Recent progress in the catalytic transformation of carbon dioxide into biosourced organic carbonates

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Cyclic organic carbonates are among the most widely studied targets in the nonreductive conversion of carbon dioxide using oxiranes as the common reaction partners. Apart from using fossil fuel based precursors, recent developments have shown that biomass related feedstock can also serve as coupling partner for CO2 allowing the preparation of more functional and complex types of carbonate architectures. This tutorial review places this latter development in the current context of new and more sustainable material designs, and highlights the main types of biomass that have been examined using primarily homogeneous catalysis approaches.

1. Introduction

Cyclic organic carbonates, more typically denoted as cyclic carbonates (CCs), have become a major target in the area of catalytic valorization of (waste) carbon dioxide. The most common way to prepare such carbonates is through the coupling of epoxides and CO2, a reaction that has reached a high level of sophistication thanks to the development of improved catalysts and new concepts. A more recent trend shows a shift towards the use of biosourced feedstock in the synthesis of organic carbonates, i.e., so-called bio-carbonates. These biosourced carbonates are believed to give new impetus for the development of a variety of new applications such as their use as drop-in monomers for sustainable polymers, the creation of isocyanate-free polyurethanes (NIPUs), new types of plasticizers, green and biodegradable solvents and surfactants, and functionalized building blocks for organic synthesis.

With this context in mind, we decided to capture the most recent and important advances in this area in this review. The focal point will be on selected biosourced feedstock that has been utilized to prepare cyclic carbonate structures including glycerol, fatty acids, terpenes and carbohydrates (Fig. 1).

Here, biosourced feedstock is defined as those starting materials produced by the growth of microorganisms, plants or animals or derived thereof. Each of these specific categories of biocarbonates is shortly introduced followed by a detailed description of the state-of-the-art. Mechanistic details on the formation of CCs from CO2 and epoxides are provided where necessary, since this topic has been recently and extensively reviewed. This article thus summarizes the most frequently used feedstock to build biobased organic carbonates serving as an inspiring stepping stone towards a greener development of CO2-derived heterocyclic building blocks.

2. Glycerol carbonate

The utilization of glycerol to produce valuable chemicals is an inspiring goal for chemists. Glycerol is the main byproduct of the biodiesel production process and the amount of this chemical has soared over the last years. The demand for glycerol and the decrease in its price allowed the development of many syntheses towards biobased organic carbonates.

![Fig. 1. Biobased feedstock used to prepare bio-carbonates. Apart from glycerol, exemplary cases of the other categories are shown.](image-url)
derived from the production of biodiesel (i.e., through the transesterification of triglycerides, present in vegetable oils, with alcohols such as methanol), and is produced at a higher rate than it is consumed. Therefore, it is important to find ways that transform low-value glycerol into high-value products. Regarding the chemical transformations of glycerol, one of the most attractive conversion processes is its conversion into glycerol carbonate (GC). This cyclic organic carbonate finds interesting use in cosmetics and lubricants, coating materials and as a polar solvent. In addition, GC can also be used as building block in organic synthesis through ring-opening, decarboxylation, esterification or polymerization reactions.

The most common way to produce GC is by transesterification of glycerol with dimethyl carbonate (DMC) or urea with the aid of a catalyst. The most desirable sustainable and straightforward route to produce GC would be from glycerol and carbon dioxide combining two waste molecules. However, the direct coupling of CO2 and glycerol is an equilibrium-limited reaction making it difficult to achieve high conversions and yields unless sacrificial dehydrating agent are used (vide infra). Despite significant advances that have been achieved in the direct glycerol-to-GC conversion, an alternative route towards GC utilizes glycicidol and CO2. Glycidol has much higher reactivity towards CO2 and, moreover, it can also be produced from biomass. The subsequent sections discuss the pros and cons of both formation routes.

2.1. Glycerol carbonate from glycerol and CO2

The first attempt towards the synthesis of GC from glycerol and CO2 was reported by Mouloungui in 1998. Unfortunately, under supercritical CO2 conditions, the reaction did not occur. It was not until 2006 when Dibenedetto successfully reported that Sn-based catalysts of the formula \((n\text{-Bu})_2\text{Sn(OMe)2}\) were able to catalyze the formation of GC at 5 MPa of CO2 pressure and 180 °C to obtain a maximum of 5.7% isolated yield of GC under solvent-free conditions using molecular sieves to remove water from the reaction mixture. The Sn-based catalyst activates glycerol by forming an active Sn-glycerate intermediate that allows for CO2 insertion. This process was greatly improved by Munshi in 2009 using MeOH as medium, which increased the yield of GC to 35% (Scheme 1).

In most reported approaches, acetonitrile is selected as an inexpensive dehydrating agent, which upon reaction with the in situ generated water forms acetamide. This in turn may further react with a second molecule of water to generate acetic acid. The latter can lower the selectivity towards GC through mono- and di-acetylation of glycerol.

Adiponitrile has been used as a dehydrating agent by McGregor, who found that under the applied reaction conditions, adiponitrile degraded to NH3 that upon reaction with glycerol produces 4-(hydroxymethyl)oxazolidin-2-one (4-HMO) as a mixture of two regioisomers. Apart from acetonitrile and adiponitrile, He and co-workers reported in 2016 the use of 2-cyanopyridine as a superior dehydrating reagent. In the presence of a CeO2 based catalyst, the yield of GC is boosted up to...
79% when using 3 equiv. of 2-cyanopyridine at 4 MPa of CO\textsubscript{2} and 150 °C in DMF.\textsuperscript{63} Moreover, the CeO\textsubscript{2} catalyst could be recycled 5 times through a calcination process at 400 °C. Recently, Choi et al. demonstrated the advantage of using CaC\textsubscript{2} as a dehydrating agent for the synthesis of GC, which in combination of Zn(OTf)\textsubscript{2}/phen (1,10-phenanthroline) in NMP (N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone) could achieve 88% isolated yield at 50 bar of CO\textsubscript{2} pressure at 180 °C for 24 h.\textsuperscript{55}

One year later, Zhao et al. demonstrated that the formation of GC (via 2-cyanopyridine) also occurs in the absence of a metal catalyst achieving a 19% yield at 15 MPa of CO\textsubscript{2} and 180 °C (Scheme 3).\textsuperscript{64} The authors confirmed by FTIR that 2-cyanopyridine activates CO\textsubscript{2} to form a five-membered ring which then reacts with glycerol to produce GC. Interestingly, switching to 3-cyanopyridine, 4-cyanopyridine or acetonitrile did not provide such potential. Theoretical calculations pointed indeed to the formation of a five-membered heterocycle as the “activated” form of CO\textsubscript{2}, which is subsequently involved in a transesterification reaction of glycerol.

### 2.2. Glycerol carbonate using coupling agents

Glycerol carbonate can also be successfully prepared by reaction of glycerol and carbon dioxide in the presence of a coupling agent, which is used to produce a cyclic carbonate intermediate \textit{in situ} allowing for transesterification of glycerol to form glycerol carbonate and a by-product (Scheme 4). The involvement of a third reactant allows to overcome the intrinsic thermodynamic limitation for the direct reaction between glycerol and CO\textsubscript{2}, whereas it also produces a new byproduct derived from this additional component.

In this context, propylene oxide (PO) was the first additive to be reported by Han and co-workers in 2012 (entry 1, Table 1).\textsuperscript{65} Although PO constitutes an inexpensive precursor, the process would not be entirely biobased since PO is primarily produced from fossil fuel feedstock. The reaction uses KI as a catalyst and is carried out at 2 MPa of CO\textsubscript{2} pressure and 115 °C affording GC in 75% yield. The catalyst promotes the formation of propylene carbonate (PC), which then engages in a transesterification of glycerol producing both GC and propylene glycol. In 2018, Xiao \textit{et al.} improved the process by introducing a bromide-based heterogeneous catalyst obtained through the polymerization of divinyl benzene and 1-vinyl-3-butylimidazolium bromide (entry 2, Table 1).\textsuperscript{66} Importantly, not only the yield of GC could be improved to 81%, but also the catalyst could be recycled up to 5 times while maintaining the same level of activity.

Apart from the use of PO, dimethylethynyl carbinal (\textit{i.e.,} a propargylic alcohol) has also been applied as a reagent to generate GC in high yield, along with 3-hydroxy-3-methyl-2-butanone as the byproduct. The reaction proceeds through the intermediary of a cyclic alkanyl carbonate, which allows for the transesterification of glycerol. Since 3-hydroxy-3-methyl-2-butanone contains a tertiary alcohol group, it is less nucleophilic than propylene glycol, and thus does not readily react with the formed GC to return the carbonate intermediate. Initially, the group of He reported in 2017 the use of a Ag\textsubscript{2}CO\textsubscript{3}/Xanthos as a catalyst promoting this transformation in MeCN at 80 °C under 1 MPa of CO\textsubscript{2} pressure to give GC in 82% yield (entry 3, Table 1).\textsuperscript{67} A solvent-free version was later reported by Song and Zhang using a silver sulfadiazine/Et\textsubscript{4}NBr catalytic system, although a lower yield for GC was obtained (entry 4, Table 1).\textsuperscript{68}

On the other hand, the groups of Lu,\textsuperscript{69} and Liu,\textsuperscript{70} independently reported an organocatalytic approach to prepare GC. In the case of Lu, a one-pot approach was applied by formation of the intermediate carbonate using a catalytic amount of an amidine-CO\textsubscript{2} adduct, followed by the transesterification with glycerol catalyzed by MTBD (entry 5, Table 1; MTBD = methyl-1,5,7-triazabicyclo[4.4.0]dec-5-ene). In this way, 85% yield of GC was obtained under very mild reaction conditions. The system of Liu and co-workers was based on DBU (8-diazabicyclo[5.4.0]undec-7-ene) and was also found to promote both steps to deliver GC in 97% yield albeit under harsher reaction conditions (entry 6, Table 1).
The last example of this strategy illustrates that alkyl halides are also effective reactants. Compared to the other methods, the use of halogenated reagents implies the generation of halogen-containing waste, which is not ideal from a sustainable point of view. Initially, Jang reported in 2014 one example using BuBr as the additional component, together with a guanidine-based catalyst (entry 8, Table 1).\textsuperscript{72} By adjusting the reaction conditions, it was possible to selectively form GC in 74\% yield at 50 °C under 0.1 MPa of CO\textsubscript{2} pressure and using NMP (N-methyl pyrrolidone) as solvent.

### 2.3. Glycerol carbonate from glycidol
Apart from the conversion of glycidol to glycerol carbonate, an alternative and popular route starts from its epoxy alcohol derivative, \textit{viz.} glycidol (\textit{Gly}). This precursor can be derived from glycerol present in industrial waste produced in the synthesis of epichlorohydrin, thus providing an opportunity for recycling it into valuable glycerol carbonate in two steps.\textsuperscript{73} This route based on \textit{Gly} features excellent atom-economy and, additionally, since many highly efficient catalytic systems have been developed over the years for the coupling of oxiranes and CO\textsubscript{2}, glycidol has often been included in the substrate scope.

\textit{Gly} has distinct reactivity compared to other common epoxides such as PO or styrene oxide. The non-innocent hydroxyl group can actively participate in the reaction in two distinct ways. Capaccione and co-workers found that ring-opening of glycidol by an external nucleophile was faster than with other epoxides (Table 2).\textsuperscript{74} By means of NMR and DFT studies, they concluded that glycidol dimers were present under the catalytic reaction conditions. Intermolecular hydrogen bonds between the \textit{Gly} molecules are important to explain the activation of the oxirane ring by \textit{Gly} towards nucleophilic ring-opening by bromide (Fig. 3). Hence, using simple TBAB (tributylammonium bromide, 5 mol\%) at 60 °C and 1 MPa of CO\textsubscript{2} pressure it was possible to convert \textit{Gly} in >99\% conversion and selectivity producing GC [entry 1, Table 2]. Lowering the temperature to 40 °C or reducing the loading of TBAB to 1 mol\% while heating at 80 °C for 1 h reduced the conversion to 87\% and 85\%, respectively (entries 2 and 3, Table 2). Lowering the pressure to 0.1 MPa had a negative impact on the \textit{Gly} conversion, which reached 52\% after stirring for 24 h at 40 °C. The authors also examined the conversion of PO at the optimized reaction conditions but noted only 4\% of conversion. This \textit{Gly}/TBAB derived binary catalyst was then successfully applied to other epoxide/CO\textsubscript{2} combinations, and significantly better substrate conversion levels were achieved compared to the reactions performed without \textit{Gly}.

The group of Kleij discovered that the hydroxyl group of \textit{Gly} can be involved in the activation of CO\textsubscript{2} by forming a transient hemi-carbonate species (Scheme 5) that acts as an intramolecular nucleophile able to ring-open the oxirane ring under mild conditions: as such, no external nucleophilic additive is required facilitating thus a halide-free route.\textsuperscript{17} The use of the aminotriphenolate aluminum catalyst 1\textsuperscript{RnBu} (1 mol\%) at
75 °C and 1 MPa of CO₂ pressure in methylethyl ketone (MEK) as solvent enabled to obtain >99% Gly conversion in 2 h and provided GC in 93% isolated yield. The mechanism of the reaction was studied in detail by ATR-IR, kinetic studies, DFT analysis and X-ray crystallography, which provided proof that a hemi-carbonate intermediate forms under the reaction conditions aiding the intramolecular ring-opening of the oxirane ring of Gly and being facilitated by a hydrogen bond network between the catalyst, Gly and co-catalytic H₂O.

