

Support Information for

Continuous flow Meerwein-Ponndorf-Verley reduction of HMF and Furfural using basic zirconium carbonate

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General Procedures

Commercially available reagents and solvents were used without further purification, unless otherwise stated. Basic zirconium carbonate was acquired from Sigma-Aldrich, product SKU 14616, lot BCBW5143. ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker DPX-250 and Avance III 500 MHz spectrometers. Chemical shifts (δ) are given in parts per million, referenced to the residual peak of CDCl_3 , $\delta = 7.26$ (^1H NMR) and $\delta = 77.0$ (^{13}C NMR) as internal references. The following abbreviations were used to designate chemical shift multiplicities: s = singlet, br s = broad singlet, d = doublet, t = triplet, q = quartet, m = multiplet. GC-MS analysis was performed on a 9870A Agilent GC system. The chromatographic column was an Agilent HP-5MS (60 m length, 0.25 mm diameter, and 0.25 μm film). The injector and MS source temperatures were 280 and 230 $^\circ\text{C}$, respectively. The MS ionization impact was set at 70 eV and the mass spectrometer was operated with a mass scan range of 30–400 m/z. All microwave experiments were carried out using a Biotage Initiator+ Microwave Synthesizer using a 5 mL pressurized vial. All continuous flow experiments were carried out using the Vapourtec R2/R4 modules. The FTIR in-line monitoring data were recorded using the DS Micro Flow Cell connected to the ReactIR 45 from Mettler Toledo. Continuous flow reactions were statistically evaluated by Design Expert software version 10 (Stat-Ease).

Thermal analysis of the catalyst

When trying to perform reactions under continuous flow at 150 $^\circ\text{C}$, we observed the formation of channels in the catalyst column and gas evolution. For further comprehension of the catalyst behaviour, thermogravimetric analysis (TGA – TA Instruments model 2950, r.t. to 500 $^\circ\text{C}$, 10 $^\circ\text{C}/\text{min}$, inert atmosphere) and differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) of the material were performed (Figure S1). Hence, we constrained our evaluation to 120 $^\circ\text{C}$ as an upper limit to avoid catalyst decomposition and change of properties. Additionally, we performed a TGA for the catalysts after the scale up experiments with furfural and HMF. The

different thermal profiles indicate change in the catalyst structure. Additionally, the weight loss above 200 °C is greater for the used catalyst, indicating decomposition of organic compounds.

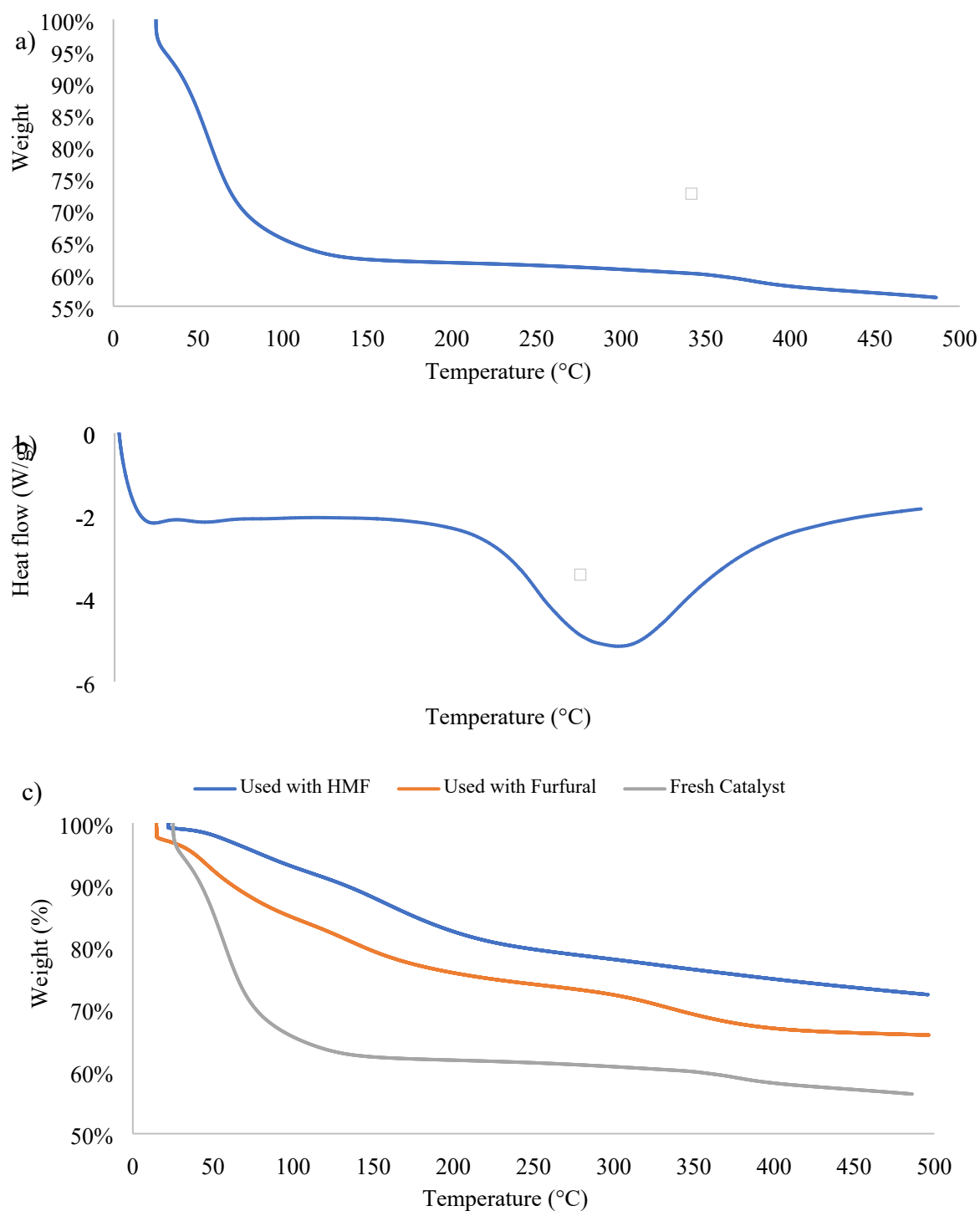


Figure S1. (a) TGA of the commercial BZC. (b) DSC of the BZC. (c) TGA of fresh BZC and after scale-up experiments with furfural and HMF. [i] The important mass loss around 100 °C can be associated with water removal while the loss at 380 °C may indicate the decomposition of the carbonate. [ii] shows an important thermal event at around 130 °C

Catalyst evolution and evaluation of additives with HMF

A visual comparison can be done of the catalyst after processing furfural and HMF (Figure S2). The darker colour after processing HMF (**6**) is an indicative that large quantities

a) b) c)

of side-products are adsorbed in the column, probably humins.

Figure S2. Comparison of the catalyst (a) before use, (b) after processing ~55 mmol of furfural and (c) after processing ~55 mmol of HMF.

Aldol products between acetone and furfural were detected using GC-MS while running the system at high aldehyde concentrations (1 mol L⁻¹). Although highly coloured, these side-products were not problematic for the reaction development.

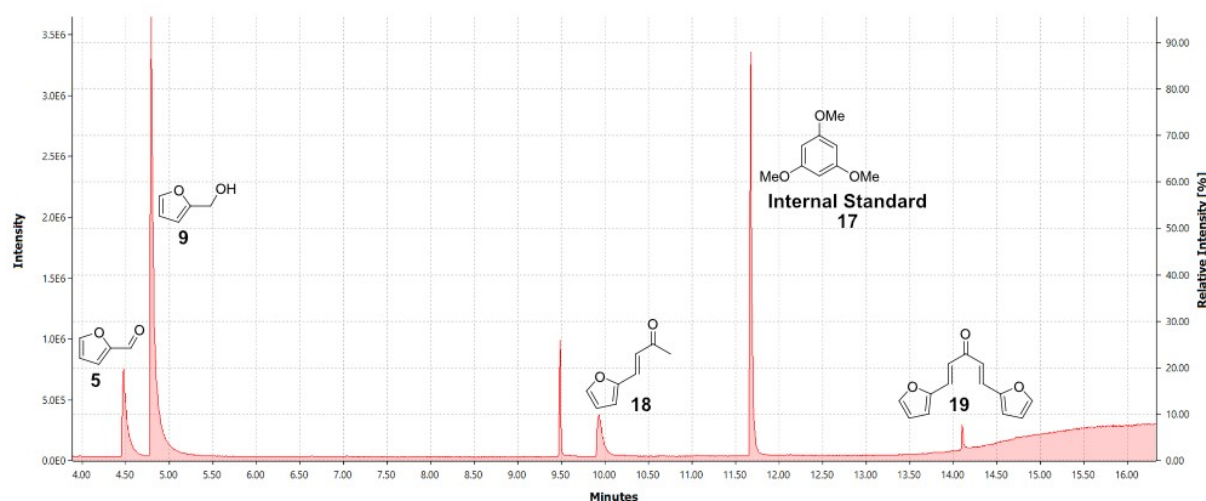
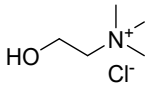


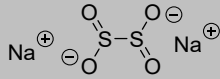
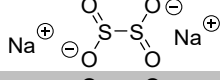
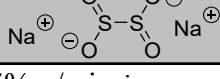


Figure S3. GC-MS with identified side-products from the reduction of furfural in continuous flow.

The use of additives for further improvement on HMF transformation was evaluated. Previously, Gomes and co-workers used choline chloride (ChCl), DMSO and sodium dithionite ($\text{Na}_2\text{S}_2\text{O}_4$) as additives to mitigate side-reactions involving HMF.¹ We first evaluated them under batch conditions at 150 °C for 30 min (Table S1). While choline chloride and DMSO have significantly inhibited the reaction (entries 2-4), sodium dithionite at low concentrations did not influence the reaction (entry 5). We speculate that this is a result of the low solubility in *iso*-propanol. Adding higher quantities of $\text{Na}_2\text{S}_2\text{O}_4$ also resulted in reduced yields (entries 6-7). Hence, none of the evaluated additives were deemed suitable for the transformation of interest.

Table S1. Additive evaluation for stabilizing HMF towards reduction over BZC.

#	Additive	Structure	Loading (m/m)	Conversion (%)	Yield (%)
1	-	-	-	88	82
2	ChCl		1.3%	76	70
3	DMSO		1.3%	74	67
4*	DMSO		1650%	37	31
5	$\text{Na}_2\text{S}_2\text{O}_4$		1.3%	87	82
6	$\text{Na}_2\text{S}_2\text{O}_4$		2.6%	83	79
7	$\text{Na}_2\text{S}_2\text{O}_4$		5.2%	78	75

*It corresponds to 15% v/v in *iso*-propanol, previously used for the fructose dehydration.²

**Reactions were performed in the same conditions as the general procedure in batch: 4mL scale, 0.25 M at 150 °C for 30 min under microwave heating.

