

Abstract

Continuous process for preparing alpha-hydroxycarboxylic esters, in which the reactants reacted are alpha-hydroxycarboxamide with an alcohol in the presence of a catalyst to obtain a product mixture which comprises alpha-hydroxycarboxylic ester, ammonia, unconverted alpha-hydroxycarboxamide and alcohol, and catalyst; wherein

reactant streams comprising, as reactants, an alpha-hydroxycarboxamide, an alcohol and a catalyst are fed into a pressure reactor;

the reactant streams are reacted with one another in the pressure reactor at a pressure in the range of 1 bar to 100 bar; and

the product mixture is depleted in alcohol and ammonia by distilling off ammonia at a pressure which is constantly kept greater than 1 bar without the aid of additional stripping media.

The continuous process can be employed particularly advantageously on the industrial scale.