While more than 140 publications have been reported that discuss the conversion of Gly into GC, not all the catalyst systems proved to be superior to simple TBAB. However, some catalyst systems provide other advantages, such as recyclability, reduced catalyst loading and/or milder reaction conditions among others. For example, the use of heterogeneous catalysts (Scheme 6) allows for easy catalyst recovery after some post-synthetic treatment such as filtration or product extraction. Most of these heterogeneous systems for GC synthesis from Gly are derived from ionic liquids (ILs), which accelerate the reaction in two ways. First, a nucleophilic anion helps to ring-open the oxirane ring and, second, an appropriate IL can establish hydrogen bonds between the oxirane ring and the acidic C₂ proton (Scheme 6) of the imidazolium ring. The group of Jiang reported an efficient supported ionic liquid catalyst which was confined inside a metal–organic framework (MOF), and this multi-component system displayed synergistic effects between the CO₂ capturing capability of the MOF, the Lewis acidic sites of the MOF and the basic sites of the poly-IL. Islam et al. reported three examples of active heterogeneous catalysts that are not based on ILs. An iron-phosphonate nanomaterial, and a polystyrene supported zinc catalyst, showed good activity as Lewis acidic materials with TBAB used as a co-catalyst. Conversely, the catalyst based on ZnSnO₃ did not require any additive.

Compared to heterogeneous catalysts, homogeneous catalysts derived from earth-abundant metals show superior activity and, thus, reduced catalyst loadings are typically utilized. Moreover, bifunctional catalysts, which have the halide anion incorporated within the catalyst structure, have demon-
strated good activity and selectivity towards the formation of GC. For instance, aluminum scorpionate complexes (Scheme 7) reported by Lara-Sánchez and co-workers can achieve an excellent GC yield using 0.25–0.5 mol% of catalyst loading at 70–85 °C.87–89 Similar results were obtained by the group of He, who reported a bifunctional zinc salen-like complex that shows appreciable activity at 0.3 mol% catalyst loading and 0.1 MPa of CO₂ pressure, though heating to 100 °C was necessary.90 Another type of bifunctional catalyst was reported by North et al. showing that a bimetallic aluminum salen complex displays high activity in the synthesis of GC from Gly, achieving full conversion in 3 h at only 27 °C and 0.1 MPa.91

Other homogeneous metal catalysts combined with a cocatalytic amount of halide also exhibit high activity such as the aluminum,92 and lanthanum,93 based scorpionate catalysts reported by Otero, Lara-Sánchez et al. In particular the La-based catalyst shows good activity at remarkably low catalyst loading (0.05 mol%) achieving 98% yield of GC at 70 °C and 1 MPa CO₂ pressure in 4 h.

Lastly, some organocatalysts have also been demonstrated as competitive systems for metal-based catalysts. Most of these organocatalysts effectively activate the oxirane ring by establishing hydrogen bonds that facilitate the ring-opening by a halide nucleophile. For instance, Cokoja,94 and Lara-Sánchez,95 reported recyclable organocatalysts that contain imidazolium rings featuring halide counter anions (Scheme 8). Similarly, the group of Kim published a scorpionate type organocatalyst comprising of an aminodiphenol scaffold which acts as a hydrogen-bond activator, and additionally contains a quaternary ammonium salt in its structure.96

D’Elia reported that ascorbic acid is an efficient hydrogen bond donor which, in combination with a co-catalytic amount of TBAI, could achieve high yield of GC at room temperature and 0.1 MPa of CO₂.97 On the other hand, the group of Wu reported a bifunctional organoboron organocatalyst able to achieve full conversion and excellent yield of GC at remarkably low (0.02 mol%) catalyst loading though under somewhat harsher reaction conditions (120 °C, 20 MPa CO₂).98 In the latter case, mechanistic studies indicated that the boron acts as a Lewis acid and activates the oxirane ring near a closely positioned ammonium iodide unit (Scheme 8). Lastly, Kleij et al. showed that DBU can promote the formation of GC from Gly and other epoxy alcohols through the formation of a hemiacetal intermediate under mild reaction conditions (45 °C, 1 MPa CO₂).99

3. Terpene based carbonates

As stated before, the synthesis of CCs from CO₂ has become a mature research field. In most contributions, there has been a primary focus on the preparation of relatively simple five- and six-membered CCs with a low degree of substitution/functionality. To explore new applications of CCs, the preparation of structurally more complex products is currently an emerging topic in the area of CO₂ utilization. In this regard, terpenes represent attracting starting materials for the preparation of new, more complex and partially biobased CCs.

The isolation of 4-muurolen-7,15-diol-7,15-carbonate in 1994 demonstrated that there are naturally occurring terpenoid carbonates (Fig. 2).100 Since then, several other examples of terpene carbonates have been reported,101,102 ranging from compounds having five- to eight-membered CC moieties...
within their structure with some of them showing biological activity such as Genkwanin I,\textsuperscript{103} Soyasapogenol G,\textsuperscript{104} and Chuktabrin F (Fig. 2).\textsuperscript{105} These findings triggered the effort of several research groups to use terpene scaffolds for the preparation of new types of CCs. The high-structural modularity of terpenes and the almost ubiquitous presence of double bonds that can be easily oxidized and further functionalized, offer an ideal starting point for the preparation of CCs using CO\textsubscript{2}.\textsuperscript{106,107}

In addition to these attractive structural features, it must be noted that terpenes can be isolated from natural sources, rendering these molecules an attracting alternative to fossil fuel-based raw materials. In particular, the cyclic terpene limonene (both enantiomers) can be conveniently isolated from natural sources such as citrus fruit and fir cone oil (Scheme 9).\textsuperscript{108,109} It is likely for this reason that limonene has been the most studied terpene in the coupling reaction with CO\textsubscript{2}, and especially in the synthesis of polycarbonates.\textsuperscript{110–116}

The extraction of (R)-limonene from orange peel has resulted as economically feasible, and thus the use of this enantiomer is predominant in literature. The structure of limonene shows the presence of two different double bonds, that can be selectively epoxidized to afford either 1,2-limonene oxide (1,2-LO), 8,9-limonene oxide (8,9-LO) and limonene dioxde (LDO, being a mixtures of cis/trans isomers), and their coupling with CO\textsubscript{2} leads to the formation of the corresponding 1,2-limonene carbonate (1,2-LC), 8,9-limonene carbonate (8,9-LC) and limonene dicarbonate (LDC) (Scheme 9).

Due to the higher reactivity of the endocyclic double bond and hence the easier synthetic access to 1,2-LC, this particular limonene oxide has been investigated preferentially. A summary of metal-based catalytic systems reported to promote the coupling of 1,2-LO with CO\textsubscript{2} is given in Fig. 4.\textsuperscript{92,93,117–121} With respect to other epoxides commonly used for the preparation of CCs, sterically demanding 1,2-LO shows substantially lower reactivity during its coupling with CO\textsubscript{2}. This results in the typical use of relatively high temperatures (75–100 °C) and pressures (10–30 bar) and relatively long reaction times (16–66 hours); therefore, achieving full substrate conversion remains a challenge.

Selective formation of trans-1,2-LC has been observed in several cases such as with catalysts based on 1\textsuperscript{Bu}, 2, 6 and 8 (Fig. 4). This suggests that the cis and trans isomers of 1,2-LO exhibit different reactivity as previously described in the preparation of poly(limonene carbonate).\textsuperscript{114,115} Indeed, reactions conducted with the binary system 1\textsuperscript{Bu}/PPNCl [bis(triphenylphosphine)iminium chloride] using either the pure trans-1,2-LO or cis-1,2-LO resulted in higher conversion (73%) and stereoselectivity (cis/trans > 1 : 99), and only very low conversion (4%), respectively.\textsuperscript{116} The formation of trans-1,2-LC was confirmed by X-ray analysis, and more recently the same reactivity difference was observed with the binary catalyst 8/PPNCl.\textsuperscript{93}

In 2016, Fiorani et al. extended the use of the binary systems 1\textsuperscript{Bu}/PPNCl to the synthesis of other CCs from CO\textsubscript{2} and both bicyclic and acyclic terpene epoxides (Scheme 10).\textsuperscript{116} Under the optimized conditions, the conversion of these bicyclic substrates typically proceeds with high chemoselectivity and moderate isolated yields between 45–52% providing thus access to carvone (c1), limonene dioxde (c3) and menthene (c4) based CCs. Attempts to produce limonene dicarbonate c2...
were less successful because of the competitive formation of a polyether (PE) product. The crystal structures of cis-c1, trans-c2 and c3 were elucidated by X-ray analysis for the first time, and confirmed the assigned stereochemistry on the basis of NMR spectroscopic studies.

The conversion of acyclic substrates proceeded with lower chemoselectivities, and generally higher pressure of CO2 (4.0 MPa) was necessary to obtain appreciable yields. In the conversion of these acyclic terpene oxide substrates apart from the formation of a PE, the formation of allylic alcohol (AA) and ketone (K) side-products was also detected (Scheme 10). The formation of AA and K by-products was attributed to the phenolate-assisted,122,123 and the Lewis-acid induced Meinwald-type rearrangements of the starting epoxide,124,125 respectively.

The preparation of model compound c10 resulted into a similar product distribution, thus ruling out that by-product formation depends on the nature of the substrate. Despite the issue with the overall chemoselectivity, the synthesis of terpene CCs derived from citronellyl acetate (c5), geranyl acetate (c6), linalyl acetate (c7) and neryl acetate (c8) was possible in moderately high yields. The conversion of myrcene gave a complex reaction mixture, resulting in low yield of CC c9 due to additional side-reactions likely involving the conjugated double-bond.

Following this study, Werner et al. reported the preparation of carbonate c2 (78%) and c4 (81%) in high yields in the presence of 10 mol% of the catalyst 4/PPH3 (Fig. 4) and at 50 bar of CO2 and 75 °C.118 Under the same reaction conditions, the preparation of c5 (19%) and c6 (23%) was less efficient and provided only low yields. In 2019, Lara-Sánchez et al. reported the preparation and characterization of several new terpene-based CCs obtained through the use of binary catalyst 5/TBAC (Fig. 4).119 Carvone-based carbonates c11–14 (Scheme 11) were obtained in good to high yields.

Diastereo-enriched samples of c11 and c13 were obtained after crystallization, and their atom connectivities were revealed by X-ray analysis. Carbonates c15 and c16 were only

Fig. 4 Metal-based catalytic systems reported for the preparation of 1,2-LC, comparative reaction conditions and product stereochemistry. N.d. stands for not determined.
isolated in low yield because of the low stability of the bicyclic carbonates derived from the endo epoxide. These latter products undergo a decarboxylative decomposition toward the formation of the corresponding syn diols. The challenging carbonates $c_{17}$ and $c_{18}$, derived from terpinolene and ionone were obtained in moderate yields, whereas the preparation of terpinene-4-ol and caryophellene carbonates $c_{19}$ and $c_{20}$ were found to proceed in a diastereo-selective fashion as presented in the bottom part of Scheme 11.

In 2016, Kleij et al. described a new protocol for the synthesis of highly substituted CCs using epoxy alcohols as substrates via a “substrate-directed” mechanism promoted by complex $1tBu$ (Fig. 4). In this context, the authors reported the diastereoselective synthesis of 1,2-geraniol carbonate from 2,3-epoxy geraniol and CO$_2$ (Scheme 12). Notably, this regio-divergent method achieved the conversion of a sterically demanding terpene-based substrate under mild conditions.

Metal-based catalysts may offer several advantages such as the use of milder reaction conditions, shorter reaction times and higher stereocontrol. At the same time, drawbacks such as high(er) cost, multistep synthesis and air/moisture sensitivity create incentives to select more simple catalysts of commercial interest and a practical point of view. In 2018, Morikawa et al. described the reaction of 1,2-LO with CO$_2$ in the presence of TBAC, TBAB or TBAI as catalyst. In the presence of 10 mol% of halide salt, the reaction at 100 °C and 30 bar proceeds more efficiently with TBAC. Due to the steric impediment of LO, the smaller radius chloride anion gives the best trade-off in terms of nucleophilicity, leaving group ability and size features. Under these conditions, the reactions using pure trans-1,2-LO and cis-1,2-LO provided higher (76%) and lower (19%) conversions, respectively, compared with the commercial cis/trans mixture (51%). This finding is in line with the different reactivity reported for both LO stereoisomers in the case of metal-based catalysts. Interestingly, pure cis-1,2-LO was isolated for the first time and characterized by NMR spectroscopy. In addition, the relative configuration of the chiral centers in cis-1,2-LO was confirmed by X-ray analysis of the corresponding diol obtained by reduction with LiAlH$_4$ (Scheme 13).

For comparative reasons only, the same research group, for the first time the synthesis of two 1,2-LO diastereoisomers in which the oxygen atoms of the carbonate ring are in a trans configuration by treatment of 1,2-diols stereoisomers with triphosgene rather than using a more preferred CO$_2$/epoxide coupling strategy (Scheme 14).
Recently, Rehman et al. reported a detailed kinetic study of the 1,2-LO/CO₂ coupling reaction in the presence of TBAC.¹²⁹ This investigation confirmed the higher reactivity of the trans isomer in the formation of 1,2-LC. It was found that the reaction kinetics show a first-order dependence with respect to all the reaction components (1,2-LO, CO₂ and TBAC). In addition, the thermodynamic parameters of this conversion were determined using the Eyring equation, providing activation enthalpy and entropy values of 60.6 kJ mol⁻¹ and −103.6 J (mol K)⁻¹, respectively.

In the last decade, the use of CCs have emerged as an attracting, more sustainable alternative for the production of the so-called non-isocyanate based polyurethanes (NIPUs), and the preparation of CCs from renewable feedstock is of importance to develop more sustainable materials.²²,¹³⁰,¹³¹ In this respect, the research group of Mülhaupt investigated the use of limonene dicarbonate (LDC) for the synthesis of new types of NIPUs.¹³²,¹³³ They investigated the synthesis of LDC from LDO and CO₂ catalyzed by TBAB on a kilogram scale. First, the reaction parameters (CO₂ pressure, temperature and catalyst loading) were optimized, after which full LDO conversion could be achieved using 3 mol% of TBAB in less than 50 h at 140 °C and 30 bar of CO₂. A brownish oil was obtained this way, and it was initially directly used (without purification) for the preparation of NIPUs preparation.¹³² Afterwards, a more detailed analysis of the reaction products based on NMR and mass spectrometry was carried out revealing the formation of several by-products (B₁–₄, Scheme 15).¹³³ The authors proposed that the formation of these products occurs via bromide elimination after initial bromide-assisted epoxide ring-opening being essentially the first step of the catalytic cycle leading to LDC. Therefore, in order to obtain a pure compound, LDC was crystallized obtaining a mixture of cis and trans isomers in a 2 : 3 ratio. Further crystallization led to the isolation of pure trans-LDC as confirmed by X-ray analysis.