Procedure for collection and analysis of reduction over BZC under continuous flow

First the system was followed using the infrared detector, following the wavenumbers 1713 cm^{-1} and 1680 cm^{-1} . When the signals stabilized, aliquots of $\sim 5\text{ mL}$ – around 4 column void-volumes – were collected and samples of $100\text{ }\mu\text{L}$ were diluted with $900\text{ }\mu\text{L}$ solution of internal standard trimethoxybenzene of known concentration (around 1.0 g/L). The reaction crudes were analysed using GC-MS. Multiple fractions were collected and analysed per condition to ensure that the samples correspond to steady-state operation. Samples were seldom collected before a stable concentration was achieved, for these cases the last fractions were used for the analysis as they correspond to the actual chemical information of the system (steady-state operation). Yields were calculated as previously described. Productivity was calculated using the reactor void-volume ($V_{\text{reactor}}[\text{mL}] = 1.2\text{ mL}$, determined through weight difference between the dry packed column and the column after filled with *iso*-propanol.

$V_{\text{reactor}} = \frac{m_{\text{reactor, with solvent}} - m_{\text{reactor, dry}}}{\rho_{\text{solvent}}}$), yield ($\text{Yield}[\%]$), concentration ($C[\text{mol L}^{-1}]$), product molecular weight ($MW[\text{g mol}^{-1}]$), and residence time ($t_R[\text{s}]$) according to the following equation:

$$\text{Productivity} = \frac{V_{\text{reactor}} \cdot C \cdot MW \cdot \text{Yield}}{\left(\frac{t_R[\text{s}]}{60}\right)}$$

Response factors and yields measurements

Response factors for each component (furfural, furfuryl alcohol, HMF and DHMF) to the internal standard were updated at least 14 days before usage to ensure reliability of the results. They were calculated from 3-6 different solutions prepared before injection. Masses of the compounds of interest, alongside with the internal standard, were weighted and further diluted to proper concentrations. The response factor was calculated according to the following equation.

$$R_i = \frac{A_i \cdot m_{IS}}{A_{IS} \cdot m_i}$$

Yields were calculated using the following equation:

$$Yield = \frac{A_{product} \cdot m_{IS}}{R_{product} \cdot A_{IS} \cdot m_{product}^0}$$

Where, $A_{product}$ is the area of the product signal after baseline correction, m_{IS} is the mass of internal standard in the vial calculated from the dilution, $R_{product}$ is the response factor, A_{IS} is the area of the internal standard signal and $m_{product}^0$ is the expected mass of product if reaction yield was quantitative.

Statistics results for the productivity DoE of furfuryl alcohol and DHMF

The statistical results were done using the Design-Expert version 10.0.6.0 from Stat-Ease Inc.

1. Furfuryl alcohol productivity model

Table S2. ANOVA for the log-transformed reduced cubic model for the reduction of furfural.

Transform: Base 10 Log		Constant: 0				
ANOVA for Response Surface Reduced Cubic model						
Analysis of variance table [Partial sum of squares - Type III]						
	Sum of		Mean	F	p-value	
Source	Squares	df	Square	Value	Prob > F	
Model	1.53	8	0.19	69.46	< 0.0001	significant
A-Temperature	0.021	1	0.021	7.60	0.0187	
B-Time	0.31	1	0.31	113.55	< 0.0001	
C-Concentration	0.60	1	0.60	217.98	< 0.0001	
AB	0.052	1	0.052	18.89	0.0012	
A ²	4.268E-004	1	4.268E-004	0.16	0.7013	
B ²	1.110E-004	1	1.110E-004	0.040	0.8445	
A ² B	0.030	1	0.030	11.04	0.0068	
AB ²	0.033	1	0.033	11.82	0.0055	
Residual	0.030	11	2.753E-003			
Lack of Fit	0.013	6	2.206E-003	0.65	0.6961	not significant
Pure Error	0.017	5	3.408E-003			
Cor Total	1.56	19				

Table S3. R-squared and deviations for furfuryl alcohol productivity reduced cubic model.

Std. Dev.	0.052	R-Squared	0.9806
Mean	1.43	Adj R-Squared	0.9665
C.V. %	3.66	Pred R-Squared	0.9439
PRESS	0.088	Adeq Precision	33.136
-2 Log Likelihood	-73.10	BIC	-46.14
		AICc	-37.10

Table S4. Furfuryl alcohol productivity model coefficients and their error.

Factor	Coefficient		Standard Error		95% CI		VIF
	Estimate	df	Error	Low	High		
Intercept	1.43	1	0.018	1.40	1.47		
A-Temperature	-0.10	1	0.037	-0.18	-0.021	5.00	
B-Time	-0.40	1	0.037	-0.48	-0.31	5.00	
C-Concentration	0.24	1	0.017	0.21	0.28	1.00	
AB	-0.081	1	0.019	-0.12	-0.040	1.00	
A ²	-0.012	1	0.029	-0.076	0.053	1.56	
B ²	5.889E-003	1	0.029	-0.059	0.070	1.56	
A ² B	0.14	1	0.041	0.047	0.23	5.00	
AB ²	0.14	1	0.041	0.051	0.23	5.00	

Table S5. Furfuryl alcohol productivity reduced cubic model equations in coded (A, B and C) and real variables (T, t_R and C).

Log ₁₀ (Productivity) =	Log ₁₀ (Productivity) =
+1.43	-6.46998
-0.10 * A	+0.14202 * T
-0.40 * B	+0.077469 * t _R
+0.24 * C	+0.65323 * Concentration
-0.081 * AB	-1.28935E-003 * T * t _R
-0.012 * A ²	-6.03042E-004 * T ²
+5.889E-003 * B ²	-1.25723E-004 * t _R ²
+0.14 * A ² B	+4.59337E-006 * T ² * t _R
+0.14 * AB ²	+1.26770E-006 * T * t _R ²

Design-Expert® Software
Log10(Productivity)

Lambda
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Best = -0.02
Low C.I. = -0.26
High C.I. = 0.21

Recommend transform:
Log
(Lambda = 0)

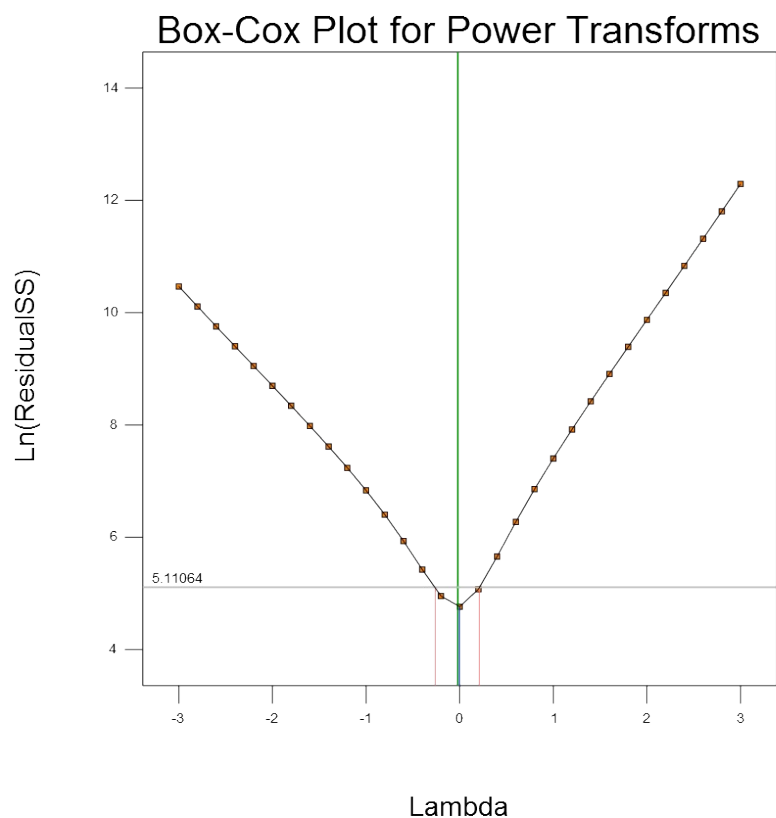


Figure S3. Box-Cox plot for furfuryl alcohol productivity model.

Design-Expert® Software
Log10(Productivity)

Color points by value of
Log10(Productivity):
2.079
0.930

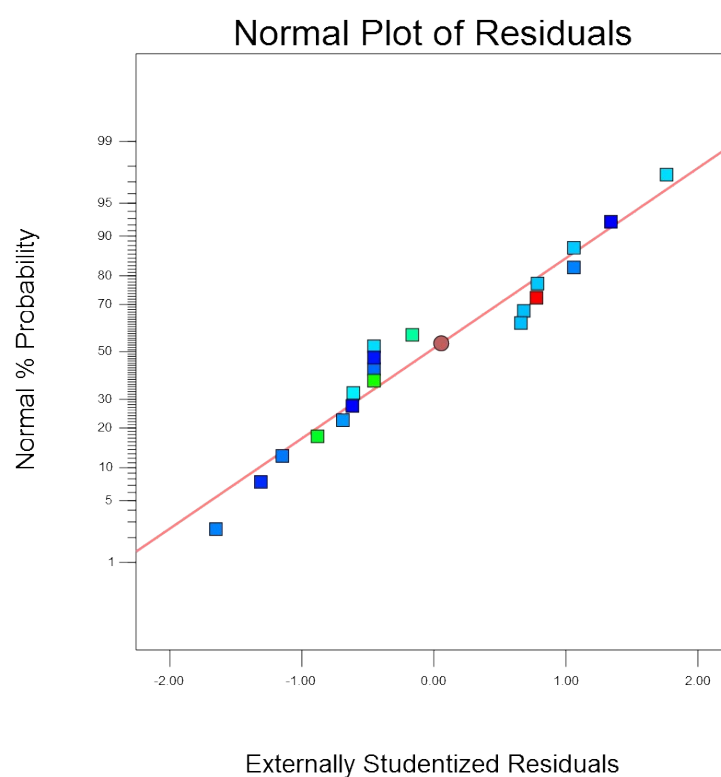


Figure S4. Normal plot of residuals for furfuryl alcohol productivity model.

