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Oxo Alcohols

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Abstract

This report consolidates and updates the IHS Process Economics Program (PEP) technical and economic analyses of oxo alcohols manufacturing technologies from 1995 to the present. The term “oxo” is the generic name for the chemicals manufactured from “oxo synthesis” chemistry, which is the hydroformylation of olefins by using syngas, carbon monoxide, and hydrogen. The oxo process or hydroformylation of olefins with synthesis gas (or syngas) is the principal route to C₃–C₁₅ aldehydes, which are converted to alcohols, acids, or other derivatives. By far the most important oxo chemical is n-butyraldehyde, followed by C₆–C₁₃ aldehydes for plasticizer alcohols, isobutyraldehyde, valeraldehyde, and C₁₂–C₁₈ aldehydes for detergent alcohols. Nearly all oxo aldehydes are converted to derivatives in plants adjacent to the hydroformylation unit; very small volumes of oxo aldehydes are transported.

Technical descriptions and economic analyses are provided herein for the eleven technologies listed below, four of which produce the intermediate aldehydes—three processes for n-butyraldehyde and one process for n-valeraldehyde—as feedstocks to be converted to oxo alcohol products. The other seven technologies covered produce a range of C₄–C₁₅ oxo alcohols.

- Dow-Davy’s low-pressure (LP) OxoSM SELECTORSM process for n-butyraldehyde by propylene.
- The Union Carbide, Davy McKee, and Johnson Matthey LP oxo process with liquid recycle for n-butyraldehyde by propylene. (Union Carbide Corporation is a subsidiary of Dow Chemical Company, and Davy Process Technology Limited is a subsidiary of Johnson Matthey.)
- The Ruhrchemie/Rhône-Poulenc process for n-butyraldehyde by propylene. (Rhône Poulenc/Ruhrchemie is a subsidiary of Sanofi.)
- The BASF process for n-valeraldehyde by raffinate II C₄ olefins (2-butene).
- The BASF process for n-butanol by n-butyraldehyde.
- The hydrogenation to amyl alcohol by n-valeraldehyde.
- The Mitsubishi process for 2-ethylhexanol by n-butyraldehyde.
- The Exxon process for isononyl alcohol by isooctane.
- The Exxon process for isodecyl (isodecanol) alcohol by nonenes.
- The BASF process for 2-propylheptanol by n-valeraldehyde.
- The Shell process for primary linear C₁₂–C₁₅ alcohols by linear olefins.

These and other technologies (past, present, and emerging) for oxo alcohol production are reviewed with a bibliography and abstracts for relevant patents since the mid-1990s. The industry status is updated, and the modern oxo alcohol processes are summarized in terms of economics and the key process indicators (KPI) of capital intensity and carbon intensity. Lastly, the iPEP Navigator interactive module is attached to the electronic version of this report. iPEP Navigator provides an economic snapshot for each process, allowing the user to select and compare the processes, units, and regions of interest.

Contents

1	Introduction	14
2	Summary	16
	Manufacturing processes	18
	n-Butyraldehyde (NBAL)	19
	n-Valeraldehyde (NVAL)	19
	n-Butanol (NBA)	19
	Amyl alcohol	19
	2-Ethylhexanol (2-EH)	19
	Isononyl alcohol (INA)	19
	Isodecyl alcohol (isodecanol)	20
	2-Propylheptanol (2-PH)	20
	Primary C ₁₂ -C ₁₅ linear alcohols	20
	Block flow diagrams for 11 technologies	20
	Process overview for 11 technologies	24
	Dow-Davy's low-pressure Oxo SM SELECTOR SM process for n-butyraldehyde by propylene	24
	Union Carbide, Davy McKee, and Johnson Matthey process for n-butyraldehyde by propylene	24
	Ruhrchemie/Rhône-Poulenc process for n-butyraldehyde by propylene	25
	BASF process for n-valeraldehyde by raffinate II C ₄ olefins, 2-butene	25
	BASF process for n-butanol by n-butyraldehyde	25
	Hydrogenation to amyl alcohol by n-valeraldehyde	25
	Mitsubishi process for 2-ethylhexanol by n-butyraldehyde	25
	Exxon process for isononyl alcohol by isooctane	26
	Exxon process for isodecyl (isodecanol) alcohol by nonenes	26
	BASF process for 2-propylheptanol by n-valeraldehyde	27
	Shell process for primary linear C ₁₂ -C ₁₅ alcohols by linear olefins	27
	Summary of oxo alcohol process technologies	28
	Process economics	32
	Key process indicators	41
3	Industry status	46
4	Technology review	54
	Background technology	55
	New developments	56
	Recent Abengoa activity	56
	Patent review	56
	Recent Dow patent	56
	Recent Shell patent	57
	Recent ExxonMobil patents	57
	Recent BASF patent	57
	Recent Mitsubishi patents	59
	Background hydroformylation	61
	Homogeneous catalysis	61
	Hydroformylation and catalysis	63
	Catalytic cycle	64
	Catalyst and ligand degradation	65