The use of limonene-based CCs in the preparations of NIPUs was also investigated by Hintermair et al.¹³⁴ The authors reported the preparation of 8,9-LC by reaction of 8,9-LO and CO₂ mediated by TBAB. The key step for the synthesis of the desired carbonate was the selective epoxidation of (R)-limonene at the less hindered terminal alkene. This reaction was performed using perchloric acid as the oxidant in the presence of a bulky polyoxometalate (POM) catalyst previously reported by Mizuno and coworkers (Scheme 16).¹³⁵ Because of a lower degree of steric hindrance, the formation of 8,9-LC occurs comparatively much faster than the formation of 1,2-LC under the same reaction conditions reaching 80% conversion in 2.5 hours. Remarkably, the two different 8,9-LC diastereoisomers generated during the epoxidation reaction show similar reactivity in their coupling reaction with CO₂, which is in contrast to the behaviour typically observed for cis and trans 1,2-LO.

### 4. Carbohydrate derived carbonates

Sugars are another interesting and ubiquitous source for CCs. Different from terpenes or fatty acids, these compounds bear multiple alcoholic functionalities, and therefore the preparation of cyclic carbonates on sugars is generally performed using phosgene-derived reagents.¹³⁶–¹³⁹ Well-defined, non-toxic and biodegradable poly-glycolcarbonates with a narrow distribution of molecular weights can be prepared from sugar-based monomers bearing a six-membered carbonate,¹³⁶,¹³⁷,¹⁴⁰–¹⁴² or a trans-positioned five-membered carbonate,¹³⁸,¹⁴³ showing the huge potential of functional polymers from such substrates. In addition, the sugar molecules can first be converted into simpler compounds, which can then be converted into polymerizable monomers.¹⁴⁴–¹⁴⁷

Recently, a protocol to replace phosgene-derivatives was developed (Scheme 17).¹⁴⁸ In this process, CO₂ and an organic base (DBU) form an ionic hemi-carbonate intermediate, after which tosyl-chloride is added to yield a cyclic carbonate.


1H NMR spectroscopy was used to monitor the formation of the ionic intermediate of 1,3-butanediol, showing that under optimized conditions, 49% of the in situ product is carbonated on the primary alcohol, 24% on the secondary alcohol, and 5% is bis-carbonated. Subsequent tosylation rapidly led to cyclic carbonate formation, without the observation of any intermediates. To discriminate between two mechanistic possibilities where either the hemi-carbonate or the remaining free alcohol is tosylated, enantiopure (R)-1,3-butanediol or (R,R)-2,4-pentanediol were employed. Interestingly, the stereochemistry was preserved during the reaction, indicating that the hemi-carbonate group is likely tosylated instead of the remaining free alcohol (Scheme 17a, top pathway). The proposed mechanism was further supported by DFT calculations. The reaction proved to be capable of providing the 6-membered cyclic carbonate derivative of D-xylose (Scheme 17b), albeit in low yield, showing the potential of the overall transformation.

Later on, the process was improved significantly as to allow the carbonation to occur in one step, and higher yields of the cyclic carbonate versus byproducts such as oligomeric species or tosylation of the alcohols were reported. The use of a weaker base such as Et3N or 2,2,6,6-tetramethylpiperidine (TMP) proved to be essential for the overall chemoselectivity. Even though the initial formation of the hemi-carbonate is strongly disfavored in the presence of weaker bases (2% or 4% for TMP or Et3N, respectively vs. 85% for DBU), the selective tosylation of the hemi-carbonate over the alcohol and the ring-closure step are strongly favored energetically as calculated by DFT. A comparison between the mechanism using Et3N vs. DBU shows that the barriers for formation of the tosylated carbonate are 18.4 and 23.8 kcal mol−1, and the ring-closure step is subject to a barrier of 15.4 and 18.9 kcal mol−1, respectively. Using this new strategy, the authors synthesized a series of 5- to 8-membered cyclic carbonates, amongst which four sugar-based CCs (Scheme 17c) in good yields comparable to or exceeding the yields obtained using phosgene-reagent based syntheses.

The possibility to convert diols to carbonates by this method rapidly led to further development of CO2- and sugar-based CCs. A first report describes the synthesis and ring-opening polymerization (ROP) of a cyclic carbonate-functionalized mannose derivative. 1-O-Methyl-α-D-mannose was protected at position 2 and 3 by an isopropylidene acetal. Subsequently, a six-membered cyclic carbonate was formed by subjecting the compound to DBU and CO2 followed by tosylation with TsCl and Et3N (Scheme 18). The stereochernistry was retained, which suggests that the mechanism discussed above is operative. The yield of the product (57%) was higher than in similar syntheses for α-glucose (36%) and α-xylose (41%) derived CCs mediated by phosgene-reagents. An X-ray molecular structure was obtained, confirming the trans-positioning of the carbonate on the mannose ring. These types of bicyclic carbonates are easily polymerized through ROP. Indeed, the authors showed that a controlled polymerization of the obtained cyclic carbonate is feasible under organocatalytic conditions using TBD (1,5,7-triazabicyclo[4.4.0]dec-5-ene) and 4-methylbenzyl alcohol as initiator.

In addition to pyranose-sugars, there has been interest in the use of furanoses due to their stiffness in the backbone for potential polymers based on it. An interesting candidate is 2-deoxy-D-ribose. Naturally, this sugar exists in its pyranose form, which exposes a cis-diol, which can be converted into a CC through phosgene-based pathways. cis-5-Membered CCs, however, do not readily undergo ROP. Therefore, this sugar was treated with MeOH in acidic conditions to transform it to its furanose-form (Scheme 19a). The furanose-form has a trans 1,3-diol that cannot be carbonated using phosgene-derived methods, likely due to
the high ring strain. Therefore, an alternative route was envisioned, based on selective preactivation of the secondary alcohol at the 3-position using tosyl chloride.\textsuperscript{153}

Using the activated sugar, the protocol based on DBU and CO\textsubscript{2} led to a 6-membered CC in one step as a mixture of anomers that could be separated by column chromatography. By reversing the order of tosylation and hemi-carbonate formation, the stereochemistry of the reaction can therefore be controlled. However, it is necessary to first isolate the tosylate, and the regioselectivity had to be forced by protection of the 5-alcohol. The reason for the successful synthesis lies in the fact that the stereochemistry is formally inverted in this process leading to a \textit{cis}-configured carbonate of 2-deoxy-\textit{D}-xylose that is less strained than its \textit{trans}-analogue. ROP was attempted for both anomers, and it was shown that the \textit{\beta}-anomer could not be polymerized. In contrast, the \textit{\alpha}-anomer was converted into a high-molecular weight polymer using trimethylene carbonate (TMC) as a comonomer in the presence of TBD as catalyst and benzyl alcohol as initiator.\textsuperscript{153}

The same research group set out to investigate the possibility of generating CCs of thymidine, one of the bases of DNA containing the same 2-deoxy-\textit{D}-ribose sugar backbone.\textsuperscript{154} Both phosgene-reagent and DBU-CO\textsubscript{2} mediated syntheses were unsuccessful likely due to high ring strain of \textit{trans}-fused CC units in furanose-sugars. In order to relieve the ring-strain but retain polymerization potential, the secondary alcohol at position 3' of the thymidine was tosylated. Subsequent hemi-carbonate formation at alcohol 5' and ring-closure led to a 6-membered CC with the stereochemistry at the 3'-position inverted (Scheme 19b). In addition, the free NH-group of thymidine required methylation as not to inhibit carbonate formation. As in other comparable cases, the cyclic carbonate monomer could be polymerized with a high control over the molecular weight of the resultant polycarbonate.

Later on, the ribose substrate was investigated for the formation of thio-carbonates or xanthates using CS\textsubscript{2} as a replacement for CO\textsubscript{2} (Scheme 19c).\textsuperscript{155} The authors hypothesized that the larger C–S bond distance could better accommodate a \textit{trans}-fused ring on the sugar. Reacting 1-O-methyl-2-deoxy-\textit{D}-ribose with CS\textsubscript{2} and DBU, followed by MsCl (mesyl chloride) and Et\textsubscript{3}N led to a single product in low yield (10%). The product was proven to contain a xanthate ring fused \textit{trans} to the ribofuranose ring. When using a substrate where the diol is positioned \textit{cis} (such as in 1,2-protected xylose) the xanthate product was obtained in similar yield (15%) but in addition the expected thio-carbonate product was formed in moderate yield (48%). The authors explain these results by proposing that the alcohol at the 5-position is mesylated, and the hemi-xanthate intermediate is formed at position 3, formed by ring-closure. Indeed, when the mesylated compound is prepared prior to reacting with DBU and X\textsubscript{2}, the same product is formed in higher yield.

The group of Gnanou published a similar strategy to obtaining carbonates of glucose by inclusion of CO\textsubscript{2}.\textsuperscript{156} By a protection-group strategy, they produced a fully protected glucopyranose with a benzylidene-acetal on alcohols 4 and 6, methylated anomeric alcohol and either a methyl or a methyl triethylenglycol group on alcohols 2 and 3. Bromination of the acetal-group and hydrolysis of the resulting benzoyl-group on position 4 led to a halo-alcohol derivative. Under slightly elevated pressure of CO\textsubscript{2} (10 bar) and in the presence of DBU, this compound was carbonated to give the glucose-based cyclic carbonate with retention of stereochemistry (Scheme 19d).

Although inversion of stereochemistry would be expected on position 6, this carbon center is achiral. The authors were able to generate hydrophilic or hydrophobic polymers by ROP of

\begin{itemize}
  \item Scheme 19 (a) Synthesis of sugar-derived CCs through a DBU mediated insertion of CO\textsubscript{2} through SN\textsubscript{2} displacement of pre-activated alcohols or halides. (b) synthesis of a \textit{\alpha}-mannose-based cyclic carbonate. (c) preparation of thio-based CCs. (d) synthesis of a \textit{\alpha}-glucose-based cyclic carbonate \textit{TEGM} = \textit{-(CH\textsubscript{2}CH\textsubscript{2}O)\textsubscript{3}CH\textsubscript{3}}, a \textit{\alpha}-mannose-based cyclic carbonate and a \textit{\alpha}-galactose-based cyclic carbonate.
\end{itemize}
the cyclic-carbonate monomers, with R = Me, or TEGM, respectively or amphiphilic polymers by using both monomers. The new synthetic method proves a greener alternative to the method described by Wooley et al., using phosgene derivatives to generate the carbonate. Two more derivatives were later synthesized through the same method, i.e., selective protection and bromination of the 6-position followed by reaction with DBU and CO$_2$ in DMF. By this method, the authors could synthesize cyclic carbonates from a d-mannose and a d-galactose, and polymerize them through ROP.

In the same article, the authors report a procedure to generate 5-membered cyclic carbonates regioselectively from galactose and mannose that were only methylated at the anomeric position (Scheme 20a). The simple one-step reaction involves CH$_2$Br$_2$ to generate a productive leaving group in the hemi-carbonate fragment that allows for subsequent ring-closure to yield the cyclic carbonate (Scheme 20b). The procedure is selective for the formation of cis-5-membered carbonates, no trans-cyclic carbonates or 6-membered (even if they are cis in the case of galactose) were observed. Although not polymerizable, the authors show that the carbonates can react with amines to afford linear carbamates, which holds promise for their use in the production of isocyanate-free hydroxypolyurethanes.

5. Fatty acid based carbonates

As can be judged from the preceding sections, the partial replacement of fossil fuels-based chemicals with compounds sourced from bio-based, renewable sources is an attractive and rewarding target in chemical research in the pursuit of increased sustainability. It is clear that the realization of such a target requires the use of feedstock that are available in large volumes such as biogenic and food waste materials, or those derivable from mass production crops.

In this context, vegetable oils (VOs, Fig. 5), with a global production of over 200 Mt per year, represent a valuable feedstock for the production of several chemicals. The transesterification of VOs leads to fatty acid methyl esters (FAMEs, Fig. 5) that find wide application as commodity chemicals, biodiesel fuel, and as intermediates for further chemical diversification. In particular, epoxidized fatty acid esters (EFAs, Fig. 5) can be easily obtained and display potential for applications such as lubricants, additives and plasticizers. Similarly, triglycerides in vegetables oils can be epoxidized to afford epoxidized vegetable oils (EVOs, Fig. 5), that find application as green materials for the preparation of PVC, plasticizers, elastomers, coatings, and epoxy resins.
resins and blends. Finally, both EFAs and EVOs can be carbonated via catalytic cycloaddition chemistry using CO$_2$, leading to carbonated fatty acids and carbonated vegetable oils (CFAs and CVOs, Fig. 5). These latter compounds can serve as plasticizers for PVC and as building blocks for the synthesis of NIPUs, respectively. Importantly, the latter processes have received increasing attention in recent years, as they enable the integration between highly sought-after recycling of CO$_2$ into chemicals, and the use of renewable substrates as building blocks for commodity chemicals with a low(er) carbon footprint.

In this section, we review the catalytic processes that have been developed (mostly in the last decade) for the cycloaddition of CO$_2$ to EFAs and EVOs providing oleochemical carbonates. For the sake of clarity, terminal cyclic carbonates prepared from epoxidized fatty acid derivatives are initially discussed whereas the carbonation of internal epoxides present in fatty acids and vegetable oils is discussed separately.