Design-Expert® Software
Log10(Productivity)

Color points by value of
Log10(Productivity):

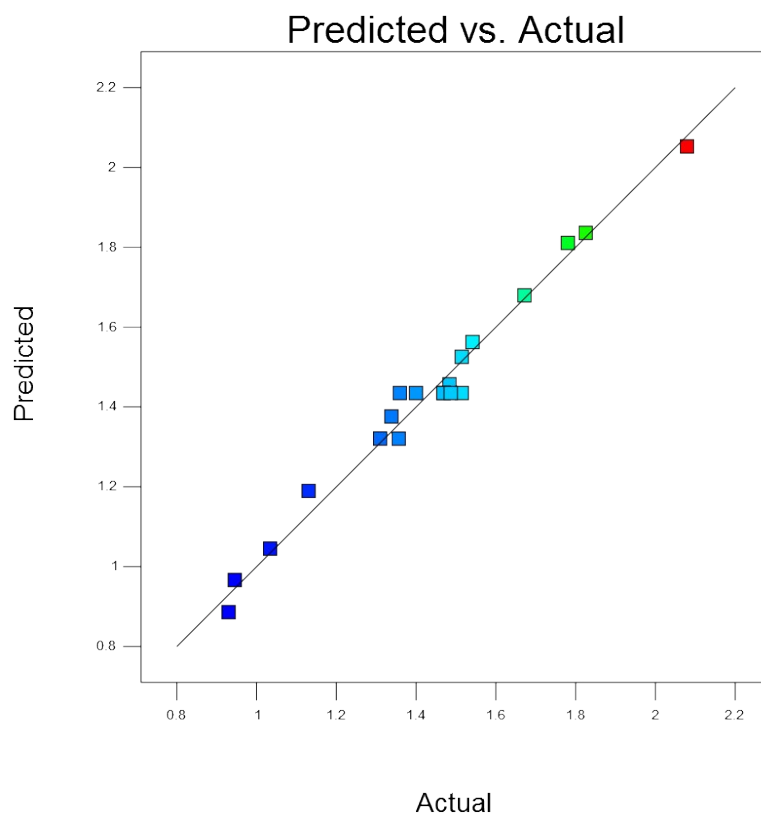


Figure S5. Plot of predicted versus actual values for furfuryl alcohol productivity.

Design-Expert® Software

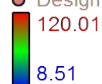
Factor Coding: Actual

Original Scale

Productivity (mg/min)

● Design points above predicted value

● Design points below predicted value



X1 = A: T

X2 = B: Time

Actual Factor

C: Concentration = 1

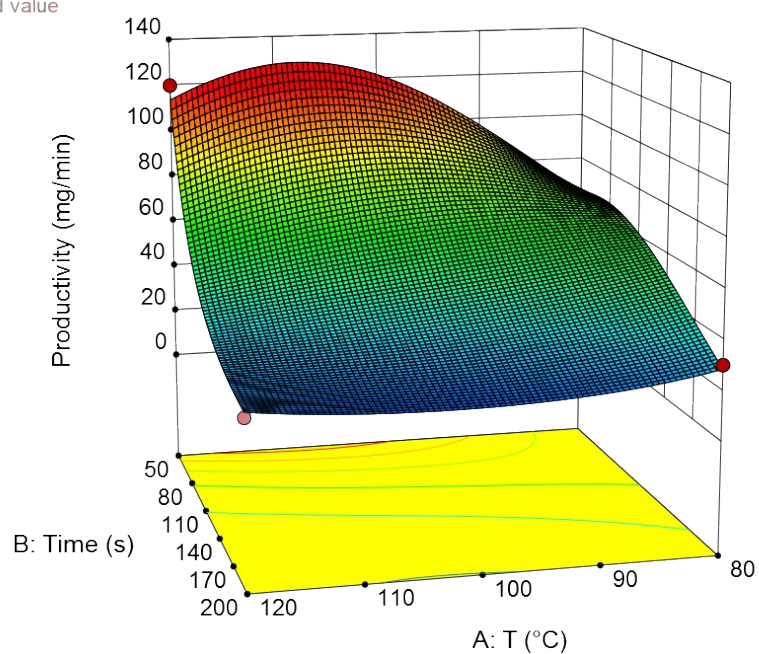


Figure S6. Productivity response surface at high furfural concentrations.

Design-Expert® Software

Factor Coding: Actual

Original Scale

Productivity (mg/min)

● Design points above predicted value

○ Design points below predicted value

120.01

8.51

X1 = A: T

X2 = B: Time

Actual Factor

C: Concentration = 0.25

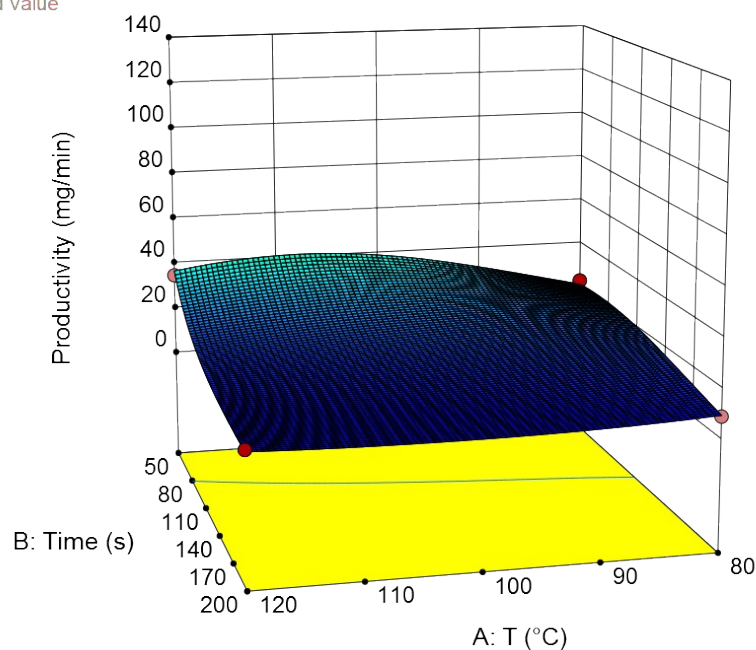


Figure S7. Productivity response surface at low furfural concentrations.

2. DHMF productivity model

Table S6. ANOVA for the reduced cubic model for the reduction of HMF.

ANOVA for Response Surface Reduced Cubic model

Analysis of variance table [Partial sum of squares - Type III]

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F Value	p-value	
Model	1824.22	5	364.84	61.69	0.0002	significant
<i>A-Temperature</i>	67.06	1	67.06	11.34	0.0199	
<i>B-Time</i>	1285.90	1	1285.90	217.41	< 0.0001	
<i>AB</i>	200.49	1	200.49	33.90	0.0021	
<i>B²</i>	93.37	1	93.37	15.79	0.0106	
<i>AB²</i>	206.67	1	206.67	34.94	0.0020	
Residual	29.57	5	5.91			
<i>Lack of Fit</i>	25.96	3	8.65	4.79	0.1775	not significant
<i>Pure Error</i>	3.61	2	1.81			
Cor Total	1853.79	10				

Table S7. R-squared and deviations for DHMF productivity reduced cubic model.

Std. Dev.	2.43	R-Squared	0.9840
Mean	19.22	Adj R-Squared	0.9681
C.V. %	12.65	Pred R-Squared	0.8874
PRESS	208.71	Adeq Precision	24.184
-2 Log Likelihood	42.10	BIC	56.48
		AICc	75.10

Table S8. DHMF productivity model coefficients and their error.

Factor	Coefficient		Standard Error		95% CI		VIF
	Estimate	df	Error	Low	High		
Intercept	16.03	1	1.09	13.23	18.82		
A-Temperature	-5.79	1	1.72	-10.21	-1.37	3.00	
B-Time	-14.64	1	0.99	-17.19	-12.09	1.00	
AB	-7.08	1	1.22	-10.21	-3.95	1.00	
B ²	5.85	1	1.47	2.07	9.64	1.00	
AB ²	12.45	1	2.11	7.04	17.86	3.00	

Table S9. DHMF productivity model reduced cubic equations in coded (A-B) and real variables (t_R-T).

Productivity=	Productivity =
+16.03	-113.05446
-5.79 * A	+1.64207 * T
-14.64 * B	+1.89955 * t _R
-7.08 * AB	-0.022215 * t _R * T
+5.85 * B ²	-5.63988E-003 * t _R ²
+12.45 * AB ²	+6.22500E-005 * t _R ² * T

Design-Expert® Software
Productivity

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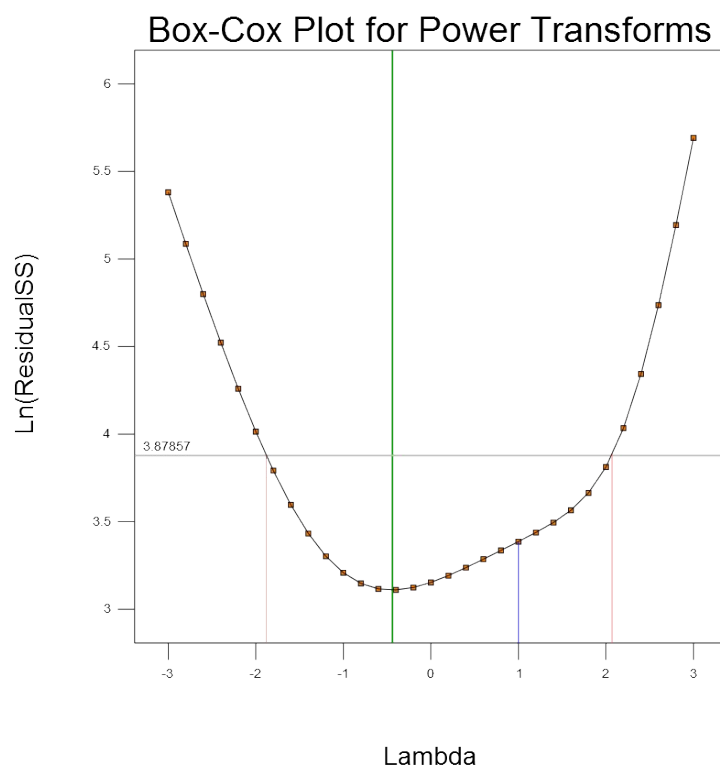


Figure S8. Box-Cox plot for DHMF productivity model.

Design-Expert® Software
Productivity

Color points by value of
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49.7074
6.7245

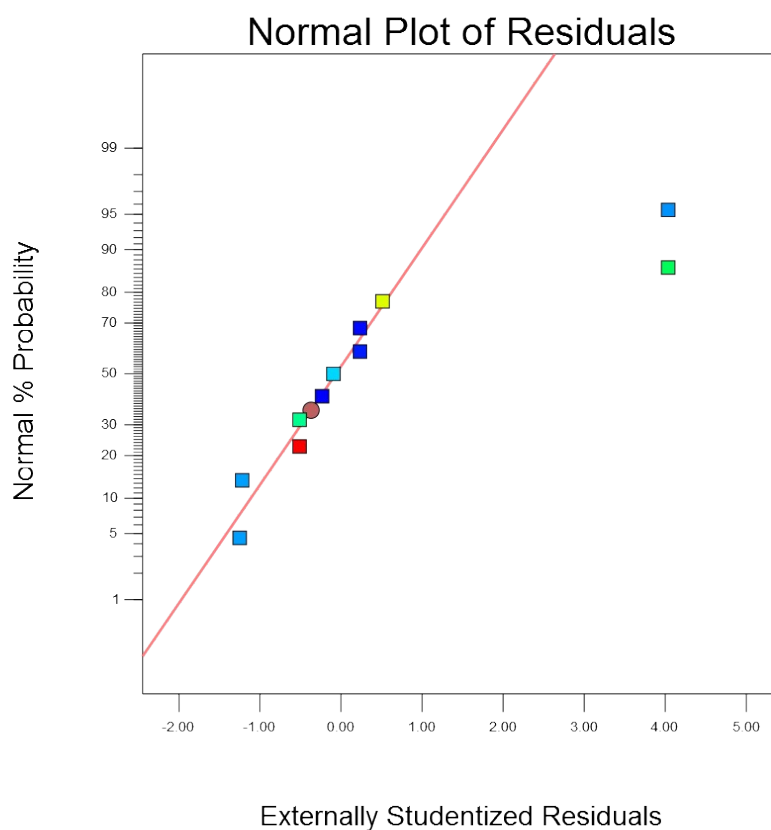


Figure S9. Normal plot of residuals for DHMF productivity model.

