (I). This process consists in adding, to these salts, at least one chelating agent which can be an aminocarboxylic acid and respectively a nitroso compound or a compound of quinone type. In practice, ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) and the trisodium salt of nitrilotriacetic acid have been experimented with as aminocarboxylic acid, either with a nitroso compound or with benzoquinone, in order to stabilize an aqueous methacryloyloxyethyltrimethylammonium chloride solution.

EDTA is also the only sequestering agent cited in European Patent Application EP-A-302 122, which describes a process for the preparation of unsaturated quaternary ammonium salts by quaternization in a medium composed of water and an aprotic organic solvent.

The Applicant Company has now discovered that the use of specific sequestering agents, belonging to the family of aminocarboxylic acids and their salts, makes it possible to obtain solutions of salts having excellent stability at room temperature.

The subject of the present invention is thus first a stabilized aqueous solution of at least one unsaturated quaternary ammonium salt, corresponding to the formula (I) as defined above and having been obtained by the reaction of a monomer (II) and of a quaternizing agent (III), as indicated above, the said aqueous solution containing at least one stabilizing agent in combination with the monomer (II) and additionally containing at least one sequestering agent for metals, characterized in that the sequestering agent for metals is chosen from diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid, the pentasodium salt of diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid, N-(hydroxyethyl)-ethylenediaminetriacetic acid and the trisodium salt of N-(hydroxyethyl)ethylenediaminetriacetic acid.

The content of sequestering agent(s) according to the invention is, generally, from approximately 1 to 100 ppm with respect to the aqueous solution of quaternary salt of formula (I). The sequestering agents

are preferentially added to the monomer (II) at the beginning of the reaction.

The stabilizing agents are chosen in particular from 3,5-di-tert-butyl-4-hydroxytoluene, hydroquinone methyl ether, hydroquinone, catechol, tert-butylcatechol and their mixtures.

The content of stabilizing agent(s) is, in accordance with the present invention, from approximately 20 to 1200 ppm with respect to the aqueous solution of quaternary salt of formula (I).

The aqueous quaternary salt solutions according to the invention are solutions containing concentrations in particular of approximately 50 to 85% by weight of quaternary salts (I) in water.

Another subject of the present invention is a process for the manufacture of a stabilized aqueous solution of unsaturated quaternary ammonium salt, corresponding to the formula (I) as defined above, from at least one (meth)acrylic monomer and from at least one quaternizing agent of the formulae (II) and (III) respectively, also as defined above, in the presence of at least one stabilizing agent in combination with the monomer (II) introduced at the beginning of the reaction, characterized in that at least one sequestering agent for metals is added to the monomer (II) at the beginning of the reaction and/or to the aqueous solution obtained, the sequestering agent for metals being chosen from diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid, the pentasodium salt of diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid, N-(hydroxyethyl)-ethylenediaminetriacetic acid and the trisodium salt of N-(hydroxyethyl)ethylenediaminetriacetic acid.

Examples of stabilizing agents and the preferred amounts of the latter, as well as those of the sequestering agents, have been indicated above.

Generally, the sequestering agents according to the invention are added in the form of an aqueous solution, because they are generally available in this form. Thus, the pentasodium salt of diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid, sold under the name Versenex 80, is provided

in the form of an approximately 40% by weight aqueous solution.

A particularly preferred implementation of the process according to the invention is that which forms the subject of European Patent EP-B-0 250 325. To this end:

- (a) the (meth)acrylic monomer (II) is reacted, in a closed reactor, with 5 to 20% by weight of the amount of quaternizing agent (III) necessary for the reaction, this quaternizing agent being introduced continuously into the reactor; or
- (a') the (meth)acrylic monomer (II) and 5 to 20% by weight of an aqueous solution of quaternary salt (I) with respect to the weight of the (meth)acrylic monomers (II) comprising from 50 to 85% by weight of quaternary salt are introduced into a closed reactor;
- (b) water and the remainder of the quaternizing agent (III) are then continuously added until the desired concentration of quaternary ammonium salt (I) in the water is obtained;
- (c) the temperature is maintained, during the stages (a) or (a') and (b), at a value of between 30 and 60°C; and
- (d) during the stages (a) or (a') and (b) and at the approach of the end of the reaction in particular, a stream of oxygen-containing gas is maintained in the reaction mixture, such that the ratio by volume of total gas at the outlet of a reactor to the oxygen introduced at the inlet of this same reactor is less than 100/1.