### 5.1 Terminal carbonates from EFA derivatives

A variety of terminal carbonates can be generated from methyl 10-undecenoate, a terminal fatty acid (tEFA) that in turn can be obtained from the pyrolysis of methyl ricinoleate, which is a main fatty acid component of renewable castor oil. In Scheme 21, several possible synthetic routes are illustrated leading to (terminal) mono- and bis-carbonates. Terminal carbonate tc1 can be obtained from the carbonation of epoxidized methyl 10-undecenoate (route a, Scheme 21). In recent years, the synthesis of tc1 was studied by Werner et al. by employing various organocatalysts derived from phosphonium salts, or calcium-based catalysts (9, Scheme 22). The first attempt to prepare tc1 was carried out by using bifunctional single-component organocatalysts based on tetraalkylphosphonium salts bearing an alcoholic moiety acting as hydrogen bond donor (HBD) for the activation of the epoxide (9, Scheme 22). The latter class of organocatalysts is structurally tunable and accessible through the simple reaction

![Scheme 21: Five-membered CC diversity derived from castor oil.](image1)

![Scheme 22: Catalysts for the formation of fatty acid based CC tc1.](image2)
between trialklyphosphines and halogenated alcohols under ambient conditions. Using catalyst 9, the coupling of the epoxy precursor and CO₂ was carried out in the temperature range 45–90 °C and at 10 bar of CO₂ pressure. A different single-component organocatalyst for the carbonation of this epoxidized fatty acid is the triphenylphosphine derivative 10 bearing an ortho-hydroxy functionality (Scheme 22).198 Importantly, due to an optimal pKₐ, phenolic hydroxyl groups have been found among the best H-bonding activating moieties in the conversion of epoxides into CCs.199 The presence and the position of the hydroxy substituent in 10 was found to be crucial for its catalytic performance likely because it allows activation of the epoxide in the proximity of the bromide anion associated to the phosphonium group, with the halide acting as nucleophile for the ring-opening of the epoxide. The latter aspect allowed the use of 10 also as organocatalyst for the carbonation of more challenging internal bio-based epoxides (vide infra). However, in comparison to the previously discussed single-component organocatalyst 9, the carbonation of epoxidized methyl 10-undecenoate using 10 required higher pressure (25 bar) and longer reaction times.

In order to avoid the limitations related to the use of homogeneous catalysts in terms of cost and product purification, immobilization of 10 onto polystyrene and a silica based support was carried out to ease separation from the reaction products and to allow for its recycling (11, Scheme 22) with the silica-supported catalyst 11 found to perform better than the polystyrene-supported one.197 Catalyst 11 proved to be even more active than its homogeneous counterpart achieving a satisfactory yield in the carbonation of the same epoxide in 6 h at 10 bar of CO₂ pressure. The increased activity of the supported catalyst was attributed to the presence of abundant Si–OH moieties on thermally untreated silica likely acting as additional hydrogen-bonding moieties.200,201 Catalyst 11 could be recovered and reused for over ten catalytic cycles, albeit some leaching and deactivation was noted.

As an alternative to the application of organocatalysts, inexpensive and readily available coordination compounds in combination with ammonium and phosphonium salts have frequently found to act as highly active catalysts for the cycloaddition of CO₂ to epoxides.202–204 Additionally, Lewis acids based on earth-abundant iron-derived complexes are particularly attractive.2,7,205,206 On the other hand, catalysts based on metal halides are potently corrosive and unlikely to find application in industrial reactors.205,208 In this context, within a study on the application of iron-based coordination compounds as Lewis acids for the carbonation of several bio-based epoxides, Werner et al. investigated the catalytic performance of the binary catalyst tetra-n-octylphosphonium bromide 12/FeCl₃ (Scheme 22) for the carbonation of epoxidized methyl 10-undecenoate.196 The complete carbonation of this substrate was achieved in 6 h albeit under harsh reaction conditions (100 °C, 50 bar of CO₂).

More recently, the in situ complexation of calcium halides by crown ethers allows to prepare soluble calcium-based catalysts (4, Scheme 22 and Fig. 4).209 This system was able to convert several internal and terminal epoxides to their corresponding CCs under ambient or very mild conditions without the need for additional quaternary salts. Later on, 4/PP₃ was applied for the conversion of several bio-based epoxides including epoxidized methyl 10-undecenoate (Scheme 22).118 Whereas the calcium based complex 4, formed by the reaction of CaI₂ with dicyclohexyl-functionalized 18-crown-6 ether (DFCCE), performed well in the carbonation of a benchmark substrate (i.e., methyl oleate), the addition of triphenylphosphine (PPh₃, 5 mol%) allowed for reducing the CO₂ pressure from 20 to 5 bar and the reaction temperature from 60 to 45 °C. Under such conditions, epoxidized methyl 10-undecenoate was efficiently converted into tc1 in 6 h.

Bis-carbonates containing two terminal cyclic carbonate moieties are useful synthons for the preparation of non-isocyanate based polyurethanes (NIPUs) by step-growth polymerization using diamine reagents.185,186,210,211 Leitner et al. studied the carbonation of bis-epoxidized hex-5-enyl undec-10-enoate (route b, Scheme 21) to afford tc2, and this process was carried out under relatively harsh conditions using supercritical CO₂ (scCO₂) at 100 °C.212 In this case, the authors chose tetraheptylammonium silicotungstated containing chromium (a polyoxometalate, POM, abbreviated as THA-Cr-Si-POM) in combination with TBAB as the catalyst. The authors proposed that the POM is capable of activating CO₂ by binding it to the catalyst surface. However, this aspect was not experimentally proven and it should be considered that the metal atoms (W, Cr) on the surface of the POM could, alternatively, accelerate the cycloaddition reaction by acting as Lewis acids. This could facilitate the ring-opening of the epoxide in a similar way as observed in MOFs,213,214 and metalated porous polymers.215,216 Despite the harsh reaction conditions, the advantage of the binary, heterogeneous system THA-Cr-Si-POM/TBAB was its simple separation from the products and the potential implementation of a flow process.

Cramail et al. carried out the coupling between GC, a versatile biobased building block,217,218 with 10-undecenyl chloride leading to the preparation of CC tc3 (route c, Scheme 21) bearing both terminal carbonate and alkene moieties.219 The same CC (tc3) was also prepared by Plaserra et al. using a different strategy that involves the ring opening of glycidol (Gly) by undecylenic acid followed by carbonation of the obtained diol with diethyl carbonate (route d, Scheme 21).220 Dimerization of tc3 via self-metathesis using Grubbs catalyst gave access to bis-carbonate tc4 that could be used to produce NIPUs by treatment with diamines. Cramail et al. also utilized 6-membered bis CCs derived from undecylenic acid using a procedure similar to route d giving other types of NIPUs precursors.221 A different strategy to advance the synthesis of cyclic bis-carbonates for NIPUs using undecylenic acid derivatives was followed by Cramail and coworkers (route e, Scheme 21). This strategy consists of bridging two undecylenic acid units by flexible “diamino or diol” linkers via transamidation or transesterification reactions.222 Following epoxidation of the terminal alkenes to afford a bis-epoxide precursor, the bis-carbonate product (tc5) was produced quantitatively under harsh reaction conditions (80–140 °C, 50–60 bar of CO₂) using TBAB as the catalyst.
Finally, terminal cyclic bis-carbonates were prepared also from the methyl ester of oleic acid (MO, Scheme 23). The ethanolation of the latter is known to produce useful synthons such as 9-decanoic acid methyl ester (9-DAME) and 1-decene. Cramail et al. coupled two molecules of 9-DAME by transesterification with pentanediol catalyzed by Zn(OAc)$_2$ at 140 °C. Alternatively, parent MO was directly transesterified with pentanediol to afford an intermediate with internal double bonds. Epoxidation of both compounds led to bis-epoxides serving as precursors for their respective CCs, which was carried out under close-to-supercritical or supercritical conditions using TBAB as a catalyst. Terminal bis-carbonate tc6 was found to be more reactive than the bis-internal one tc7 despite the latter being more soluble in the liquid CO$_2$ phase.

5.2 Internal carbonates from EFA derivatives

The synthesis of cyclic carbonates from epoxidized fatty acids with internal epoxy groups (iEFAs) is more complex than from terminal ones (tEFAs) because of the increased steric hindrance around the epoxy groups and the occurrence of rearrangement and/or isomerization processes compromising the selectivity and thus the yield of the targeted product. In the case of iEFAs, the internal epoxides are generally available in the stereochemically pure cis-configuration, and an attractive challenge is to perform the carbonation reaction with control over the stereoselectivity to obtain the fatty acid based cyclic carbonates as pure cis- or trans-isomers.

A general mechanism along with competitive side-reactions is shown in Scheme 24 for a reaction catalyzed by a binary catalyst comprising of a Lewis acid [M] and a nucleophilic halide(x). Starting from a pure cis-epoxide, both cis and trans configured CCs can be formed after an initial S$_{N}2$-type epoxide ring-opening step mediated by the halide that affords a metal alkoxide. In the subsequent step, a hemicarbonate intermediate is formed after CO$_2$ insertion into the metal–alkoxide bond. This linear carbonate species undergoes a second, intramolecular nucleophilic substitution having either S$_{N}1$ or S$_{N}2$ character that strongly depends on the choice of the halide nucleophiles. Halides possessing excellent leaving group ability (i.e., Br and I) may provide under suitable reaction conditions S$_{N}1$ type chemistry with the intermediacy of a carboxilation. In this case, ring-closure of the carboxilation affords either the cis- or trans-carbonates with the latter being typically the thermodynamically favored product. Conversely, an anion with reduced leaving group ability (i.e., Cl) is less likely to provide an in situ generated carboxilation. In this case, a second S$_{N}2$ at the same carbon atom of the

![Scheme 23](image-url)  
Scheme 23 Synthesis of terminal carbonated fatty acid diester (tc6) and internal carbonated fatty acid diester (tc7).

![Scheme 24](image-url)  
Scheme 24 General mechanism of the coupling reaction between a fatty acid containing internal epoxy units and CO$_2$ catalyzed by a binary system [M]/X. X is a halide source such as an ammonium or phosphonium salt. iCFA stands for internal carbonated fatty acid, K for a ketone byproduct.
metallo-hemicarbonate will undergo ring-closure while restoring the initial configuration leading thus to a cis CC product.

To further substantiate these concepts, the catalytic performance of several binary/bifunctional catalysts (13 and 13–15) incorporating different nucleophilic halides(s) is compared in Table 3. For all catalysts featuring chloride nucleophiles, the cis-iCFA1 was observed as the main product (entries 1–4). Furthermore, the use of 13/TBAI allowed the formation of trans-iCFA1 with nearly complete diastereoselectivity.230 In agreement with the mechanistic picture of Scheme 24, the use of bromide or iodide as the nucleophilic anion should lead to a decreased selectivity for the cis isomer by favoring an SN1 pathway.229,230

Among the catalysts, simple and readily available l-ascorbic acid 14/TBAC allowed the synthesis of the cis-iCFA1 from cis-iEFA1 with high diastereoselectivity (cis:trans = 85:15).231 The system 14/TBAC showed (unexpectedly) lower substrate conversion than 14/TBAB and 13/TBAI but higher chemoselectivity towards cis-iCFA1 (>99%), whereas in the other two cases a significant amount of the side products were formed (entry 3). When 13/TBAI or 14/TBAI were selected as catalysts, trans-iCFA1 was observed as the main carbonate product (entries 1 and 3), whereas iCFA1 was preferentially formed when utilizing bifunctional catalyst 15 regardless of the nature of the halide (entry 4) though with the lowest stereoselectivity towards cis-iCFA1 in the presence of iodide. These results suggest that the use of iodide based catalysts have higher preference for the trans-carbonate product by favoring an S_{N}1 pathway.229,230

The nature of the halide has thus a clear impact on the overall selectivity of the process, and ketones K are typical by-products in the formation of iCFAs.4,24,116,118,196,212,224,231,232 Ketone formation is attributed to Meinwald rearrangement via a 1,2-hydride shift in the presence of Lewis- or Brønsted acids (Scheme 24, below).124,233 For example, the formation mechanism of K proposed for YCl3 is shown in Scheme 25.234–236 In the case of CO_{2} cycloaddition to internal epoxides catalyzed by Lewis acids in the presence of halides as nucleophiles, the carbocation species (precursor of the ketone via hydride shift) may be formed by dissociation of the halide from the alkoxide intermediate similar to what discussed for the S_{N}1 mechanism. Therefore, catalysts with halides that can serve as good leaving groups (Br and I) are expected to favor the formation of a ketone by-product (K), whereas catalysts delivering a chloride nucleophile should suppress this side-product formation.

Table 3  The catalytic comparison of the cycloaddition of CO_{2} to iEFA1 producing iCFA1 depending on the metal complex/halide combinations

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<td>iCFA1a</td>
<td>7 : 93</td>
<td>230</td>
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* Determined by °H NMR from the integration of the peaks corresponding to the carbonates (cis iCFA1 + trans iCFA1) and ketone (K) by-product.

** cis:trans ratio determined by °H NMR by integration of the corresponding signals of cis and trans carbonate products. ° Isolated yield. °° Not reported.
This is in agreement with the observations when using catalysts 14,231 and 15,224 with the selectivity for the carbonate product cis-iCFA1 progressively decreasing in the series Cl > Br > I (entries 3 and 4) in line with the ability of Cl-derived catalysts to suppress the occurrence of undesired Meinwald rearrangement.