Design-Expert® Software
Productivity

Color points by value of
Productivity:

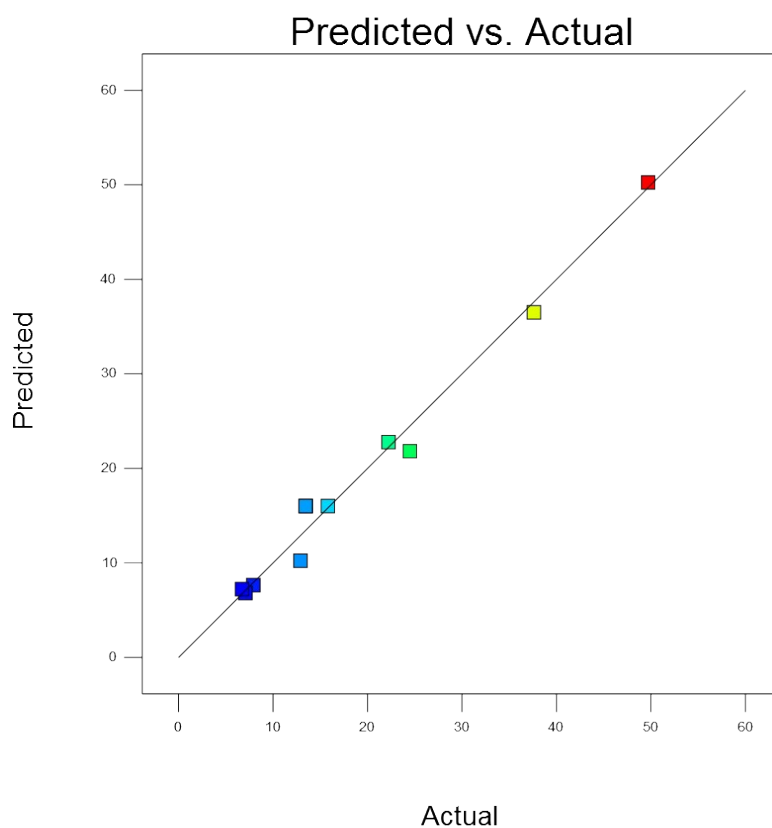


Figure S10. Plot of predicted versus actual values for DHMF productivity.

Design-Expert® Software

Factor Coding: Actual

Productivity (mg/min)**

● Design points above predicted value

● Design points below predicted value

49.7074

6.7245

X1 = A: Temperature

X2 = B: Time

** Predictions adjusted for
variation in the factors

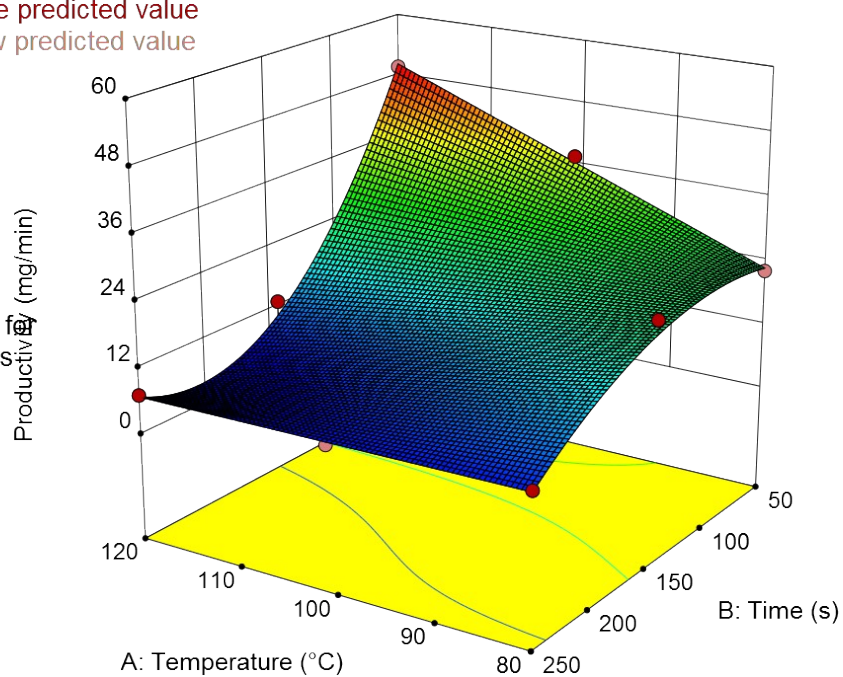


Figure S11. DHMF productivity response surface.

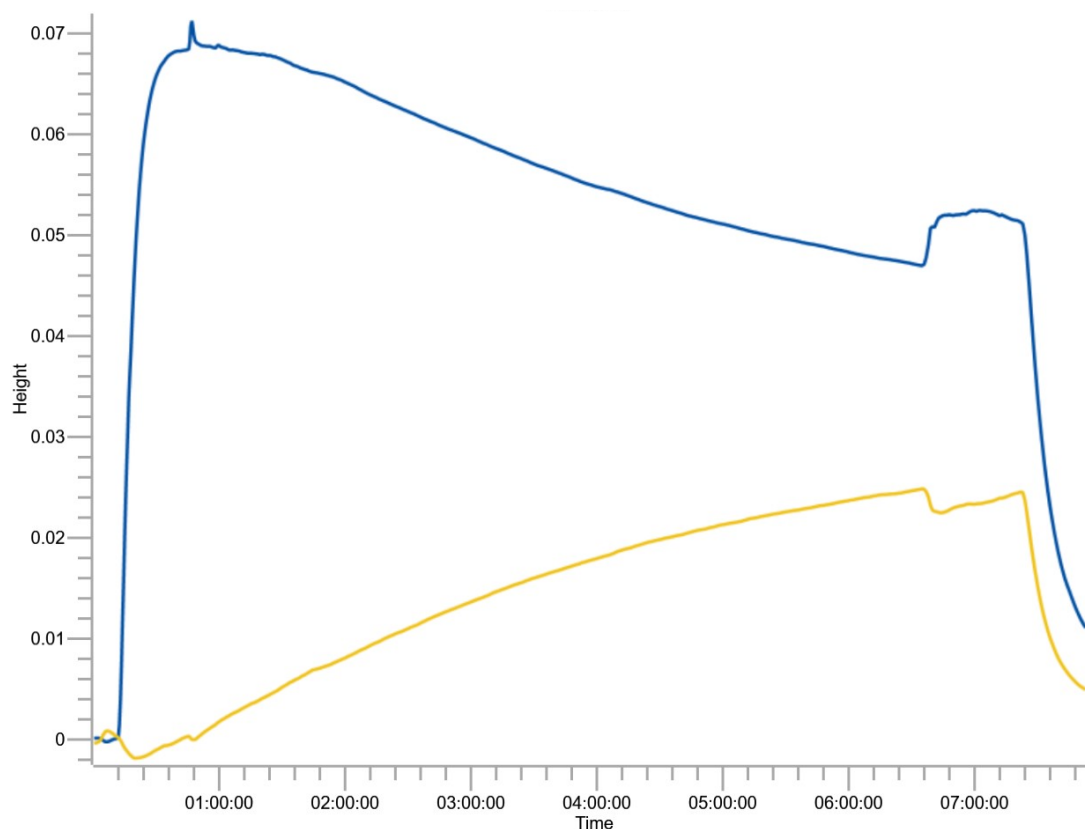


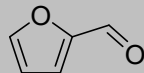
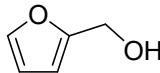
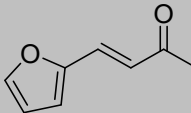
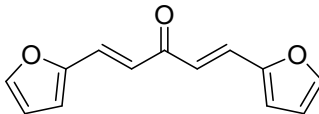
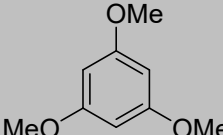
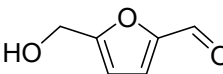
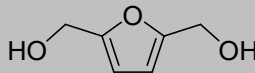
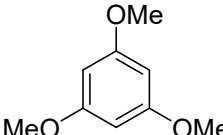
Figure S12. Trend analysis of HMF reduction for the scale-up reduction at 120 °C, 50 s residence time. Wavenumbers selected: 1713 cm⁻¹ (blue) to acetone and 1680 cm⁻¹ (yellow) for the aldehyde.

Selected GC-MS analysis of scale-up experiments

Furfural Method: Temperature ramp started at 40 °C for 1 min, and it was increased to 90 °C at a rate of 10 °C min⁻¹ and then increased to 280 °C at 30 °C min⁻¹, finally it was kept at 280 °C for 1 min.

HMF Method: Temperature ramp started at 80 °C for 1 min, and it was increased to 180 °C at a rate of 10 °C min⁻¹ and then increased to 280 °C at 30 °C min⁻¹, finally it was kept at 280 °C for 1 min.

Table 10. GC-MS retention time of standards in the methods used

Compound	Method	Retention time (min)
	Furfural	4.468
	Furfural	4.789
	Furfural	9.929
	Furfural	14.101
	Furfural	11.668
	HMF	6.060
	HMF	6.676
	HMF	9.218

1. Furfural reduction to furfuryl alcohol

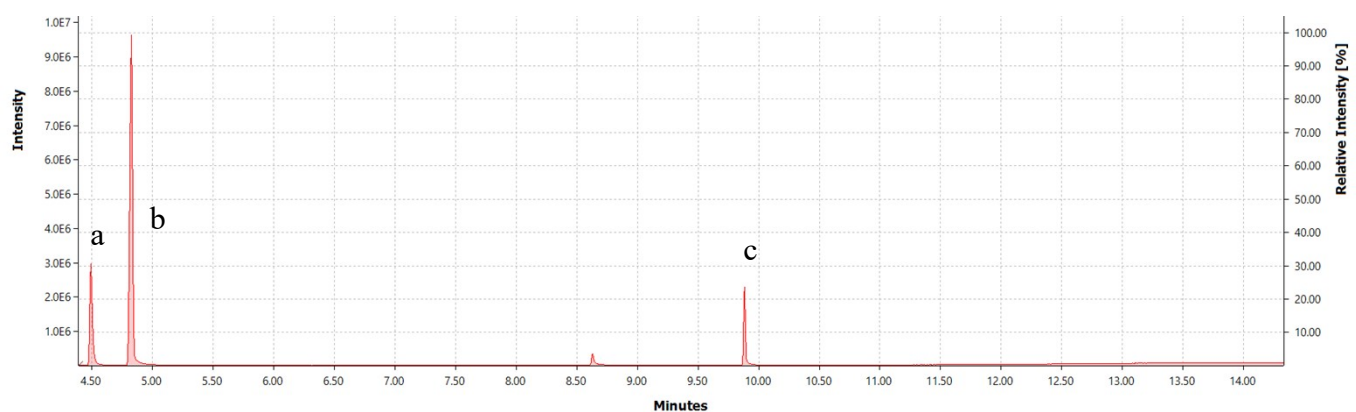


Figure S13. GC-MS of furfural reduction after 1 hours of column use (a = furfural, b = furfuryl alcohol, c = trimethoxymenzene internal standard).