n-Butyraldehyde (NBAL)	66
Catalyst system	66
Catalyst mechanism	68
Catalyst degradation	69
Reaction medium	69
Catalyst recovery	70
Reaction conditions	72
Molar ratio of H ₂ to CO	72
Process description	72
Increasing yield on propylene	73
Selection of catalyst ligands	74
Phosphite ligands	74
Phosphine ligands	75
Water-soluble Rh/phosphine complexes	75
Control of the n:i ratio	76
Separation of the aldehyde and catalyst complex	76
Coproduct of aldehydes and ketones	76
Processes for regenerating catalysts	76
n-Valeraldehyde (NVAL)	77
Catalyst system	77
Reaction conditions	78
By-products/impurities	79
BASF	79
Dow	81
Aldol condensation	82
Aldol condensation reactions	82
BASF aldol condensation	83
Davy aldolization-dehydration process	83
Aldolization and dehydration	85
n-Butanol (NBA)	87
Catalyst system	87
Reaction conditions	88
Main by-products	88
Product separation	88
Amyl alcohol	88
Hydrogenation	89
Chemistry for hydrogenation	89
2-Ethylhexanol (2-EH)	89
Catalyst system	90
Reaction conditions	90
Reaction stages	90
Isononyl alcohol (INA)	91
Cobalt catalyst recovery	91
Hydrocobalt dicobalt-tetracarbonyl octacarbonyl	92
Carbonyl salt (aqueous)	92
Carbonyl formic cobalt salt acid formate	92
Stripping	93
Demetalling	93
Demetalling downstream of the stripper (C ₈ + products)	93
Demetalling upstream of the stripper (C ₈ and lower products)	93
Preforming	94
Isodecyl alcohol (isodecanol, or IDA)	94
Branched-chain oxo alcohols	94

Physical/chemical properties	95
Environmental issues	95
ExxonMobil process configuration	96
2-Propylheptanol (2-PH)	97
Aldol condensation	97
Chemistry for aldol condensation	98
Hydrogenation	98
Chemistry for hydrogenation	98
Primary linear C ₁₂ –C ₁₅ alcohols	99
Chemistry	99
Catalyst limitations	100
Improved linearity	101
5 n-Butyraldehyde production	102
Dow and Davy Process Technology LP Oxo SM SELECTOR SM technology	102
Process description	103
Section 100—NBAL production	103
Section 200—NBAL recovery	105
Section 300—Propylene recovery	105
Process discussion	112
Raw materials	112
Propylene feedstock purity	112
Catalyst system	112
Reactor sizing	113
Reaction conditions	113
Process configuration	113
Product recovery	114
Materials of construction	114
Cost estimates	114
Fixed-capital costs	114
Production costs	115
Process description—Oil-soluble phosphine process with dual reactor	119
Waste streams	122
Process discussion—Oil-soluble phosphine process with dual reactors	124
Materials of construction	125
Capital and operating costs	125
Process description—water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor	129
Waste streams	134
Process discussion—Water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor	136
Materials of construction	136
Uncertainties	136
Capital and operating costs—Water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor	137
6 n-Valeraldehyde from C₄ olefins by BASF hydroformylation	142
Process description	142
Chemistry	142
Main reactions	142
Process chemistry	143
Hydroformylation	143
Process description	144
Section 100—Feed distillation with equilibrium reaction and isomerization plus hydrogenation	145
Section 200—Hydroformylation with pressure separation and recovery distillation	145
Basis for design and evaluation	146
Design references	146
Stream flows	148