Interestingly, the use of Lewis acid complex 1Cl led preferentially to carbonate cis-iCFA1 as the major product independent of the use of chloride or bromide anions as nucleophiles (entry 2). Finally, the formation of a carbocation from the crucial alkoxide intermediate can also lead to cis-to-trans isomerization of the epoxide (Scheme 24, below). Indeed, trans-iCFA1 is often observed as minor by-product along with the formation of trans-iCFA1 and ketones K.224

Apart from the nature of the nucleophilic halide anion, modifications of the (Lewis acid) structure can also play a role in controlling the stereoselectivity and kinetics of the carbonation reaction. In the case of calcium-based crown ether complexes, the use of complexes 4 and 16a (Scheme 26) containing fully aliphatic crown ether ligands and iodide as co-catalyst principally led to carbonate product iCFA1 with high cis-selectivity, which is somehow different from the results obtained using catalysts 13 and 14 in the presence of TBAI where the principal product was the trans isomer of iCFA1.118

When part of the bridging groups were aromatic (16b), the selectivity switched from mostly cis to trans product though the overall yield (18%) of iCFA1 was low, likely due to the low solubility of 16c in the reaction mixture. Similarly, by replacing one oxygen for a nitrogen atom (16c) largely the formation of trans-iCFA1 was noted. Finally, compound 16d with a single aromatic bridging unit displayed a catalytic performance similar to that observed for 16a. All these results combined indicate that, besides the choice of the nucleophilic halide anion, other structural factors can contribute to the overall efficacy and stereo-outcome of the process.

Some authors examined the cycloaddition of CO2 to trans-iEFA1 (Table 3) as a way to confirm the occurrence of a double inversion (or: double SN2) pathway in the formation of iCFAs. The binary catalytic system 1Cl/PPNCl, that converts cis-iEFA1 mostly to its corresponding carbonate cis-iCFA1 (entry 2, Table 3), led to almost total diastereoselective formation of trans-iCFA1 from trans-iEFA1 (entry 5, Table 3) in agreement with a double inversion pathway. Interestingly, the application of complex 13 for the carbonation of trans-iEFA1 led principally to trans-iCFA1 as the thermodynamically most stable isomer regardless of the type of halide employed (entry 6). This observation is somewhat in contrast with that observed for the carbonation of cis-iEFA1 where the use of iodide and bromide as nucleophiles led to substantial degrees of inversion of configuration via a pseudo-Sn1 mechanism (entry 1). These results suggest that the outcome of the cycloaddition process may be subject to a more complex set of interactions between the catalyst components and the substrate.

5.3 Catalytic performances in the cycloaddition of CO2 to various iEFAs and EVOs: the role of quaternary salts

Initial attempts to carry out the carbonation of EFAs where carried out using quaternary ammonium, phosphonium or other salts in the absence of Lewis acidic catalysts or HBDs. An overview of quaternary salts applied under various reaction conditions for the carbonation of iEFAs1–3 derived from mono-unsaturated MO (iEFA1), bis-unsaturated methyl linoleate (iEFA2) and, more rarely, tris-unsaturated methyl linolenate (iEFA3) is given in Table 4.223

The obvious advantage of using quaternary salts as catalysts is that they are metal-free, generally inexpensive, and commercially available. In addition, Doll and Erhan found that TBAB can be conveniently removed from the product mixture by thermal breakdown into volatile compounds at 190 °C by
Hofmann elimination.\textsuperscript{237} In different studies, the use of halide salts often required harsh reaction conditions such as the use of scCO\textsubscript{2} (entries 1–11, Table 4) or temperatures above 100 °C (entry 16) to convert \textit{iEFA}\textsubscript{1–3} to their corresponding carbonates, \textit{iCFA}\textsubscript{1–3} in reasonable to high yields.

Based on the earlier report by Doll and Erhan highlighting the catalytic competence of TBAB in the carbonation of \textit{iEFA}\textsubscript{1} under supercritical conditions (entry 1),\textsuperscript{238} Leitner \textit{et al.} showed that the employment of several quaternary ammonium halides for the cycloaddition of CO\textsubscript{2} to \textit{iEFA}\textsubscript{1} under scCO\textsubscript{2} conditions generally provided the target carbonate with good conversion rates and selectivities (entries 2–9). Exceptions in this series were NH\textsubscript{4}Br and tetra-\textit{n}-butylammonium fluoride (TBAF) because of the poor leaving group character of the fluoride anion (see entries 2 and 6) and the tighter ion pair when using ammonium cations.\textsuperscript{212} In line with earlier results discussed in section 5, all salts employed provided \textit{cis}-\textit{iEFA}\textsubscript{1} as the main stereoisomer with the exception of TBAB for which the \textit{trans}-isomer was found to be the main product (entry 5). The use of ammonium or phosphonium salts bearing longer alkyl chains compared to TBAB did not lead to any significant improvement of the catalytic activity (entries 7–9). Therefore, TBAB was selected as catalyst for the conversion of other substrates such as \textit{cis}-\textit{iEFA}\textsubscript{2} and \textit{cis}-\textit{iEFA}\textsubscript{3}, obtaining satisfactory performances despite a slight drop in conversion and carbonate selectivity (entries 10 and 11).

Similar results under comparable reaction conditions were found for substrate \textit{cis}-\textit{iEFA}\textsubscript{2} in a later study by Buchholz \textit{et al.}\textsuperscript{24} However, Werner and coworkers demonstrated that the catalytic performance is strongly reduced together with some loss of selectivity for \textit{iCFA}\textsubscript{1} when using TBAB for the carbonation of \textit{cis}-\textit{iEFA}\textsubscript{1} at 100 °C but lower CO\textsubscript{2} pressure (50 bar) and lower catalyst loading (2 mol%; cf., entries 4 and 12).\textsuperscript{224} In the same study it was observed that the use of tetrabutylphosphonium halides, in particular 15-Br and 15-Cl, leads to slight improvement in terms of epoxide conversion and \textit{iCFA} selectivity compared to TBAB under identical conditions (cf., entry 12 and 13–15). In addition, Leveneur \textit{et al.} showed that the use of a slightly higher TBAB loading (7 mol%) at 130 °C allowed complete conversion of \textit{cis}-\textit{iEFA}\textsubscript{1} under 30 bar CO\textsubscript{2} pressure as an alternative for supercritical conditions, though the selectivity towards \textit{iCFA}\textsubscript{1} was not reported (entry 16).\textsuperscript{239}

Recently, the group of Kleij studied the performance of various halide salts in an attempt to develop catalysts able to

### Table 4 The catalytic performance of quaternary salts in the cycloaddition of CO\textsubscript{2} to \textit{iEFA}\textsubscript{1–3}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>\textit{iEFA} cat. (mol%)</th>
<th>Reaction conditions T (°C), CO\textsubscript{2} (bar), time (h)</th>
<th>Conversion\textsuperscript{a} (%)</th>
<th>Selectivity for \textit{iCFA}</th>
<th>Selectivity (\textit{cis} : \textit{trans})\textsuperscript{b}</th>
<th>Ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 \textit{TBAB} (5)</td>
<td>100, 103, 15</td>
<td>93\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 \textit{TBAF} (5)</td>
<td>100, 117, 24</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 \textit{TBAC} (5)</td>
<td>100, 117, 24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>77 : 23</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 \textit{TBAB} (5)</td>
<td>100, 117, 24</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>&gt;79 : 21</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 \textit{NH4Br}</td>
<td>100, 117, 24</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>20 : 80</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 \textit{NBHBr}</td>
<td>100, 117, 24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>&gt;79 : 21</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 ((n-C\textsubscript{14}H\textsubscript{29})\textsubscript{N}Br</td>
<td>100, 117, 24</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>&gt;79 : 21</td>
<td>70 : 30</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1 ((C\textsuperscript{14}mim)\textsubscript{Br}\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>100, 117, 24</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>74 : 26</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1 ((n-C\textsubscript{14}H\textsubscript{29})(n-C\textsubscript{12}H\textsubscript{25})P)Br</td>
<td>100, 117, 24</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>69 : 31</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2 \textit{TBAB} (5)</td>
<td>100, 117, 24</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>&gt;79 : 21</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3 \textit{TBAB} (5)</td>
<td>100, 117, 24</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>&gt;79 : 21</td>
<td>212</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1 \textit{TBAB} (2)</td>
<td>100, 50, 16</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>46 : 56</td>
<td>224</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>1 \textit{15-Br} (2)</td>
<td>100, 50, 16</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>71 : 29</td>
<td>224</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>1 \textit{15-Cl} (2)</td>
<td>100, 50, 16</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>90 : 10</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>1 \textit{15-I} (2)</td>
<td>100, 50, 16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>57 : 43</td>
<td>224</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>1 \textit{TBAB} (7)</td>
<td>130, 30, 8</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>&gt;79</td>
<td>51 : 49</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1 \textit{TBAC} (5)</td>
<td>70, 10, 24</td>
<td>&gt;79</td>
<td>&gt;79</td>
<td>&gt;79 : 1</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1 \textit{TBAC} (5)</td>
<td>70, 10, 24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>&gt;79</td>
<td>&gt;79 : 1</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>1 \textit{PPNCl} (5)</td>
<td>70, 10, 24</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>&gt;79</td>
<td>96 : 4</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2 \textit{PPNCl} (5)</td>
<td>85, 10, 24</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>&gt;79</td>
<td>95 : 5</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>3 \textit{PPNCl} (5)</td>
<td>70, 10, 24</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>&gt;79</td>
<td>90 : 10</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1 \textit{TBAB} (5)</td>
<td>100, 5, 24</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>22 : 78</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1 \textit{TBAB} (5)</td>
<td>100, 5, 24</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>36 : 64</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1 \textit{TBAB} (5)</td>
<td>100, 5, 24</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>&gt;99</td>
<td>90 : 10</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a} Conversion determined by titration and/or \textsuperscript{1}H NMR. \textsuperscript{b} \textit{Cis} : \textit{trans} ratio determined by \textsuperscript{1}H NMR by integration of the corresponding signals of \textit{cis} and \textit{trans} carbonate products. \textsuperscript{c} Isolated yield. \textsuperscript{d} Not reported. \textsuperscript{e} (C\textsuperscript{14}mim)Br = 1-\textit{n}-tetradecyl-3-methylimidazolium bromide.
operate under milder conditions. They found that TBAB converts cis-iEFA1 quantitatively into iCFA1 at 70 °C and 10 bar of CO2, although without any observable stereocontrol (entry 17). The use of TBAC, however, provided cis-iCFA1 selectively but only at very low epoxide conversion, while the use of PPNCi as chloride source led to higher conversion of cis-iEFA1 maintaining very high selectivity for cis-iCFA1 (cf., entries 18 and 19). PPNCi served also as an efficient and stereoselective catalyst for carbonation of cis-iEFA2 and cis-iEFA3 at 70–85 °C and 10 bar of CO2 (entries 20 and 21).

Recently, it was shown that quaternary ammonium salts give appreciable conversion levels of cis-iEFA1 at 5 bar of CO2 and 100 °C. Under these conditions, the stereocontrol exerted by TBAI in the preparation of cis-iCFA1 is moderately high, and similar results are obtained switching to TBAB though with significantly higher chemoselectivity for iCFA1. The use of TBAC led to moderate epoxide conversion but with very high overall selectivity for cis-iCFA1 (cf., entries 22–24).

A further expansion of the portfolio of fatty acid-derived CCs can be realized by using epoxidized estolides as starting point. This class of compounds is generated by the reaction between a carboxylic acid of a fatty acid with a double bond or hydroxyl moiety of another one. The estolide compounds are attractive functional fluids when compared to standard vegetable oils because of a higher stability towards oxidation and similar results are obtained switching to TBAB though with significantly higher chemoselectivity for iCFA1. The use of TBAC led to moderate epoxide conversion but with very high overall selectivity for cis-iCFA1 (cf., entries 22–24).

In an initial study, Isbell et al. used 2-ethylhexyl estolide esters of oleic acids constituted by a complex mixture of oligomers generated by the addition of the carboxylic acid of oleic acid to the double bond of other oleate chains. Following epoxidation using in situ generated peracetic acid, the epoxidized estolide was successfully carbonated using TBAB as the catalyst under scCO2 conditions at ∼100 bar of CO2 and 100 °C. The viscosity of the carbonated estolide was substantially higher than that of the parent epoxidized estolide. The same group developed the synthesis of estolide esters obtained through the reaction between oleic acid and the hydroxyl group of saturated and unsaturated alkyl esters of castor oil (Scheme 27). The resulting compounds were epoxidized and carbonated using TBAB as catalyst under supercritical conditions as described in the previous example. The resulting carbonated estolides displayed increased viscosity and higher oxidation stability (oxidation onset around 200 °C) compared to the non-functionalized estolides and its epoxy derivatives, thus offering good candidates for application as industrial fluids.

Beside the case of EFAs, the carbonation of EVOs (Table 5) such as epoxidized vernonia, castor, soybean, linseed, sunflower, cottonseed and olive oils has been extensively studied. The resulting CVOs (Table 5) are attractive synthons for the synthesis of NIPUs by reaction with diamines and find applications in paints, coatings, and bio-based materials. Remarkably, some properties such as the thermal stability and oxidative stability of polyurethanes (PUs) derived from soybean oil were found to rival those of PUs derived from poly(propylene oxide).

The synthesis of CVOs has been principally carried out on epoxidized linseed, sunflower and soybean oils due to the relatively high epoxy content that can be introduced in the fatty acid alkyl chains. The cycloaddition reaction of CO2 to such EFAs has often been carried out using TBAB as the catalyst (Table 5). As in the case of EFAs (see entries Table 4), these reactions are conveniently performed at high pressure (CO2 ≥ 50 bar) or under sc-CO2 conditions (entries 1–10, Table 5) often in combination with high reaction temperatures (120–140 °C). However, the CO2 pressure can be reduced to 4 bar when the carbonation reaction is carried out at ≥110 °C (entries 11–15). Under these conditions, high to nearly quantitative conversion of the epoxide groups was generally observed, however the selectivities for the carbonate products have seldom been reported. Leitner et al. observed a relatively low selectivity (73%) for carbonate formation in the cycloaddition of CO2 to epoxidized soybean oil (ESBO) under supercritical conditions (entry 5). Further attempts were carried out for the carbonation of EVOs under atmospheric pressure at T ≥ 110 °C using TBAB or TBAI as catalyst by extending the reaction time to 40–70 h (entries 16–19). In some of these cases, despite the disappearance of epoxide and the appearance of IR-bands for the carbonate C=O stretching were observed, the actual chemoselectivity for the CC was not reported.