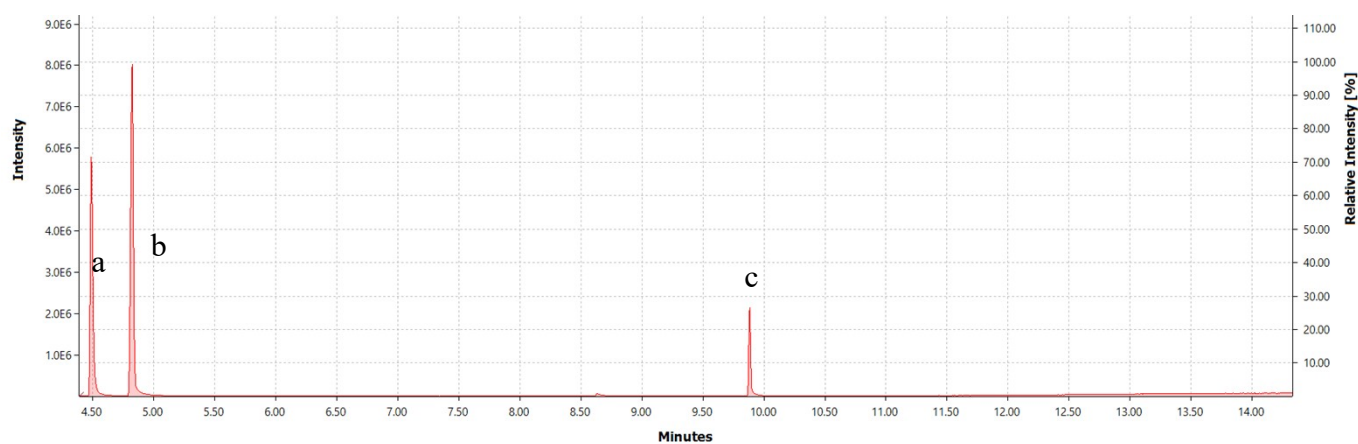


Figure S14. GC-MS of furfural reduction after 6 h 30 min of column use (a = furfural, b = furfuryl alcohol, c = trimethoxymenzone internal standard).

2. HMF reduction to DHMF

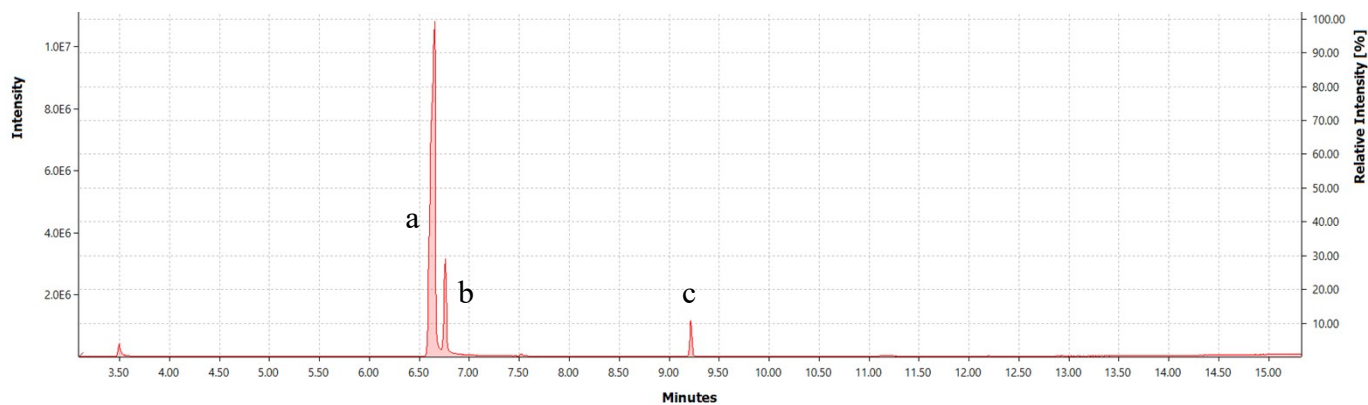


Figure S15. GC-MS of HMF reduction under continuous flow after 1h of column use (a = DHMF, b = HMF, c = trimethoxybenzene internal standard).

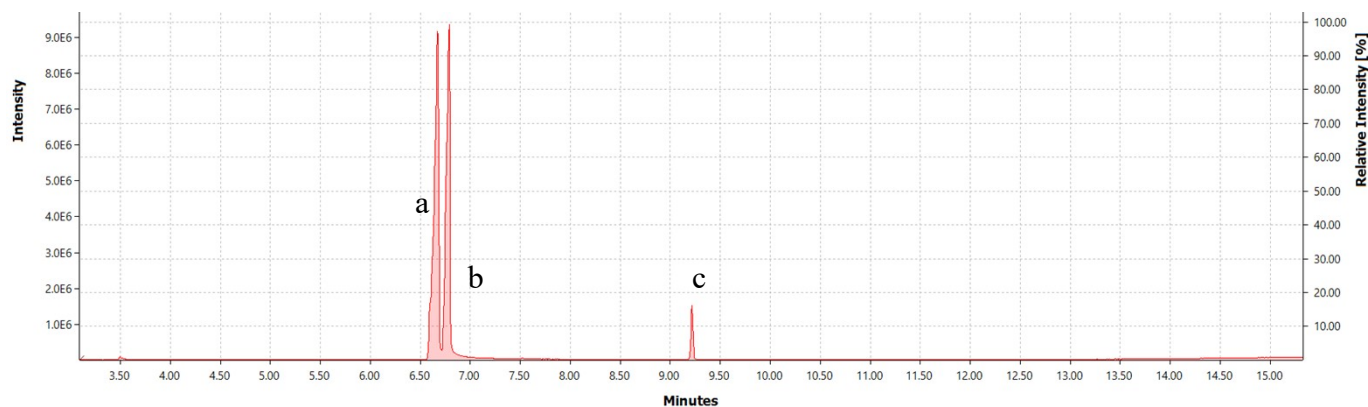


Figure S16. GC-MS of HMF reduction under continuous flow after 6h30 of column use (a = DHMF, b = HMF, c = trimethoxybenzene internal standard).

Preparation and characterization of model substrates

DHMF (10)

¹H NMR (250 MHz, DMSO-d₆): δ 6.20 (s, 2H), 5.18 (t, J = 5.8 Hz, 2H), 4.36 (d, J = 5.8 Hz, 4H).

¹³C NMR (63 MHz, DMSO-d₆): δ 155.1 (C₀), 107.9 (CH), 56.2 (CH₂).

Furfuryl Alcohol (9)

Furfuryl alcohol standard was purified by distilling the commercially available furfuryl alcohol under reduced pressure over Na₂SO₄ and Na₂CO₃.

¹H NMR (250 MHz, DMSO-d₆): δ 7.57 (dd, J = 1.8, 0.8 Hz 1H), 6.39 (dd, J = 3.1, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 6.29 (d, J = 0.8 Hz, 1H), 5.22 (t, J = 5.7 Hz, 1H), 4.41 (d, J = 5.7 Hz, 2H).

¹³C NMR (63 MHz, DMSO-d₆): δ 155.9 (C₀), 142.5 (CH), 110.7 (CH), 107.3 (CH), 56.1 (CH₂).

4-(furan-2-yl)but-3-en-2-one (18)

Furfural (1 g) and acetone (6 g) were charged into a 50 mL round-bottom flask, followed by the addition of a water-methanol solution (20 g, 1:1 in m/m) containing 0.1 g of NaOH. After stirring at 30 °C for 2 h, the mixture was neutralized with dilute HCl and extracted with CH₂Cl₂, followed by the removal of the solvent and purification through column chromatography (hexanes:EtOAc gradient). Fractions were analysed by GC-MS, only the mono-aldol product was collected for NMR analysis.

¹H NMR (250 MHz, DMSO-d₆): δ 7.83 (d, J = 1.4 Hz, 1H), 7.42 (d, J = 16.1 Hz, 1H), 6.95 (d, J = 3.5 Hz, 1H), 6.63 (dd, J = 3.5, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 6.48 (d, J = 16.1 Hz, 1H), 2.28 (s, 3H).

¹³C NMR (63 MHz, DMSO-d₆): δ 197.8 (C₀), 150.9 (C₀), 146.4 (CH), 130.1 (CH), 124.5 (CH), 116.7 (CH), 113.3 (CH), 27.6 (CH₃).

1,5-di(furan-2-yl)penta-1,4-dien-3-one (19)

Furfural (1 g) and acetone (3 g) were charged into a 50 mL round-bottom flask, followed by the addition of a water–methanol solution (20 g, 1:1 in m/m) containing 0.1 g of NaOH. After stirring at 30 °C for 2 h, the mixture was neutralized with dilute HCl and extracted with CH₂Cl₂, followed by the removal of the solvent and purification through column chromatography (hexanes:EtOAc gradient).

¹H NMR (250 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 7.50-7.48 (m, 2H), 7.47 (d, *J* = 15.6 Hz, 1H), 6.90 (d, *J* = 15.6 Hz, 2H), 6.67 (d, *J* = 3.4 Hz, 2H), 6.47 (dd, *J* = 3.4, 1.8, 2H).

¹³C NMR (63 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 188.1 (C₀), 151.5 (C₀), 145.0 (CH), 129.2 (CH), 123.2 (CH), 115.9 (CH), 112.7 (CH).