During the reaction, a ratio by volume of gas exiting from the reactor to the oxygen introduced at the inlet of this reactor is preferably set which is less than 50/1.

With the aim of avoiding supersaturation of the reaction mixture with quaternary salt (I), a molar ratio of introduction of water to the quaternizing agent (III) is set during the stage (b) which is between 2.2 and 3.7.

Preferably, during the stages (a) or (a') and (b), a temperature of between 45°C and 55°C is maintained.

Preferably again, during the stage (a) or (a'), approximately 10% by weight respectively of quaternizing agent (III) or of an aqueous solution of quaternary salt (I) comprising 50 to 85% by weight of quaternary salt are introduced.

The process according to the invention is preferably carried out at a pressure of between atmospheric pressure and 1.6 bar in absolute pressure.

When the quaternizing agent (III) is a volatile compound which is gaseous at the reaction temperature, the introduction of the quaternizing agent during the reaction is carried out so as to limit its losses into the gas vents. The losses are thus maintained at less than 10% (molar) of stoichiometry.

The outlet gas of the reactor is then conveyed to a treatment device which is targeted at ridding it of the traces of the quaternizing agent (III) which it contains, in particular in the case where the latter has a high vapour pressure or is volatile at the reaction temperature. The gas is preferably conveyed into a second reactor comprising (meth)acrylic monomer (II) in which the quaternizing agent (III) is trapped.

At the end of the reaction, the traces of quaternizing agent (III) dissolved in the reaction mixture are removed by flushing the latter with a high flow rate of oxygen-containing gas, for example air.

The quaternizing agents (III) which are highly suitable for the present invention are in particular halogenated hydrocarbons, such as methyl chloride, methyl bromide, methyl iodide, benzyl chloride, benzyl bromide and benzyl iodide, as well as dimethyl sulphate.

The examples which will follow, given by way of information, make it possible to better understand the invention. In these examples, the percentages shown are percentages by weight and the following abbreviations have been used:

- DAMEA: N,N-dimethylaminoethyl acrylate
- DAMEMA: N,N-dimethylaminoethyl methacrylate
- Adamquat MC 80: 80% aqueous acryloyloxyethyl-trimethylammonium chloride solution
- Madquat MC 75: 75% aqueous methacryloyloxyethyl-trimethylammonium chloride solution
- HQME: hydroquinone methyl ether
- Versenex 80: pentasodium salt of diethylenetriamine-pentaacetic acid (aqueous solution containing 40% by weight of active material).

Example 1: Preparation of Adamquat MC 80

429 g of DAMEA, stabilized with 800 ppm of HQME, are charged to a jacketed reactor with stirring.

Throughout the duration of the reaction, i.e. 6 hours in total, the temperature is maintained at 47°C, the pressure is maintained at atmospheric and a continuous air flow rate of 0.4 Sl/h is maintained at the inlet of the reactor.

20 g of methyl chloride are introduced at a flow rate of 39 g/h for 0.5 hour, i.e. 12% of the total amount of CH₃Cl necessary for the reaction, and then 143 g of water and 139 g of methyl chloride are introduced simultaneously at respective flow rates of 32 g/h and 39 g/h, i.e. a water/CH₃Cl molar ratio of 2.3.

Air is then injected into the manufactured product at the rate of 5 Sl/h for 0.5 hour while hot. 720 g of Adamquat MC 80 are recovered.

The product thus obtained is stabilized with 10 ppm of Versenex 80.

The result of a stability test on storage of the aqueous salt solution obtained appears in the following Table 1. To carry out this stability test, a sealed test tube, 80% filled with Adamquat MC 80 doped with Versenex 80, is immersed in a thermostatically-controlled oil bath (temperature: 92°C) and the effectiveness of the Versenex 80 is assessed by measuring the time before polymerization of the Adamquat MC 80.