Mazo and Rios observed that the addition of water (about 33 mol%) significantly accelerates the carbonation of ESBO thus obtaining the corresponding CVO under atmospheric pressure with good conversion and selectivity in 70 h (entry 18). This result is in line with the known ability of water to serve as a HBD in the cycloaddition of CO2 to epoxides. Additionally, the same authors have shown that a further acceleration of the reaction rate can be achieved by combining the addition of water to the use of a microwave reactor resulting in a reduction of the reaction time to 40 h without affecting the selectivity for the carbonated product (entry 19).

Finally, several examples of comprehensive physicochemical studies on the carbonation of EVOs in the presence of TBAB have been carried out. These studies concern reaction kinetics modelling, the role of mass transfer, CO2 solubility,
substrate viscosity, the differences between EFAs and EVOs and the effect of microwave irradiation on the process kinetics, and were carried out by Leveneur et al. These important, but rather technical studies are not described in detail in this section.

### 5.4 Catalytic performance of binary catalytic systems in the cycloaddition of CO$_2$ to iEFA1: metal salts and coordination compounds

The vast majority of catalytic systems for the cycloaddition of CO$_2$ to epoxides are binary systems. These systems typically involve one component (Lewis acid or HBD) coordinating or better activating the epoxide substrate, and a nucleophilic component that serves to ring-open the activated epoxide. These bicomponent catalysts often allow for better activating the epoxide substrate, and a nucleophilic activator including metal coordination compounds, metal–organic catalysts, and organocatalysts.

Coordination compounds and metal salts represent readily available and inexpensive compounds for the cycloaddition of CO$_2$ to epoxides. They are usually commercially available and can be easily immobilized onto silica supports. However, in the case of metal halide salts, their large-scale application could be limited by their relatively low moisture stability and by the risk of reactor corrosion.

Polyoxometalates (POMs) are clusters of metal atoms connected by oxo-bridges and terminated by anionic MOieties. Such compounds are able to activate CO$_2$/epoxides via interaction with the basic oxygen atoms and Lewis acidic metal centers of the POM. Based on this dual activation ability, the halogen-free cycloaddition of CO$_2$ to epoxides catalyzed by transition-metal-substituted silicotungstates ([n-C$_7$H$_{15}$]$_4$N$_3$[SiW$_{11}$O$_{39}$M(III)], with M = Mn, Co) was demonstrated by Sakakura et al. already in 2005. The sustainable character of this approach was limited by the harsh reaction conditions (150 °C, 35 bar of CO$_2$) and the need for a reaction solvent.

Later in 2013, Leitner et al. employed ([n-C$_7$H$_{15}$]$_4$N$_3$[SiW$_{11}$O$_{39}$Cr(III)] (THA-Cr-Si-POM) for the carbonation of iEFAs in scCO$_2$. As expected, under harsh conditions (100 °C, ~130 bar of CO$_2$), THA-Cr-Si-POM (2 mol%) was able to catalyze the quantitative conversion of iEFAs to cis-iCFA1 in 20 h. However, the authors also observed that the addition of equimolar, catalytic amounts of TBAB could accelerate the reaction that was complete in 6 h (entry 1, Table 6).

More recent, the use of coordination compounds and metal salts for the carbonation of fatty acids has led to the discovery of...
of binary systems operating under milder conditions than the THA-Cr-Si-POM reported by Leitner. Werner et al. extensively studied the application of coordination compounds as additives for the cycloaddition of CO2 to iEFA1. Initial studies involved the application of phosphonium salts 12 and 15 in combination with commercially available coordination metal compounds of transition metals such as MoO3 and FeCl3 under relatively harsh conditions (100 °C, 50 bar of CO2; entries 2 and 3 in Table 6). The presence of MoO3 appeared as a more convenient choice for iEFA1 conversion and carbonate selectivity in a wider screening of metal salts (mostly Al- and Mo-based) in the presence of 15-Br (see also Table 3) as the nucleophile.

Interestingly, compared to the exclusive use of phosphonium salts as catalysts, the addition of coordination compounds accelerate iEFA1 conversion at the cost of a slight drop in carbonate selectivity. Under the same reaction conditions, the use of FeCl3 in the presence of phosphonium salts (12 or 15-Br) led to a similar result as MoO3. The use of iron-based catalysts is considered advantageous, since Fe is an earth-abundant, non-toxic and non-endangered metal.

Similarly, the application of calcium may be seen as more sustainable compared to the use of transition metals in catalyst systems. Whereas most coordination compounds of calcium are generally insoluble in most reaction media, Werner et al. showed that the use of chelating ligands (crown ethers) in combination with calcium halides leads to soluble and highly active Lewis acids for CO2/epoxide cycloaddition. The in situ complexation of CaI2 by poly(ethylene glycol) dimethyl ether (PEG-DME-500) further promotes the nucleophilicity of the iodide anion leading to a system able to mediate the cycloaddition of CO2 to terminal and internal epoxides including iEFA1 (entry 4, Table 6). Alternatively, crown ethers are effective complexing agents for CaI2 leading to highly active calcium catalysts such as 4 for the cycloaddition of CO2 to terminal epoxides under ambient conditions. Catalyst 4 can be successfully applied for the carbonation of iEFA1 under relatively mild conditions (60 °C, 20 bar of CO2). In addition, it was found to work under even milder conditions (45 °C, 5 bar of CO2, entry 5) when used in the presence of a relatively high loading (5 mol%) of PPh3 obtaining iCFA1 mostly as the cis-isomer. In a previous study, the same group showed that KI, a frequently used source of nucleophilic iodide, forms an efficient catalyst for the carbonation of terminal epoxides when combined with triethanolamine as HBD, although this catalyst was virtually inactive for the conversion of iEFA1 (entry 6), justifying the design of more sophisticated binary catalyst architectures.

### Table 6

The comparison of the cycloaddition of CO2 to epoxidized MO (iEFA1) catalyzed by coordination compounds and metal salts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Cat/add. (mol%)</th>
<th>T, p, t (°C, bar, h)</th>
<th>Yield iCFA1 (%)</th>
<th>Sel.(^a) iCFA1 (%)</th>
<th>Sel.(^a) cis vs trans</th>
<th>Ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>THA-Cr-Si-POM (2.0)</td>
<td>100, 130, 6</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>96 : 4</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>TBAB (2.0)</td>
<td>100, 50</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>77 : 23</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MoO3 (0.25)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>68 : 32</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12 (2.0)</td>
<td>100, 50</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>53 : 47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4 (2.0)</td>
<td>90, 50</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ph3P (5.0)</td>
<td>45, 5</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>84 : 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15-Br (2.0)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>84 : 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TEA (2/2)</td>
<td>100, 50</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>84 : 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

\(^a\) Cis : trans ratios and selectivity towards iCFA1 determined by \(^1\)H NMR from the integration of the corresponding signals of cis and trans carbonate products. \(^b\) PEG DME 500: oligo(ethylene glycol) dimethyl ether with \(M_n \sim 400\) g mol\(^{-1}\). \(^c\) Not reported. \(^d\) Conversion determined by GC analysis. THA = tetra-n-heptyl ammonium, \(p\) is the partial pressure of CO2 and TEA is triethanolamine.
5.5 Catalytic performance of binary catalytic systems in the CO₂ cycloaddition to iEFA₁: metal complexes

Metal complexes based on Schiff-base ligands are among the most studied metal–organic compounds often displaying remarkable catalytic activity for the cycloaddition of CO₂ to terminal epoxides. Thus, it is not surprising that these complexes have also been studied for the carbonation of EFAs.

Masdeu-Bultó et al. prepared NN′O- and N₂O₂-type Schiff-base ligands that were used for the complexation of earth-abundant metals such as zinc and aluminum, respectively (complexes 17 and 18, Table 7). These complexes were found to be active Lewis acidic catalysts for the cycloaddition of CO₂ to terminal epoxides, but their application for the carbonation of iEFA₁ required harsh reaction conditions (100 °C, 100 bar of CO₂) to afford only moderate yields of iCFA₁ (entries 1 and 2). Under these conditions, catalyst 18/TBAB proved to be much faster with reaction times as short as 30 min.

Aminotriphenolates (TPA) complexes, extensively studied by the group of Kleij, are a different class of highly efficient and strongly Lewis acidic metal complexes for the cycloaddition of CO₂ to internal epoxides. In particular, TPA complexes derived from aluminum (1⁷, Table 3) and vanadium (1₉, Table 7) are highly chemo- and stereoselective Lewis acids for the carbonation of iEFA₁ under comparatively mild conditions (75–80 °C, 10 bar of CO₂) in the presence of TBAB, obtaining cis-iCFA₁ (entries 3 and 4), with the V-based binary catalyst 1₉/TBAB only providing moderate conversion.

One peculiar feature of Al-aminotriphenolate complexes is their capability to catalyze the conversion of CO₂ and epoxy alcohols such as glycidol and its derivative, to cyclic carbonates in the absence of nucleophilic additives. The conversion of epoxy alcohols has been proposed to take place by formation of a carbonic acid hemi-ester stabilized by the metal-organic Lewis acid. A similar mechanism was proposed when epoxidized methyl ricinoleate was combined with CO₂ in the presence of 1Cl. Despite the initial cis-configuration of the epoxide precursor, in the absence of halide nucleophiles the trans-isomer of carbonate product was obtained in high yield and selectivity indicating effective inversion of configuration (entry 5, Table 7). To explain this observation and in line with their previous findings, the authors postulated a mechanism in which an Al-stabilized carbonic acid-like intermediate, formed by reaction of the substrate with CO₂, first evolves into a six-membered carbonate intermediate by nucleophilic attack on the nearest epoxide carbon (Scheme 28).

| Table 7 Comparison of the catalytic cycloaddition of CO₂ to epoxidized MO (iEFA₁) in the presence of various Schiff base and aminotriphenolate metal complexes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Entry | Cat/add. (mol%) | T, p, t (°C, bar, h) | Yield/sel. for iCFA₁ (%) | Sel. cis : trans | Ref. |
| 1 | 17 (2.0) TBAB (2.0) | 100, 100, 24 | 53, b | 95 : 5 | 286 |
| 2 | 18 (2.0) TBAB (2.0) | 100, 100, 0.5 | 63, b | 52 : 48 | 287 |
| 3 | 1₉ (0.5) TBAB (5.0) | 85, 10, 18 | 46, >99 | >99 : 1 | 291 |
| 4 | 1Cl (0.5) PPNCl (3.0) | 70, 10, 24 | 99<sup>⁹</sup>, >99 | 97 : 3 | 187 |
| 5<sup>c</sup> | 1Cl (1.0) | 70, 10, 24 | 99<sup>d</sup>, 99 | < 1 : 99 | 187 |
| 6 | 1₃ (1.0) TBAI (10) | 100, 5, 24 | 91<sup>⁶</sup> | < 1 : 99 | 230 |

<sup>a</sup> Cis : trans ratio and selectivity for iCFA₁ determined by <sup>¹</sup>H NMR from the integration of the corresponding signals of cis and trans carbonate products, and substrate/side-products. <sup>b</sup> Not reported. <sup>c</sup> Using epoxidized methyl ricinoleate (cis) as the substrate. Note that p is the partial pressure of CO₂. <sup>d</sup> Conversion, determined by <sup>¹</sup>H NMR.
subsequent nucleophilic attack of the produced oxanion on the electrophilic carbon center of the latter carbonate would then lead to formation of the final trans-carbonate with stereo-inversion.

Recently, Liu and coworkers reported the cycloaddition of CO$_2$ to iEFA$_1$ catalyzed by the iron bis-pincer complex 13 (Table 3).\textsuperscript{230} By using a large amount of TBAI (10 mol%, entry 6, Table 7) at 100 °C and low CO$_2$ pressure (5 bar), iEFA$_1$ was fully converted to trans-iCFA$_1$ (entry 6, Table 7) according to an S$_2$1 pathway described in Scheme 24. Independent from the substrate, the authors managed to control the stereochemistry of the final carbonate iCFA$_1$ by proper selection of a suitable nucleophilic halide as described in section 5.2.

Based on previous investigations, the authors proposed that 13 acts as a precatalyst in this cycloaddition process by generating an iron-based Lewis acid (LA) and a (free) N-heterocyclic carbene (NHC), see Scheme 29.\textsuperscript{292}

In the presence of TBAB, the Lewis acid is supposed to evolve into hexa-coordinated tri-halide ate complexes of type [Fe(CNN)X$_3$] (structures A–C in Scheme 29). According to DFT calculations, compound C is the most stable one. After dissociation of one of the halide anions, a coordination site on the Fe-center becomes available for the coordination (activation) of the epoxide prior to nucleophilic attack by the liberated halide. In principle, the free NHC fragment stemming from 13 can also play a role in the reaction by capturing and activating CO$_2$,\textsuperscript{293} but in this specific case this was not discussed or proven.

5.6 Catalytic performance of organocatalysts in the cycloaddition of CO$_2$ to iEFA$_1$

Organocatalysts have received considerable attention as relatively nontoxic, readily available, and in most cases moisture-insensitive compounds.\textsuperscript{294–297} In the cycloaddition of CO$_2$ to epoxides, organocatalysts are often applied as single-component nucleophilic species, such as DBU, TBD and 4-dimethylamino-pyridine (DMAP), or as HBDs in the presence of nucleophilic halide sources.\textsuperscript{1,5,31,298} Thus far, the organocatalyzed carbonation of fatty acids has been generally carried out using both binary and bifunctional catalytic systems, with the second category embedding halide nucleophiles and HBD moieties within the same molecule.

The Werner group developed two families of bifunctional phosphonium halides (such as 9, Scheme 22),\textsuperscript{195} and ammonium halides (such as 20, Table 8),\textsuperscript{299} bearing hydroxyl groups for the activation of epoxides. Such catalysts performed efficiently in the carbonation of terminal epoxides under mild conditions (45–90 °C, 5–10 bar of CO$_2$).