NMR spectra of model substrates

DHMF (10)

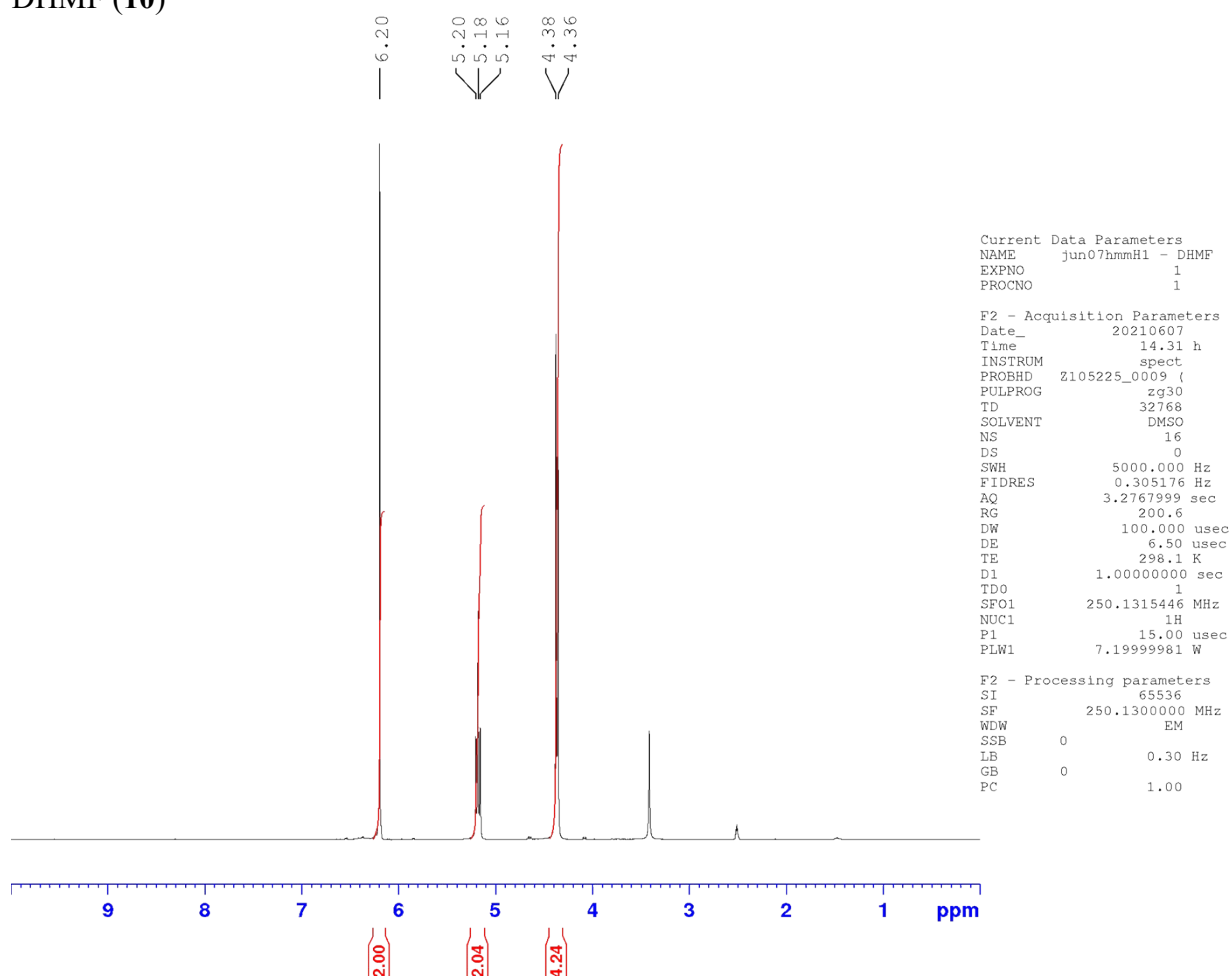


Figure S17. ¹H NMR spectrum (DMSO-d₆, 250 MHz) of DHMF (10).

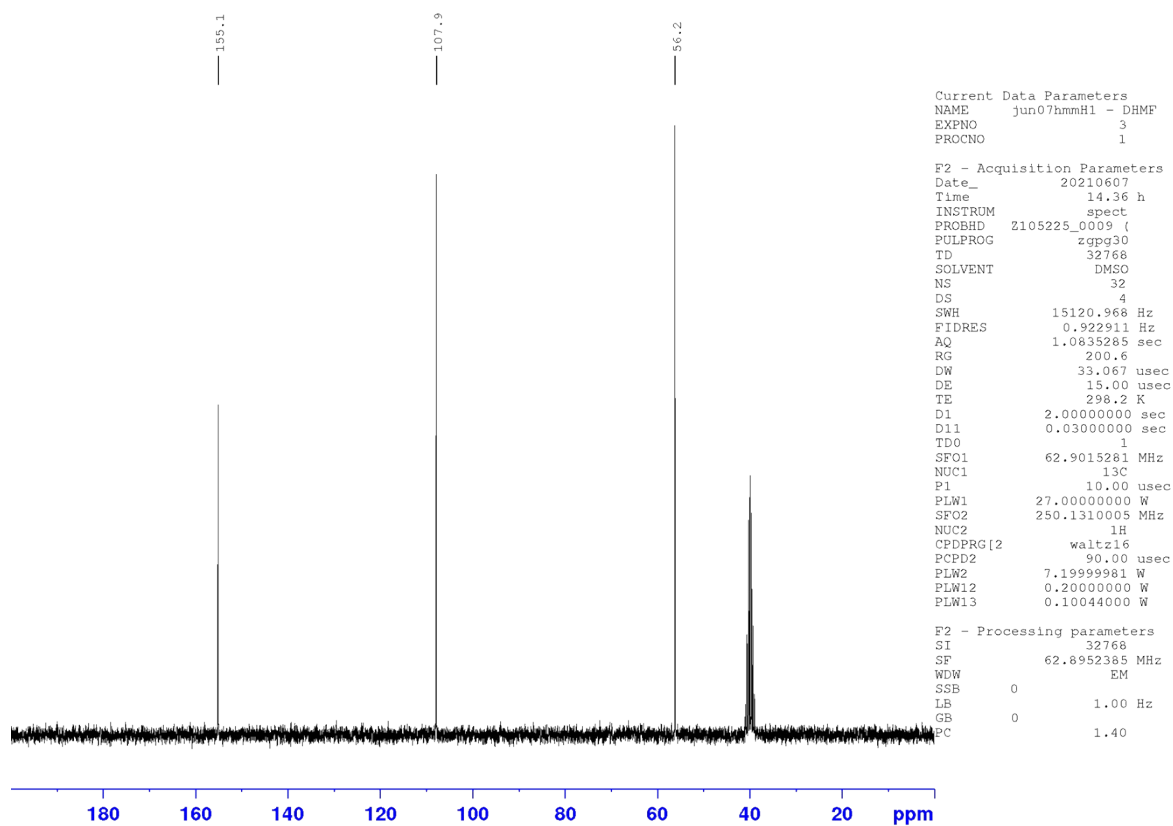


Figure S18. ^{13}C NMR spectrum (DMSO- d_6 , 63 MHz) of DHMF (10).

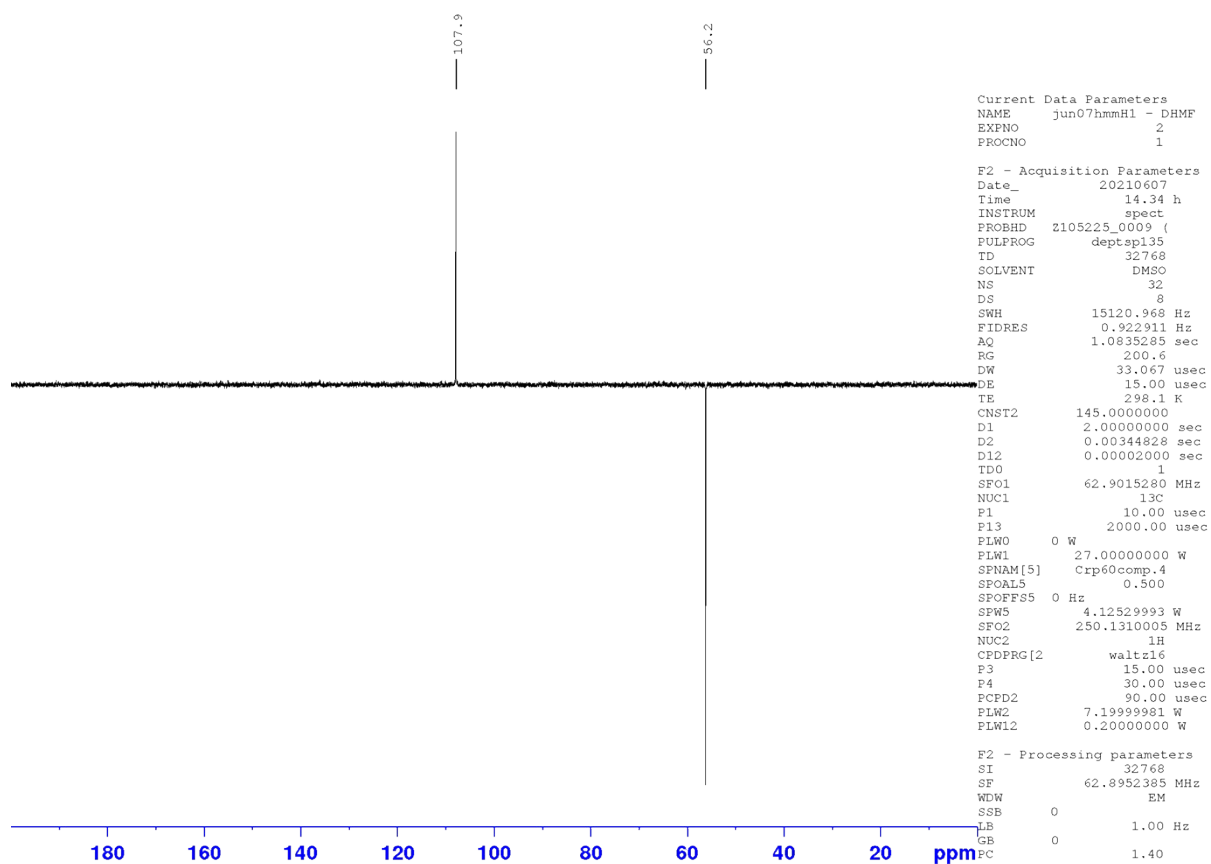


Figure S19. DEPT135 NMR spectrum (DMSO- d_6 , 63 MHz) of DHMF (10).