Example 2

The preparation is carried out as in Example 1, the

Versenex 80 being replaced respectively by another sequestering agent as shown in Table 1.

The results are also reported in Table 1, at the same time as those of a control example without sequestering agent (Example 3) and of Comparative Examples 4 to 7 carried out with sequestering agents which do not belong to the invention.

TABLE 1

Example	Sequestering agent	Time before polymerization (h)
1	Versenex 80	280
2	Trisodium salt of N-(hydroxyethyl)-ethylenediaminetriacetic acid	300
3 (control)	Without sequestering agent	3.25
4 (comparative)	Poly(acrylic acid)	1
5 (comparative)	Poly(sodium acrylate)	2
6 (comparative)	Tetrasodium salt of ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid	72
7 (comparative)	Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid	154

Example 8: Preparation of Madquat MC 75

314 g of DAMEMA, stabilized with 80 ppm of HQME and 10 ppm of Versenex 80 as a 40% aqueous solution, are charged to a jacketed reactor with stirring.

Throughout the duration of the reaction, i.e. 7.5 hours in total, the temperature is maintained at

50°C, the pressure is maintained at atmospheric and a continuous air flow rate of 0.4 Sl/h is maintained at the inlet of the reactor.

11 g of methyl chloride are introduced at a flow rate of 22 g/h for 0.5 hour, i.e. 10% of the total amount of CH_3Cl necessary for the reaction, and then 138 g of water and the remaining methyl chloride, i.e. 100 g, are introduced simultaneously at respective flow rates of 21 g/h and 17 g/h, i.e. a water/ CH_3Cl molar ratio of 3.46.

At the approach of the end of the reaction, that is to say after approximately 6.5 hours, the methyl chloride flow rate is gradually reduced to 5 g/h.

Air is then injected into the manufactured product at the rate of 5 Sl/h for 0.5 hour while hot. 545 g of Madquat MC 75 are recovered.

For this Example 8 of the invention, the amounts of stabilizing agent and of sequestering agent used in combination with the Madquat MC 75 and the observations made with respect to the stability on storage of the aqueous solution obtained appear in the following Table 2. The results obtained with a Control Example 9, carried out in an identical way to Example 8 but without addition of sequestering agent, appear in parallel in the same table.

TABLE 2

Example	Stabilizing agent (amount in ppm)	Sequestering agent (amount in ppm)	Observation of a polymerization at room temperature
8	HQME (45)	Versenex 80 (10)	No polymerization is observed after storing for one year
9 (control)	HQME (45)	none	After storing for 48-72 hours

Example 10: Preparation of Madquat MC 75

The preparation is carried out as in Example 8 but using a different amount of stabilizing agent. The results are presented in Table 3, which is similar to Table 2, apart from the fact that the stability of the solution obtained at 70°C has been shown therein in the last column. The results obtained in the case of a Control Example 11, carried out without sequestering agent, also appear in this Table 3.

TABLE 3

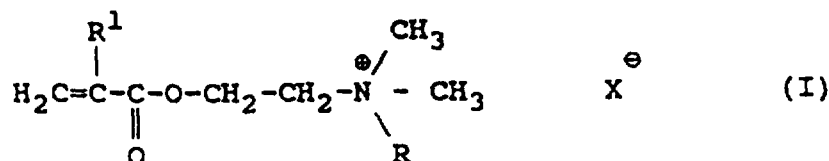
Example	Stabilizing agent (amount in ppm)	Sequestering agent (amount in ppm)	Stability at 70°C (hours) (*)
10	HQME (440)	Versenex 80 (10)	> 24
11 (control)	HQME (1130)	None	2

(*) Time before appearance of a positive polymers test



CLAIMS

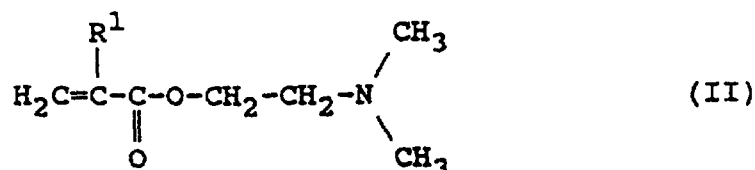
1. Stabilized aqueous solution of unsaturated quaternary ammonium salt(s), corresponding to the following:



in which:

- R^1 represents a hydrogen atom or a methyl radical;
- R represents a methyl radical or a benzyl radical;
- X is chosen from Cl , Br , I or CH_3-SO_4 ,

the quaternary salts (I) having been obtained by reaction, in the presence of water, of N,N-dimethylaminoethyl (meth)acrylate of formula (II):



in which R^1 is as defined above,

with a quaternizing agent of formula (III):



in which R and X are also as defined above;

the said aqueous solution containing at least one stabilizing agent in combination with the monomer (II) and additionally containing at least one sequestering agent for metals, characterized in that the sequestering agent for metals is chosen from diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid, the pentasodium salt of diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid, N-(hydroxyethyl)ethylenediaminetriacetic acid and the trisodium salt of N-(hydroxyethyl)ethylenediaminetriacetic acid.

2. Aqueous solution according to Claim 1, characterized in that the content of sequestering agent(s) is from



1 to 100 ppm with respect to the aqueous solution of quaternary salt (I).

3. Aqueous solution according to one of Claims 1 and 2, characterized in that the stabilizing agents are chosen from 3,5-di-tert-butyl-4-hydroxytoluene, hydroquinone methyl ether, hydroquinone, catechol, tert-butylcatechol and the mixtures of these stabilizing agents.

4. Aqueous solution according to one of Claims 1 to 3, characterized in that the content of stabilizing agent(s) is from 20 to 1200 ppm with respect to the aqueous solution of quaternary salt (I).

5. Aqueous solution according to one of Claims 1 to 4, characterized in that its concentration of quaternary salt (I) is from 50 to 85% by weight.

6. Process for the manufacture of a stabilized aqueous solution of unsaturated quaternary ammonium salt, corresponding to the formula (I) as defined in Claim 1, from at least one (meth)acrylic monomer and from at least one quaternizing agent of the formulae (II) and (III) respectively, also as defined in Claim 1, in the presence of at least one stabilizing agent in combination with the monomer (II) introduced at the beginning of the reaction, characterized in that at least one sequestering agent for metals is added to the monomer (II) at the beginning of the reaction and/or to the aqueous solution obtained, the sequestering agent for metals being chosen from diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid, the pentasodium salt of diethylenetriaminepentaacetic acid, N-(hydroxyethyl)-ethylenediaminetriacetic acid and the trisodium salt of N-(hydroxyethyl)ethylenediaminetriacetic acid.

7. Process according to Claim 6, characterized in that the sequestering agent or agents are added in the form of an aqueous solution.

8. Process according to one of Claims 6 and 7, characterized in that:

(a) the (meth)acrylic monomer (II) is reacted, in a closed reactor, with 5 to 20% by weight of the amount of quaternizing agent (III) necessary for the



reaction, this quaternizing agent being introduced continuously into the reactor; or

- (a') the (meth)acrylic monomer (II) and 5 to 20% by weight of an aqueous solution of quaternary salt (I) with respect to the weight of the (meth)acrylic monomers (II) comprising from 50 to 85% by weight of quaternary salt are introduced into a closed reactor;
 - (b) water and the remainder of the quaternizing agent (III) are then continuously added until the desired concentration of quaternary ammonium salt (I) in the water is obtained;
 - (c) the temperature is maintained, during the stages (a) or (a') and (b), at a value of between 30 and 60°C; and
 - (d) during the stages (a) or (a') and (b) and at the approach of the end of the reaction in particular, a stream of oxygen-containing gas is maintained in the reaction mixture, such that the ratio by volume of total gas at the outlet of a reactor to the oxygen introduced at the inlet of this same reactor is less than 100/1.
9. Process according to Claim 8, characterized in that the reaction is carried out at an absolute pressure of between atmospheric pressure and 1.6 bar.
10. Process according to one of Claims 8 and 9, characterized in that the gas exiting from the reactor is conveyed to a treatment device which is targeted at ridding it of the traces of quaternizing agent R-X, which device is composed of a second quaternization reactor comprising (meth)acrylic monomer.