When using iEFA$_1$ as the substrate, 9 promotes its chemoselective carbonation in good yields under demanding reaction conditions (100 °C, 50 bar of CO$_2$), whereas 20 was less efficient under similar conditions providing only low yields of iCFA$_1$ (cf., entries 1 and 2, Table 8). In both cases, the carbonate product was obtained as a mixture of cis and trans stereoisomers. Due to their higher acidity, phenolic hydroxyls are more active HBDs in the cycloaddition of CO$_2$ to epoxides than aliphatic hydroxyls.\textsuperscript{199} Werner prepared bifunctional phenolic phosphonium salts (such as 10; see also Scheme 22) and applied them for the cycloaddition of CO$_2$ to fatty acids. The carbonation of iEFA$_1$ proceed quantitatively under significantly milder conditions than for aliphatic HBDs (entry 3) though without any stereocontrol.\textsuperscript{198} The same group reported the immobilization of 10 either on a traditional support such as silica (i.e., catalyst structure 11; see also Scheme 22),\textsuperscript{197} or on amorphous hydrogenated carbon coating through a plasma-assisted method leading to recyclable catalysts.\textsuperscript{21,300} The application of these heterogeneous compounds for the carbonation of iEFA$_1$ at lower CO$_2$ pressure compared to the homogeneous catalyst 10 led to low yields of iCFA$_1$ (entries 4 and 5).

Dai et al. reported a multifunctional pincer-type organocatalyst (22) for the cycloaddition of CO$_2$ to iEFA$_1$. This catalyst bears several active functionalities such as a nucleophilic imidazolium iodide, a pyridine moiety, –NH and –OH (carboxylic and phenolic) HBDs groups.\textsuperscript{301} Higher loadings of 22 and TBAI were required to produce moderate yields of iCFA$_1$ mostly as the trans-isomer.
Despite its excellent catalytic activity, compound 10 was prepared from the reaction between expensive and toxic (2-hydroxyphenyl)-diphenylphosphine (hazard: GSH07) and carcinogenic 1-bromopropane (hazard: GSH08). Similarly, the synthesis of 22 required 2,6-dibromopyridine as the starting material and a two-step CuI-mediated coupling process.301 In order to better exploit the generally assumed benefits of organocatalysis (lower catalyst cost and toxicity), the application of organocatalytic pair iEFA2 under subcritical conditions (entries 3 and 4) or even at moderate CO2 pressures (entries 5–10), the mildest conditions were reported for the in situ generated complex between CaI 2 and [18]crown-6 (entry 2). Whereas other catalytic systems could afford the carbonation of iEFA2 at slightly higher temperature providing a shorter reaction time and with high (chemo)selectivity for cis-iCFA2 close to that observed with Al-based iCFA1.

5.7 Catalytic performance of binary catalysts in the cycloaddition of CO2 to polyunsaturated EFAs

Several of the catalytic systems discussed before were also applied for the carbonation of bis-unsaturated epoxidized linoleic acid methyl ester iEFA2 (entries 1–10, Table 9). Generally, the reaction conditions optimized for the carbonation of iEFA1 highlighted in the previous sections could be successfully applied to the conversion of iEFA2, therefore there will not be any detailed discussion of each example. For systems operating under supercritical conditions (entries 1 and 2), good epoxide conversion rates and iCFA2 selectivities were obtained using alkali metals halides in combination with crown ethers.24 The best results were obtained using KI/[18]crown-6 (entry 2).

5.8 Catalytic performance of binary catalyst systems in the cycloaddition of CO2 to EVOs

Whereas the cycloaddition of CO2 to EVOs produced from several vegetable oils (soybean, linseed, olive, sunflower etc.) has been reported, here we mostly focus on the carbonation of ESBO as a benchmark substrate. The catalytic performance of various catalyst systems for the carbonation of EVOs is summarized and discussed in Table 10.

![Image](https://example.com/image.png)

Table 8 The comparison of cycloaddition of CO2 to epoxidized MO (iEFA1) catalyzed by various organocatalytic binary/bifunctional systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Cat/additive (mol%)</th>
<th>T, p, t (°C, bar, h)</th>
<th>Yield/selector of iCFA1 (%)</th>
<th>Sel. cis/trans</th>
<th>Sel. ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9 (5.0)</td>
<td>100, 50, 24</td>
<td>65, &gt;99</td>
<td>40 : 60</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20 (2.0)</td>
<td>100, 50, 16</td>
<td>20, &gt;99</td>
<td>48 : 52</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10 (5.0)</td>
<td>80, 25, 24</td>
<td>98, &gt;99</td>
<td>54 : 46</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>21 (1.0)</td>
<td>90, 10, 24</td>
<td>30, &gt;99</td>
<td>28 : 72</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11 (2.0)</td>
<td>90, 10, 24</td>
<td>26, &gt;99</td>
<td>43 : 57</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>22 (4.0)</td>
<td>100, 5, 24</td>
<td>51, &gt;99</td>
<td>19 : 81</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>TBAI (12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 (1.5)</td>
<td>100, 5, 48</td>
<td>90, &gt;99</td>
<td>77 : 23</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) cis/trans ratio determined by 1H NMR by integration of the corresponding signals of cis and trans carbonate products, isolated yields of iCFA1 are given. b) GC yield. c) Not reported. d) Yield determined by 1H NMR using mesitylene as the internal standard. Note that p is the partial pressure of CO2.

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Green Chem., 2021, 23, 1077–1113 | 1101
Although in the case of THA-Cr-Si-POM/TBAB only a relatively modest yield of carbonated product was observed (entry 1). \(^{212}\) Therefore, these examples will not be discussed in detail to avoid overlap with previous sections. A different system able to efficiently carbonate ESBO under supercritical conditions was developed by Jerome, Detrembleur et al. in a study targeting the preparation of NIPU foams from CVOs. \(^{312}\) The authors used TBAB in the presence of fluorinated HBD \([1,3\text{-bis(2-hydroxyhexafluoroisopropyl)}]\text{benzene}, 23\] \(^{198}\) providing quantitative carbonation of ESBO in 10 h (entry 2).

Rokicki et al. reported the carbonation of ESBO at lower CO\(_2\) pressure than the previous example but a higher reaction temperature and longer reaction time (5 d) were needed employing KI/18-crown-6 as a catalyst. In this case, the CVO was obtained in high yield in the form of cis- and trans mixture (entry 3). \(^{214}\)

Previously discussed coordination compounds (see also Table 6) displayed good performance in the carbonation of EVOs under relatively high pressure (entries 4–6, Table 10). A simple alkali salt (CaCl\(_2\)) displayed a catalytic activity comparable to these aforementioned Lewis acid based systems for the carbonation of ESBO in the presence of TBAB albeit at a significantly higher reaction temperature (entry 7). \(^{315}\) In a related contribution, the same authors showed that CaCl\(_2\)/TBAB can be used for the synthesis of carbonated soybean oil (CSBO) under a flow of atmospheric CO\(_2\) at 110 °C, although at the expense of the reaction time. \(^{254}\)

A different, readily available and highly Lewis acidic compound, SnCl\(_4\)-5H\(_2\)O, used in combination with TBAB allowed for quantitative conversion of ESBO into CSBO under moderate CO\(_2\) pressure but at a high temperature (entry 8). \(^{316}\) Previously discussed organocatalytic systems 10 and 14/TBAB (entries 9 and 10) and coordination complex 4 combined with PPh\(_3\) (entry 11) had attractive catalytic activity for the synthesis of CSBO under milder temperatures and/or CO\(_2\) pressures with performances comparable to those observed for fatty acids (see Tables 6 and 8). Thus, it appears that the type of ester and the presence of saturated fatty acid chains in the starting material has a negligible impact on the reactivity of the epoxide moieties. As a testament for this hypothesis, 14/TBAB proved to be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>iEFA</th>
<th>Cat/additive</th>
<th>T, p, t (°C, bar, h)</th>
<th>Conv. (%)</th>
<th>Sel. For iCFA</th>
<th>Yield (%)</th>
<th>Sel. (cis:trans)</th>
<th>Ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>iEFA2</td>
<td>THA-Cr-Si-POM (2.0) (^d)</td>
<td>100, 130, 6</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>iEFA2</td>
<td>KI (5.0 wt%)</td>
<td>100, 100, 17</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>iEFA2</td>
<td>FeCl(_3) (1.0)</td>
<td>100, 50, 48</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>iEFA2</td>
<td>15-Br (1.0)</td>
<td>100, 50, 48</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>70:30</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>iEFA2</td>
<td>10 (2.5)</td>
<td>80, 25, 48</td>
<td>&gt;99</td>
<td>&gt;99</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>iEFA2</td>
<td>14 (0.75)</td>
<td>100, 10, 48</td>
<td>&gt;99</td>
<td>&gt;99</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>iEFA2</td>
<td>THA-Cr-Si-POM (2.0)</td>
<td>70, 10, 24</td>
<td>&gt;99</td>
<td>&gt;99</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>97:3</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>iEFA2</td>
<td>4 (4.0)</td>
<td>100, 5, 48</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>301</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>iEFA2</td>
<td>PPh(_3) (10)</td>
<td>45, 5, 48</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>iEFA2</td>
<td>13 (1.0)</td>
<td>100, 5, 24</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16:84</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>iEFA3</td>
<td>THA-Cr-Si-POM (2.0)</td>
<td>100, 130, 6</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>iEFA3</td>
<td>1(^{15}) (0.20)</td>
<td>70, 10, 24</td>
<td>&gt;99</td>
<td>&gt;99</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>68:32</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>iEFA3</td>
<td>1(^{18}) (1.0)</td>
<td>70, 10, 24</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>&gt;99</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>96:4</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>iEFA3</td>
<td>14 (1.5)</td>
<td>80, 10, 48</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>93:7</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) The loading value in brackets is relative to the total amount of epoxides unit. \(^b\) Conversion and selectivity determined by \(^1\)H NMR. \(^c\) Overall cis: trans ratio determined by \(^1\)H NMR from the integration of the corresponding signals of cis and trans carbonate units. \(^d\) THA = tetra-n-heptylammonium. \(^e\) Not reported. \(^f\) Conversion determined by \(^1\)H NMR and GC. Note that p is the partial pressure of CO\(_2\), 18-C-6 is short for 18-crown-6.
an efficient catalyst for the carbonation of epoxidized FAME.\textsuperscript{231}

Finally, Lewis acidic metal complexes were tested for the carbonation of epoxidized sunflower oil (ESFO) under atmospheric pressure in the presence of TBAB. Metalloporphyrins are known as efficient catalysts for the cycloaddition of CO\textsubscript{2} to epoxides under ambient pressure.\textsuperscript{1,317–319} Safari \textit{et al.} showed that the Mn(II) metalloporphyrin complex 24a in the presence of TBAB permits full carbonation of ESFO under atmospheric pressure at 100 °C in 30 h, whereas the analogous Zn(II) complex 24b is inactive under identical conditions (entries 12 and 13).\textsuperscript{320}

5.9 Recyclable catalytic systems for the carbonation of EFAs and EVOs

Whereas most of the highlighted catalytic systems are homogeneous, the development of recoverable and recyclable heterogeneous catalysts is crucial for easier purification of the products and for the sake of cost and sustainability, especially in the context of large-scale application. The development and communication of recyclable catalysts for the carbonation of fatty acids is rare.

In the case of TBAB as homogeneous catalyst for the carbonation of ESBO, Doll and Erhan were able to recover TBAB from the products mixture by liquid–liquid extraction using water followed by freeze-drying (96% recovery rate). However, they did not report the catalyst reuse for the same reaction.\textsuperscript{237} Similarly, D’Elia \textit{et al.} attempted to recover 14/TBAC from the crude reaction mixture containing iCFA\textsubscript{1} by extraction with water.\textsuperscript{231} In this case, the recovered catalyst showed poor reusability as it converted only 38% of iEFA\textsubscript{1} into iCFA\textsubscript{1} without altering the chemoselectivity for the carbonate product.

Some homogeneous catalysts highlighted in the previous sections such as 20,\textsuperscript{299} 24a,\textsuperscript{126} CaI\textsubscript{2}/PEG-DME-500,\textsuperscript{282} and KI/hydroxyl-functionalized imidazoles,\textsuperscript{281} can be recovered after the synthesis of the respective CCs by methods such as

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>EVO</th>
<th>Cat/additive (mol%)</th>
<th>T, p, t (°C, bar, h)</th>
<th>Yield (%)</th>
<th>Sel.\textsuperscript{a} for CVO</th>
<th>Ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Soybean</td>
<td>THA-Cr-Si-POM (2.0)\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>100, 130, 24</td>
<td>41\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Soybean</td>
<td>23 (1.0)</td>
<td>100, 100, 10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>(\text{Not reported.})</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Soybean</td>
<td>KI (2.0) [18]crown-6 (1.0)</td>
<td>130, 60, 120</td>
<td>98\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>(\text{Not reported.})</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Soybean</td>
<td>12 (2.0) FeCl\textsubscript{3} (0.25)</td>
<td>100, 50, 24</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>(&gt;99)</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Soybean</td>
<td>15-Br (2.0) MoO\textsubscript{3} (0.25)</td>
<td>100, 50, 20</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sunflower</td>
<td>CaI\textsubscript{2} (5.0) PEG-DME-500 (5.0)\textsuperscript{f}</td>
<td>90, 50, 120</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>(\text{Not reported.})</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Soybean</td>
<td>CaCl\textsubscript{2} (5.0) TBAB (2.5)</td>
<td>140, 40, 40</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>(\text{Not reported.})</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Soybean</td>
<td>SnCl\textsubscript{2} 5H\textsubscript{2}O (1.0) TBAB (3.0)</td>
<td>140, 15, 30</td>
<td>99\textsuperscript{f}</td>
<td>(\text{Not reported.})</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Soybean</td>
<td>10 (5.0)</td>
<td>80, 25, 24</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>(\text{Not reported.})</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Soybean</td>
<td>14 (1.5)</td>
<td>100, 5, 48</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Soybean</td>
<td>4 (5.0) PPh\textsubscript{3} (5.0)</td>
<td>45, 5, 24</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>(&gt;99)</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sunflower</td>
<td>24a (4.0)</td>
<td>100, 1, 30</td>
<td>99\textsuperscript{f}</td>
<td>(\text{Not reported.})</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sunflower</td>
<td>24b (4.0)</td>
<td>100, 1, 30</td>
<td>8\textsuperscript{f}</td>
<td>(\text{Not reported.})</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a} Selectivity determined by \(\text{H} \text{NMR.}\) \textsuperscript{b} THA: tetra-n-heptylammonium. \textsuperscript{c} Conversion determined by \(\text{H} \text{NMR.}\) \(\text{Not reported.}\) \textsuperscript{e} Conversion determined by standard titration. \textsuperscript{f} PEG DME 500: poly(ethyleneglycol) dimethyl ether with \(M_n \sim 400 \text{ g mol}^{-1}.\) \(\text{Not reported.}\) \textsuperscript{g} Yield determined by \(\text{H} \text{NMR.}\)
column chromatography, product distillation and liquid-liquid extraction, and reused for the same cycloaddition reaction. However, their recyclability for the synthesis of CFAs and CVOs has not been specifically addressed. Catalyst separation protocols that require evaporation of large volumes of water or distillation of high-boiling carbonate esters are likely not convenient or sustainable for commercial exploitation. Along similar lines, Werner et al. prepared some heterogeneous, reusable catalysts such as NIPUs.21,306 However, their recyclability was not demonstrated for processes that focus on carbonate oleochemicals.