Furfuryl Alcohol (9)

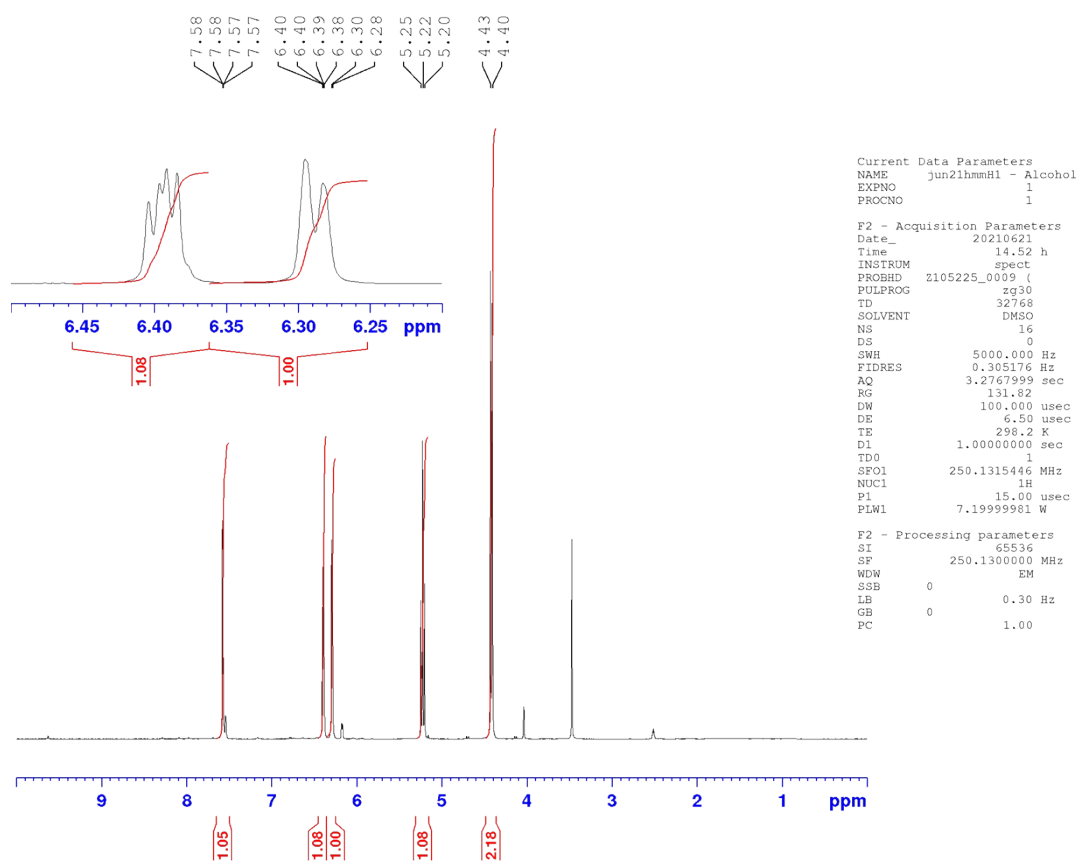


Figure S20. ¹H NMR spectrum (DMSO-d₆, 250 MHz) of Furfuryl Alcohol (9).

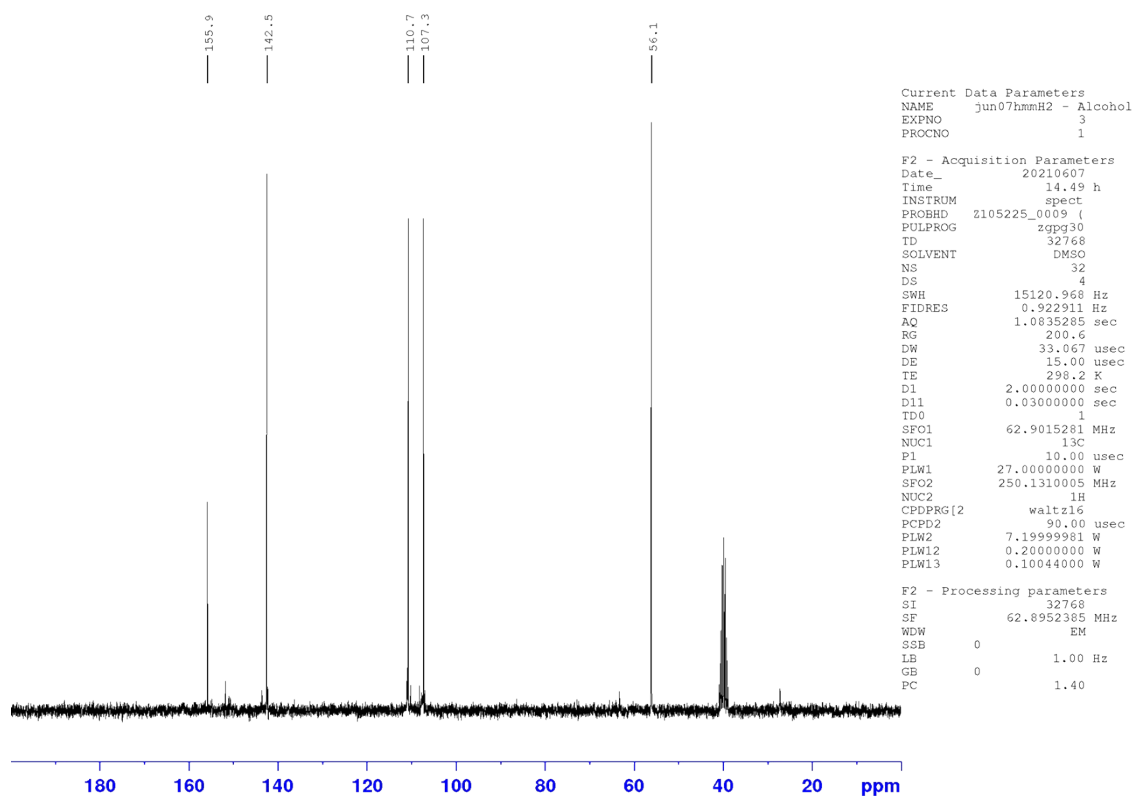


Figure S21. ¹³C NMR spectrum (DMSO-d₆, 63 MHz) of Furfuryl Alcohol (9).

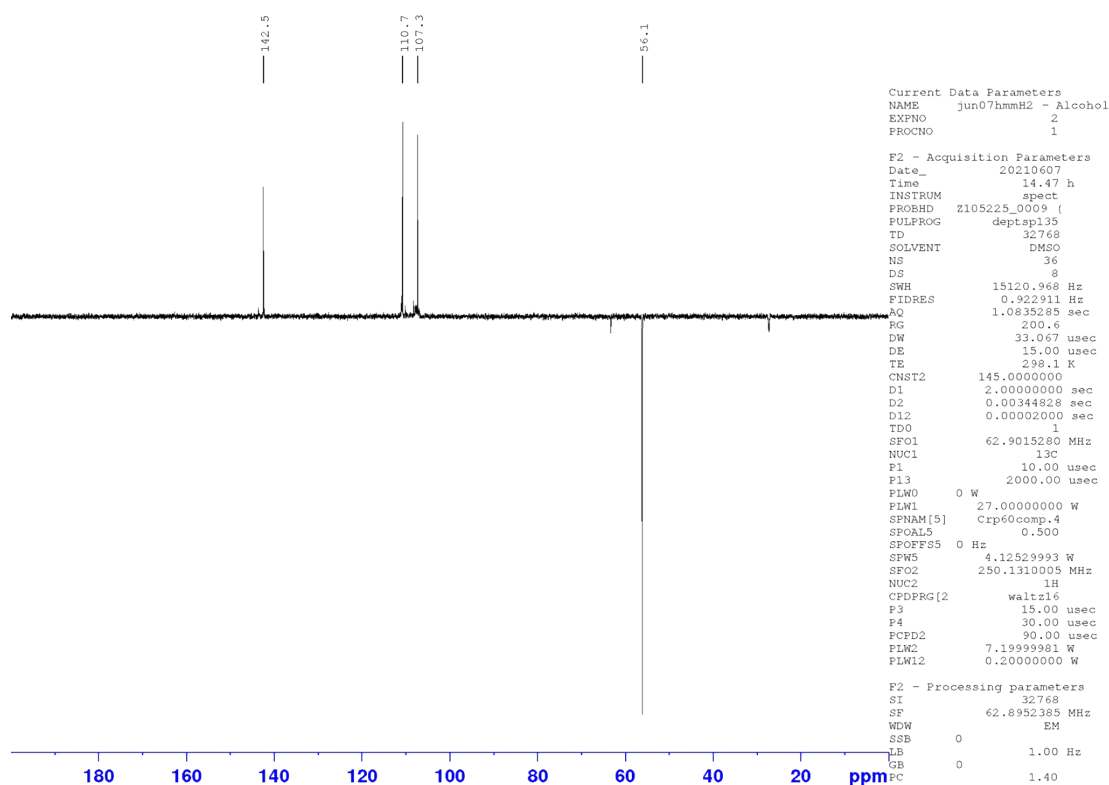


Figure S22. DEPT135 NMR spectrum (DMSO-d₆, 63 MHz) of Furfuryl Alcohol (9).

4-(furan-2-yl)but-3-en-2-one (18)

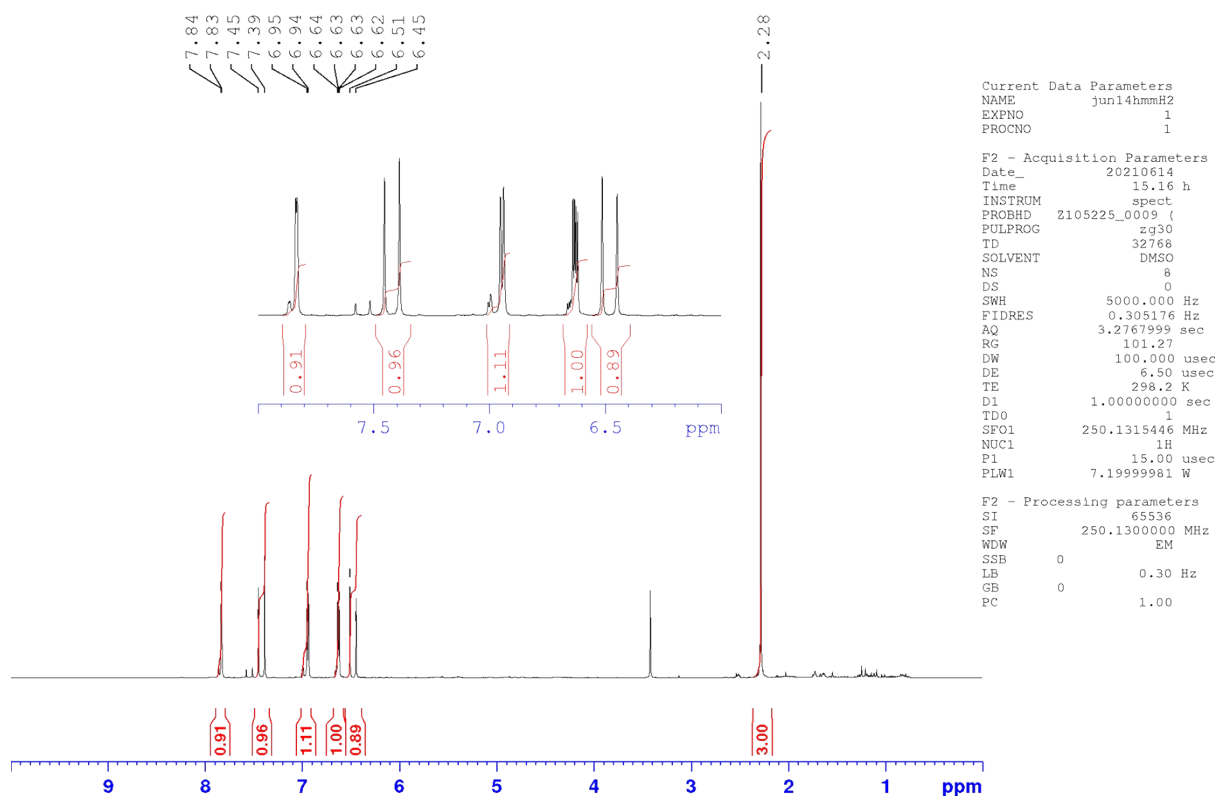


Figure S23. ¹H NMR spectrum (DMSO-d₆, 250 MHz) of compound 18.