Environmental	149
Process description	152
Section 100—Feed distillation with equilibrium reaction and isomerization plus hydrogenation	152
Section 200—Hydroformylation with pressure separation and recovery distillation	153
Offsite storage	154
Cost estimates	154
Fixed-capital costs	154
Production costs	155
7 Production of n-butanol from n-butyraldehyde	159
Process description	160
Section 100—n-Butanol production	160
Section 200—n-Butanol purification	161
Process discussion	166
Raw material source	166
Catalysts	166
Reactor	166
Heat exchangers sizing	167
Product recovery	167
Materials of construction	167
Equipment listing and utilities consumption	167
Cost estimates	167
Fixed-capital costs	167
Production costs	168
8 Production of amyl alcohol from n-valeraldehyde	173
Hydrogenation	173
Chemistry for hydrogenation	173
Process description	174
Section 100—Amyl alcohol production	174
Process discussion	178
Raw material source	178
Catalysts	178
Reactors	179
Heat exchanger sizing	179
Product recovery	179
Materials of construction	179
Equipment listing and utilities consumption	179
Cost estimates	180
Fixed-capital costs	180
Production costs	180
9 Production of 2-ethylhexanol from n-butyraldehyde	185
Process description	186
Section 100—2-Ethylhexenal production	186
Section 200—2-Ethylhexanol production	187
Process discussion	194
Raw material source	195
Catalysts	195
Reactors	195
Heat exchangers sizing	196
Product recovery	196
Materials of construction	196
Equipment listing and utilities consumption	196
Cost estimates	196
Fixed-capital costs	197

Production costs	197
10 Exxon process for isononyl alcohol using cobalt catalyst	202
Process description	202
Section 100—Hydroformylation	202
Section 200—Co catalyst recovery and product demetalling	202
Demetalling	203
Preforming	203
Section 300—Hydrogenation and product refining	203
Process discussion	211
Cracking of heavy by-products	211
Cost estimates	211
Fixed-capital costs	212
Production costs	212
11 Exxon process for production of isodecyl alcohol	217
Process description	217
Section 100—Hydroformylation of nonenes	217
Section 200—Recovery of the cobalt catalyst	218
Section 300—hydrogenation and purification	218
Process discussion	228
Heat exchanger sizing	229
Product recovery	229
Offsite storage	229
Cost estimates	230
Fixed-capital costs	230
Production costs	230
12 Production of 2-propylheptanol from n-valeraldehyde	237
Aldol condensation	237
Chemistry for aldol condensation	237
Hydrogenation	238
Chemistry for hydrogenation	238
Process description	238
Section 100—2-Propyl-2-heptenal production	239
Section 200—2-Propylheptanol production	240
Process discussion	247
Raw material source	247
Catalysts	247
Reactors	247
Heat exchanger sizing	248
Product recovery	248
Materials of construction	248
Equipment listing and utilities consumption	248
Cost estimates	248
Fixed-capital costs	249
Production costs	249
13 Primary linear C₁₂–C₁₅ alcohols	255
Process description	255
Process discussion	260
Flexibility of products and feedstocks	261
Feeds	261
Product linearity	261
Oxo reactor product separation	261
Paraffin by-product	262
Dial removal	262

Dowtherme®	262
Materials of construction	262
Cost estimates	262
Fixed-capital costs	263
Production costs	263
Appendix A—Design and cost bases	269
Design conditions	270
Cost bases	270
Capital Investment	270
Production costs	271
Effect of operating level on production costs	271
Appendix B—References by document number	273
Open literature	274
IHS publications	285
Patents	285
Appendix C—Patent summaries by assignee	289
Appendix D—Process flow diagrams	335
Appendix E—iPEP Navigator for oxo alcohols	353

Figures

Figure 2.1	Block flow diagrams of processes for interderivatives and oxo alcohols production	21
Figure 2.2	Factors of production aldehyde processes	39
Figure 2.3	Factors of production for oxo alcohols processes	40
Figure 2.4	Key process indicators	42
Figure 2.5	Key process indicators	43
Figure 2.6	CO ₂ footprint breakdown per ton of aldehydes	44
Figure 2.7	CO ₂ footprint breakdown per ton of oxo alcohols	45
Figure 3.1	World consumption of oxo chemicals—2014	48
Figure 3.2	World consumption of plasticizer alcohols—2014	50
Figure 3.3	World production capacity for detergent alcohols by major producer—2012	51
Figure 4.1	Multiphase reactor	58
Figure 4.2	Multiphase reactor with after-reactor	59
Figure 4.3	Feedstock olefin heated by external source	60
Figure 4.4	Feedstock olefin heated by heat of hydroformylation reaction	60
Figure 4.5	Chemicals from heterogeneous catalytic (and noncatalytic) processing of crude oil	62
Figure 4.6	Chemicals and classes of chemicals manufactured by homogeneous catalytic processes	62
Figure 4.7	Basic catalytic cycle for the hydroformylation of propylene with Rh/PPh ₃ -based catalyst	65
Figure 4.8	Basic catalytic cycle for the degradation of PPh ₃ ligand and catalyst	65
Figure 4.9	n-Butyraldehyde production Rh/phosphine catalyst hydroformylation mechanism	68
Figure 4.10	NBAL production from propylene	73
Figure 4.11	Ligand structure	78
Figure 4.12	BASF process scheme for n-valeraldehyde	80
Figure 4.13	Conversion of C ₄ raffinate as a function of time	81
Figure 4.14	Calixarene bisphosphate ligand	82
Figure 4.15	Aldol condensation and hydrogenation process flow diagram	83
Figure 4.16	Aldolization-dehydration process	84