Bühr and Mühlaupt reported the application of silica-supported 4-pyrylidinopyridinium iodide (previously developed by Motokura)21 as a heterogeneous catalyst for the carbonation of ESBO and epoxidized linseed oils (ELSO) with full conversion of the respective EVO realized at high temperature and moderate pressure (140 °C, 30 bar of CO2, 45 h).271 Whereas the catalyst could be easily recovered by simple filtration after the reaction and thus avoid product purification by liquid-liquid extraction, the performance of the recycled catalyst for a new run of carbonation was not reported.

As a rare example of a recyclable catalyst for the coupling of CO2 and epoxidized oleochemicals, Wang et al. reported a ZrO2-supported heteropolyacid (H3PW12O40/ZrO2) that was successfully applied for the carbonation of ESBO at high temperature (150 °C) and moderate CO2 pressure (10 bar) in the presence of DMF.322 Its catalytic performance was attributed to the synergy between the strong acidic metal centers of the heteropolyacid and the basic zirconia surface providing sites for CO2 adsorption and activation. Nonetheless, H3PW12O40/ZrO2 showed poor reuse features due to the strong adsorption of bulky reaction by-products at the active sites of the catalyst surface that could not be efficiently regenerated even after calcination. To improve the regeneration of an active catalyst, the catalyst was modified by doping it with platinum (5%) via a coimpregnation approach. As expected, the addition of platinum increased the ability of the material to oxidize hydrocarbons, and the undesired adsorbed organic molecules could be removed below 300 °C.233 At the same time, the presence of platinum did not affect the efficiency of the carbonation reaction. The Pt-doped H3PW12O40/ZrO2 displayed significantly better recyclability despite the gradual decrease in catalytic activity upon reuse with the EVO conversion dropping from 93 to 78% after four catalytic cycles. An obvious drawback of this catalytic system is the need for expensive noble metal dopant to achieve reusability.

A different way to generate internal carbonates from fatty acids was reported by Cádiz et al. by using heptanal, a product of the thermal cracking of castor oil, as a novel precursor for NIPU synthesis.224 The Horner–Wadsworth–Emmons reaction between heptanal and trimethyl phosphonoacetate yielded methyl 2-nonenolate that was further oxidized to achieve the corresponding 2,3-epoxynonanoic methyl ester (see Scheme 30) as a short-chain epoxidized fatty acid derivative.

Interestingly, the carbonation of the latter compound can be performed by employing sugarcane bagasse as a heterogeneous HBD in combination with TBAB at 80 °C and about 41 bar of CO2 pressure (Scheme 30). The insolubility of sugarcane bagasse allows for easy separation from the crude reaction mixture by simple filtration. This catalyst component can be reused for at least six runs with only slight loss of activity. However, the chemoselectivity toward carbonate for this system was only moderate due to secondary reactions (such as hydrolysis) taking place involving the epoxy groups. Additionally, fresh TBAB, likely the most expensive catalyst component, had to be added in each consecutive cycle.

6. Conclusions and perspectives

This tutorial review demonstrates that the area of biobased carbonate synthesis has tremendously advanced over the last decade. Key to the success has been and will continue to be the development of suitable catalysts that, according to the principles of green chemistry and commercial applications, should preferentially be low-cost, readily available, scalable and sustainable in terms of their components. The incorporation of carbon dioxide in biobased feedstock such as terpenes, sugar-derived architectures, glycerol and fatty acids (including vegetable oils) offers a way to increase the application potential of low-value materials into high-value functional additives, solvents and polymer precursors for, inter alia, NIPUs.

There are several aspects that still deserve attention. Most of the catalytic processes developed to date are operated with purified and single-component substrates, whereas larger scale commercially available feedstock are often mixtures containing impurities that may affect the stability, activity and reuse of the involved catalyst system. Therefore, it is important to further develop catalysts that are not only able to combine high (chemo)selectivity and sufficient activity, but are also compatible with less defined mixtures of waste streams such as the case for fatty acids that are available from the biodiesel industry. As catalyst cost is paramount for scale up, cheap(er) catalyst design is a crucial aspect and particularly when bulk chemical applications are foreseen for biocarbonates attained by integration of CO2 into biomolecules.

In the following sections we present a summary of key advances and future perspectives for each class of compounds.
6.1 Glycerol carbonate

Glycerol carbonate is a promising outlet for the valorization of waste glycerol from saponification reactions, and it is expected to represent a valuable bio-refinery product.\(^{325}\) The ideal route to prepare GC, i.e. the combination of two renewable substrates such as glycerol and CO\(_2\), is affected by thermodynamic limitations that lead to low GC yields under typically harsh reaction conditions. Such limitations can be partially eased by the use of dehydrating agents or by the presence of additional reaction components that, however, unavoidably negatively affect the overall sustainability, cost, and purification requirements of the product. In this context, the atom-economic cycloaddition of CO\(_2\) to glycidol appears as a convenient approach as it can be carried out under relatively mild conditions using molecular catalysts based on readily available organic compounds such as ascorbic acid. Moreover, recent advances in the synthesis of GC from glycidol and CO\(_2\) via Payne rearrangement chemistry rather than the traditional cycloaddition mechanism,\(^{99}\) demonstrate that this reaction can be carried out using single-component and halogen-free systems. Therefore, the development of bio-based homogeneous and heterogeneous catalysts exploiting such a reaction manifold for the synthesis of GC is highly promising. To note, the sustainability of the glycidol-based approach can be increased by the implementation of green routes to produce the latter compound; for instance using 2-chloro-1,3-propanediol, a waste product of the Epicerol process, as the substrate,\(^{326}\) or from glycerol deoxydehydration affording allyl alcohol.\(^{327}\)

6.2 Terpene-derived carbonates

Terpene compounds have been used for a long time for the preparation of fragrances, flavors and pharmaceuticals. Some terpenes, such as pinene, carvone, myrcene and limonene are currently obtained from turpentine oil, paper pulping process and extraction from citrus fruits.\(^{328}\) Such terpenes are produced on million tons per year, and have been also proposed for the production of biofuels.\(^{329}\) Interestingly, terpene-based cyclic carbonates have been isolated from natural sources with some of them showing biological activity. In comparison with other bio-based feedstock, terpenes present an impressive structural diversity, which offers the possibility to produce complex cyclic carbonate structures by relatively easy transformations (i.e., oxidation followed by coupling with CO\(_2\)). Consequently, the synthesis of terpene-based CCs has gained momentum, and future investigations could lead to the discovery of compounds with promising pharmaceutical activity. However, most of the current reports focus on limonene- and pinene-derived carbonates. Thus, future investigations are required to expand the portfolio of terpene-based carbonates. To date, different catalytic methodologies for the coupling of CO\(_2\) with terpene oxides have been reported, with in several cases significant byproduct formation when more complex substrates were employed. This clearly calls for further development of more efficient and selective catalytic systems.

In recent years, the use of terpene oxides in the field of sustainable polymer chemistry has also emerged.\(^{310}\) In particular, polycarbonates such as poly(limonene carbonate) and poly(menth-2-ene carbonate) have been obtained by direct coupling with CO\(_2\).\(^{111,330}\) Unfortunately, up to now these reactions can only be promoted by two types of catalytic systems. Alternatively, polycarbonates can be obtained via ROP of reactive cyclic carbonates in the presence of simple catalytic systems.\(^{311,332}\) We believe that further investigations should focus on the discovery of terpene-based cyclic carbonates that will serve as monomers for the production of polycarbonates by easy-to-tune ROP protocols. This will offer an alternative strategy for the production of polymeric materials with attractive properties.

6.3 Sugar-derived carbonates

Thanks to the ubiquity of sugars in nature, this class of compounds has been recognized as an attractive sustainable feedstock. However, in order to avoid competition with the food processing industry, a lot of research is still needed that should focus on sugar-based biofuels, chemicals and polymers obtained from widely-available cellulose and lignocellulose.\(^{333–335}\) Sugar structures are characterized by the presence of hydroxyl groups and, consequently, their transformation into cyclic carbonates has been mainly conducted by well-known stoichiometric procedures in the presence of non-ideal reactants such as phosgene. During the last few years, alternative methodologies have been reported for the carbonation of sugars under milder conditions. In general, these procedures are based on the reaction of low pressure carbon dioxide (1–10 bar) with an in situ formed activated alcohol species, followed by cyclization promoted by elimination of a suitable leaving group (e.g., OTs or OM). These reactions do avoid the use of phosgene-related compounds, though they still require the presence of stoichiometric amounts of base (e.g., DBU and Et\(_3\)N) and halogenated reactants (e.g., TsCl and CH\(_2\)Br\(_2\)). Future development of catalytic methodologies are likely needed to improve the potential application and scale up of this synthetic process.

Interestingly, the possibility to control the stereochemistry during the synthesis of sugar-based CCs has also been demonstrated. This aspect is highly relevant, especially with respect to the use of such carbonates as monomers in polycarbonate synthesis. Indeed, the stereochemistry of bicyclic carbonates strongly influences their reactivity during the polymerization process, and the possibility to compare compounds with different stereochemistry will offer the possibility to further investigate structure–reactivity relationships. In addition, phosgene-free routes for sugar-based carbonates render these molecules as an attracting platform for the synthesis of bio-based NIPUs.

6.4 Fatty acid and vegetable oil-based carbonates

The attractive aspects of these feedstock is that they are available in large volumes either as-produced or from the recovery of spent cooking oils. Carbonated vegetable oils are versatile...
substrates for the preparation of NIPUs via aminolysis reactions (i.e., amine-promoted ring-opening of the cyclic carbonate). With NIPUs being regarded as ideal green polymers for the replacement of phosgene-based PUs, it is expected that the demand for these types of biocarbonates will considerably increase in the near future when current process issues such as low molecular weights, low aminolysis rates and side reactions can be adequately solved.\(^{336}\) Additionally we foresee that carbonated fatty acids could be suitable substrates for the preparation of additives to improve the anti-wear properties of group II base oils.\(^{337}\)

In the last decade, the synthesis of fatty acid/vegetable oil based CCs has been characterized by a remarkable development of several binary homogeneous systems able to catalyze the carbonation reactions of oils under practical reaction conditions (45–100 °C, 5–10 bar). This is especially relevant when comparing to the exclusive use of quaternary ammonium or phosphonium salts and, often, binary systems provide better/improved control of the stereochemistry of the final products. As a drawback, and due to the low reactivity of the substrates, long reaction times (24–48 h) are generally required to reach high degrees of conversion (>80%). Therefore, substantial improvement of the performance of homogeneous (binary) catalysts for the carbonation of vegetable oil-derived epoxides is a future requisite. It can be anticipated that a substantial increase in the demand for carbonated vegetable oils should be met by the development of heterogeneous, or at least, recyclable catalysts with powerful reactivity profiles. As discussed in section 5.8, there is limited knowledge on the development of heterogeneous catalysts for the carbonation of epoxidized fatty acids, and up to now no viable catalyst has been developed for application in large-scale production. This may be related to the more challenging nature of internal epoxide conversion in the presence of CO\(_2\) mediated by heterogeneous catalysts, making the latter much less efficient than their homogeneous counterparts.\(^{338}\) A different and promising approach to the development of recoverable and reusable catalysts for the carbonation of epoxidized fatty acids was recently proposed by Duguet \textit{et al.} by using a thermomorphic polyethylene-supported catalyst.\(^{339}\) In this latter example, the polymeric catalyst is soluble in the reaction mixture (\(T = 100 ^\circ\text{C}\)) but insoluble in the product at room temperature. Therefore, it can essentially be recovered by filtration and its recyclability for the carbonation of epoxidized methyl oleate was indeed demonstrated. Whereas such polymeric catalysts are still limited by relatively modest molecular weights (~1000 g mol\(^{-1}\)) and low product stereoselectivity, the concept of using a catalyst that can be separated from the carbonated fatty acid after reaction is a promising molecular approach and could be further developed in the future.

An interesting direction for all the categories of biobased substrates presented in this account could be to merge flow catalysis approaches with biocarbonate synthesis, with catalyst recycling and a continuous operation mode helping to increase the overall sustainability. Parallel flow catalysis may help to scale up the preparation of any desired target, but market demands will likely determine which type of process will be preferred to create critical amounts of the biocarbonate for eventual (commercial) use.

From the diversity and functionality of biobased structures that can be accessed via catalytic process, and the prospect of biocarbonates in various academic and commercial applications, a bright future is ahead of these CO\(_2\) based cyclic carbonates.

**Conflicts of interest**

There are no conflicts to declare by the authors.

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**Notes and references**


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