Figure 4.17	Exxon process for INA based on PEP'S current understanding	91
Figure 4.18	Exxon process for INA—Catalyst recovery	92
Figure 4.19	ExxonMobil hydroformylation	96
Figure 4.20	Conventional cobalt catalyst mechanism	100
Figure 4.21	Structure of a typical complex with tributyl phosphine ligand	101
Figure 5.2	n-Butyraldehyde production by LP Oxo SM SELECTOR SM process as a function of product value and plant operating level	119
Figure 5.4	n-Butyraldehyde by oil-soluble phosphine process as a function of product value versus plant operating level	129
Figure 5.6	n-Butyraldehyde by water-soluble phosphine process as a function of product value versus plant operating level	141
Figure 6.2	Ligand structure	144
Figure 6.3	n-Valeraldehyde trimer	144
Figure 6.4	n-Valeraldehyde from C ₄ olefins by BASF hydroformylation as a function of product value versus plant operating level	158
Figure 7.2	n-Butanol from n-butyraldehyde as a function of product value versus plant operating level	172
Figure 8.2	Amyl alcohol from n-valeraldehyde as a function of product value versus plant operating level	184
Figure 9.2	2-Ethylhexanol from n-butyraldehyde as a function of product value versus plant operating level	201
Figure 10.2	Isononyl alcohol by the Exxon process as a function of product value versus plant operating level	216
Figure 11.2	Isodecanol from nonenes via Exxon process as a function of product value versus plant operating level	236
Figure 12.2	Production of 2-propylheptanol from n-valeraldehyde as a function of product value versus plant operating level	254
Figure 13.2	Alcohols, primary linear, C ₁₂ –C ₁₅ from linear olefins, cobalt phosphine catalyst, as a function of product value versus plant operating level	268
Figure 5.1	n-Butyraldehyde production by LP Oxo SM SELECTOR SM process	336
Figure 5.3	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by process with oil-soluble dual reactors phosphine	338
Figure 5.5	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor	339
Figure 6.1	Production of n-valeraldehyde from raffinate II C ₄ olefins	340
Figure 7.1	Production of n-butanol from n-butyraldehyde	342
Figure 8.1	Production of amyl alcohol from n-valeraldehyde	343
Figure 9.1	Production of 2-ethylhexanol from n-butyraldehyde	344
Figure 10.1	Exxon process for INA using cobalt catalyst	346
Figure 11.1	Exxon isodecyl alcohol from nonenes by hydroformylation and hydrogenation	348
Figure 12.1	Production of 2-propylheptanol from n-valeraldehyde	350
Figure 13.1	Primary alcohols by hydroformylation of linear olefins	352

Tables

Table 2.1	World consumption of oxo chemicals—2014	17
Table 2.2	Major world producers of oxo chemicals	18
Table 2.3	Summary of oxo alcohol intermediate aldehyde process technologies	28
Table 2.4	Summary of oxo alcohol process technologies	30
Table 2.5	Commercial n-butyraldehyde and n-valeraldehyde technologies—Total capital investment	33
Table 2.6	Commercial oxo alcohols technologies—Total capital investment	34

Table 2.7	Commercial n-butyraldehyde and n-valeraldehyde technologies— Production costs	36
Table 2.8	Commercial oxo alcohols technologies—Production costs	37
Table 2.9	Definitions of key process indicators	41
Table 3.1	World supply/demand for oxo chemicals—2014	47
Table 3.2	Major world producers of oxo chemicals	48
Table 3.3	World consumption of plasticizer alcohols	49
Table 3.4	Major world producers of plasticizer alcohols	50
Table 3.5	Major world producers of detergent alcohols—2012	51
Table 3.6	US prices for plasticizer alcohols	52
Table 3.7	US market prices for detergent alcohols	53
Table 4.1	Process parameters for several hydroformylation processes	64
Table 4.2	?HNP for various phosphorus-containing ligands	74
Table 4.3	Raffinate II stream composition	80
Table 4.4	C ₄ raffinate stream composition	81
Table 5.1	n-Butyraldehyde production by LP Oxo SM SELECTOR SM process— Design bases and assumptions	106
Table 5.2	n-Butyraldehyde production by LP Oxo SM SELECTOR SM process— Stream flows	107
Table 5.3	n-Butyraldehyde production by LP Oxo SM SELECTOR SM process— Summary of waste streams	109
Table 5.4	n-Butyraldehyde production by LP Oxo SM SELECTOR SM process— Major equipment	110
Table 5.5	n-Butyraldehyde production by LP Oxo SM SELECTOR SM process— Utilities summary	112
Table 5.6	n-Butyraldehyde production by LP Oxo SM SELECTOR SM process— Total capital investment	116
Table 5.7	n-Butyraldehyde production by LP Oxo SM SELECTOR SM process— Capital investment by section	117
Table 5.8	n-Butyraldehyde production by LP Oxo SM SELECTOR SM process— Production costs	118
Table 5.9	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the oil-soluble phosphine process with dual reactors—Design bases and assumptions	120
Table 5.10	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the oil-soluble phosphine process with dual reactors—Stream flows	121
Table 5.11	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the oil-soluble phosphine process with dual reactors—Summary of waste streams	122
Table 5.12	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the oil-soluble phosphine process with dual reactors—Major equipment	123
Table 5.13	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the oil-soluble phosphine process with dual reactors—Utilities summary	124
Table 5.14	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the oil-soluble phosphine process with dual reactors—Total capital investment	126
Table 5.15	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the oil-soluble phosphine process with dual reactors—Total capital investment by section	127
Table 5.16	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the oil-soluble phosphine process with dual reactors—Production costs	127
Table 5.17	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor—Design bases and assumptions	131
Table 5.18	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor—Stream flows	132
Table 5.19	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor—Summary of waste streams	134
Table 5.20	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor—Major equipment	135

Table 5.21	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor—Utilities summary	136
Table 5.22	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor—Total capital investment	138
Table 5.23	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor—Capital investment by section	139
Table 5.24	n-Butyraldehyde from propylene by the water-soluble phosphine process with a secondary reactor—Production costs	140
Table 6.1	Reaction equipment items with name and section number	142
Table 6.2	Butane- and butane-forming reactions	143
Table 6.3	Hydroformylation reactions	143
Table 6.4	Process sections	146
Table 6.5	n-Valeraldehyde from C ₄ olefins by BASF hydroformylation—Design basis and assumptions	147
Table 6.6	n-Valeraldehyde from C ₄ olefins by BASF hydroformylation—Stream flows	148
Table 6.7	n-Valeraldehyde from C ₄ olefins by BASF hydroformylation—Summary of process waste	149
Table 6.8	n-Valeraldehyde from C ₄ olefins by BASF hydroformylation—Major equipment	150
Table 6.9	n-Valeraldehyde from C ₄ olefins by BASF hydroformylation—Utilities summary	151
Table 6.10	n-Valeraldehyde from C ₄ olefins by BASF hydroformylation—Total capital investment	155
Table 6.11	n-Valeraldehyde from C ₄ olefins by BASF hydroformylation—Capital investment by section	156
Table 6.12	n-Valeraldehyde from C ₄ olefins by BASF hydroformylation—Production costs	157
Table 7.1	n-Butanol from n-butyraldehyde—Design bases and assumptions	162
Table 7.2	n-Butanol from n-butyraldehyde—Stream flows	163
Table 7.3	n-Butanol from n-butyraldehyde—Summary of waste streams	164
Table 7.4	n-Butanol from n-butyraldehyde—Major equipment	165
Table 7.5	n-Butanol from n-butyraldehyde—Utilities summary	166
Table 7.6	n-Butanol from n-butyraldehyde—Total capital investment	169
Table 7.7	n-Butanol from n-butyraldehyde—Capital investment by section	170
Table 7.8	n-Butanol from n-butyraldehyde—Production cost	171
Table 8.1	Production of amyl alcohol from n-valeraldehyde—Design bases and assumptions	175
Table 8.2	Production of amyl alcohol from n-valeraldehyde—Stream flows	176
Table 8.3	Amyl alcohol from n-valeraldehyde—Summary of waste streams	177
Table 8.4	Production of amyl alcohol from n-valeraldehyde—Major equipment	177
Table 8.5	Production of amyl alcohol from n-valeraldehyde—Utilities summary	178
Table 8.6	Production of amyl alcohol from n-valeraldehyde—Total capital investment	181
Table 8.7	Production of amyl alcohol from n-valeraldehyde—Capital investment by section	182
Table 8.8	Production of amyl alcohol from n-valeraldehyde—Production costs	183
Table 9.1	Production of 2-ethylhexanol from n-butyraldehyde—Design bases and assumptions	188
Table 9.2	Production of 2-ethylhexanol from n-butyraldehyde—Stream flows	190
Table 9.3	Production of 2-ethylhexanol from n-butyraldehyde—Summary of waste streams	192
Table 9.4	Production of 2-ethylhexanol from n-butyraldehyde—Major equipment	193
Table 9.5	Production of 2-ethylhexanol from n-butyraldehyde—Utility summary	194
Table 9.6	Production of 2-ethylhexanol from n-butyraldehyde—Total fixed capital	198

Table 9.7	Production of 2-ethylhexanol from n-butyraldehyde—Capital investment by section	199
Table 9.8	Production of 2-ethylhexanol from n-butyraldehyde—Production costs	200
Table 10.1	Exxon isononyl alcohol process using cobalt catalyst—Design bases and assumptions	204
Table 10.2	Exxon isononyl alcohol process using cobalt catalyst—Stream flows	205
Table 10.3	Exxon isononyl alcohol process using cobalt catalyst—Summary of waste streams	208
Table 10.4	Exxon isononyl alcohol process using cobalt catalyst—Major equipment	209
Table 10.5	Exxon isononyl alcohol process using cobalt catalyst—Utilities summary	211
Table 10.6	Exxon isononyl alcohol process using cobalt catalyst—Total capital investment	213
Table 10.7	Exxon isononyl alcohol process using cobalt catalyst—Production cost	214
Table 11.1	Exxon isodecyl alcohol from nonenes by hydroformylation and hydrogenation—Design bases and assumptions	219
Table 11.2	Exxon isodecyl alcohol from nonenes by hydroformylation and hydrogenation—Stream flows	220
Table 11.3	Exxon isodecyl alcohol from nonenes by hydroformylation and hydrogenation—Summary of waste streams	225
Table 11.4	Exxon isodecyl alcohol from nonenes by hydroformylation and hydrogenation—Major equipment	226
Table 11.5	Exxon isodecyl alcohol from nonenes by hydroformylation and hydrogenation—Utilities summary	228
Table 11.6	Exxon isodecyl alcohol from nonenes by hydroformylation and hydrogenation—Total capital investment	232
Table 11.7	Exxon isodecyl alcohol from nonenes by hydroformylation and hydrogenation—Capital investment by section	233
Table 11.8	Isodecyl from nonenes via Exxon process—Production costs	234
Table 12.1	Production of 2-propylheptanol from n-valeraldehyde—Design bases and assumptions	241
Table 12.2	Production of 2-propylheptanol from n-valeraldehyde—Stream flows	242
Table 12.3	Production of 2-propylheptanol from n-valeraldehyde—Summary of waste streams	244
Table 12.4	Production of 2-propylheptanol from n-valeraldehyde—Major equipment	245
Table 12.5	Production of 2-propylheptanol from n-valeraldehyde—Utilities summary	246
Table 12.6	Production of 2-propylheptanol from n-valeraldehyde—Total capital investment	250
Table 12.7	Production of 2-propylheptanol from n-valeraldehyde—Capital investment by section	251
Table 12.8	Production of 2-propylheptanol from n-valeraldehyde—Production costs	252
Table 13.1	Primary linear C ₁₂ –C ₁₅ alcohols—Design bases and assumptions	256
Table 13.2	Primary linear C ₁₂ –C ₁₅ alcohols—Stream flows	257
Table 13.3	Primary linear olefins—Summary of waste streams	258
Table 13.4	Primary linear C ₁₂ –C ₁₅ alcohols—Major equipment	259
Table 13.5	Primary linear C ₁₂ –C ₁₅ alcohols—Utilities summary	260
Table 13.6	Primary linear C ₁₂ –C ₁₅ alcohols from linear olefins—Total capital investment	264
Table 13.7	Primary linear C ₁₂ –C ₁₅ alcohols from linear olefins—Capital investment by section	265
Table 13.8	Primary linear C ₁₂ –C ₁₅ alcohols from linear olefins—Production costs	266

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