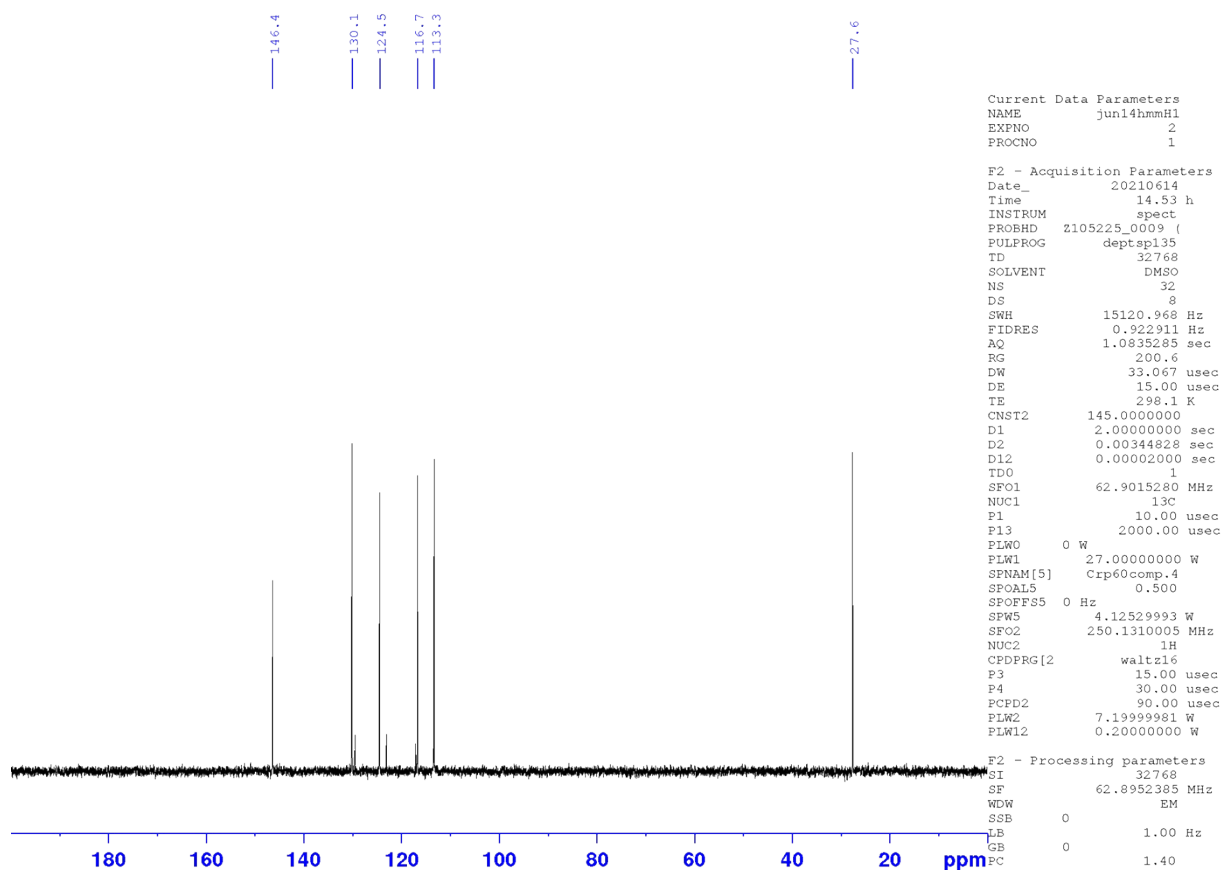


Figure S24. DEPT135 NMR spectrum (DMSO-d₆, 63 MHz) of compound 18.

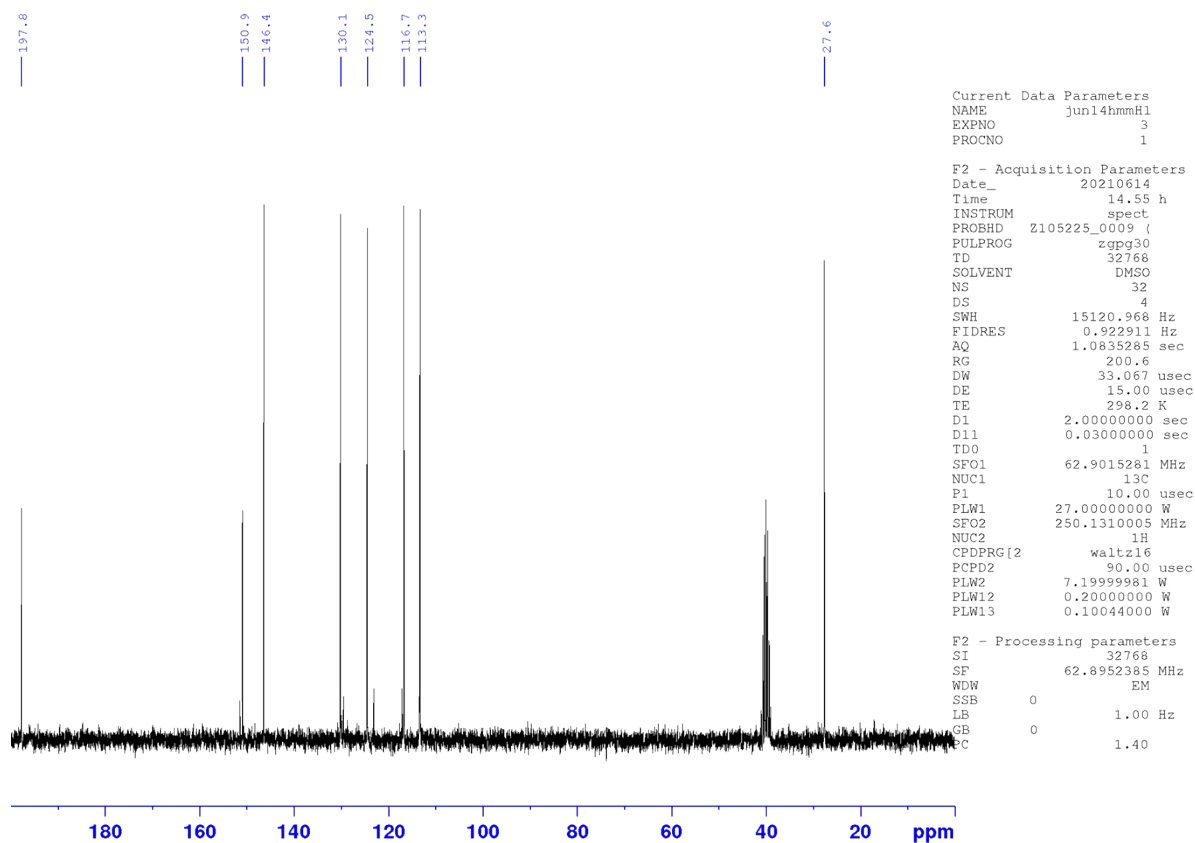


Figure S25. ¹³C NMR spectrum (DMSO-d₆, 63 MHz) of compound 18.

1,5-di(furan-2-yl)penta-1,4-dien-3-one (19)

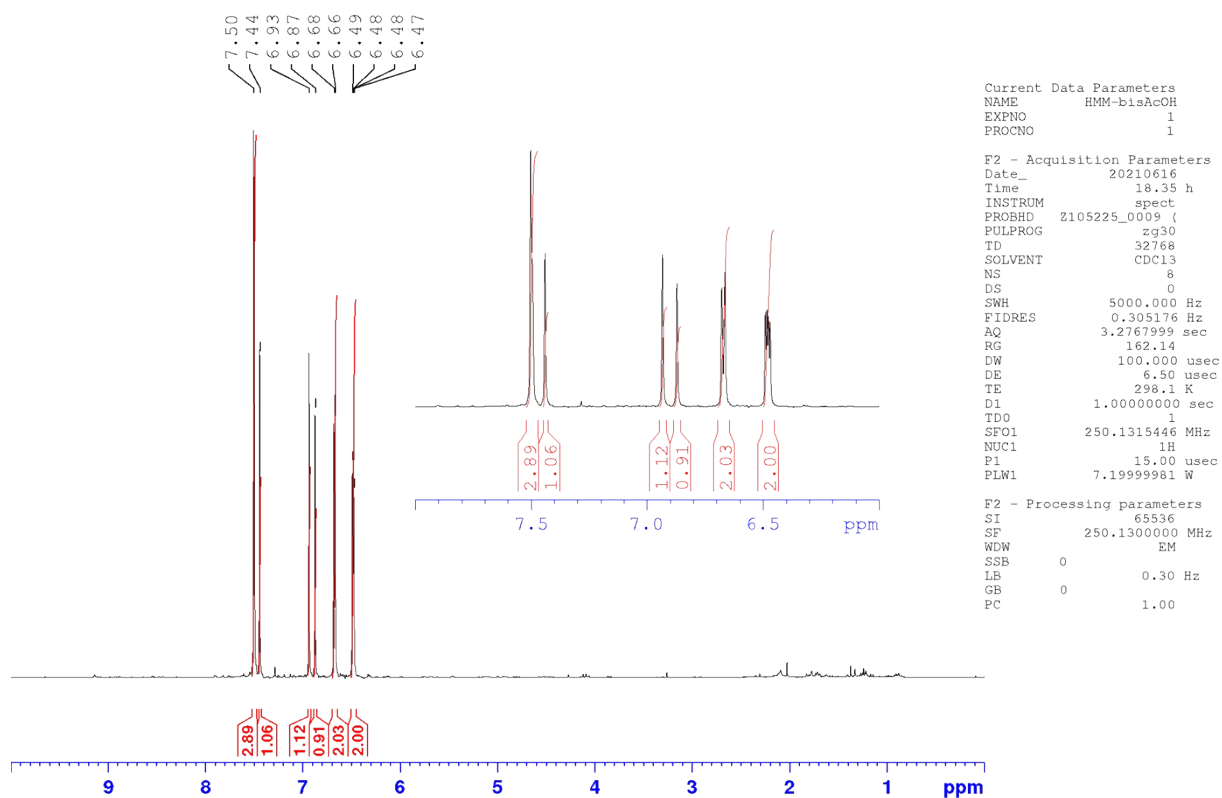


Figure S26. ¹H NMR spectrum (CDCl₃, 250 MHz) of compound 19.

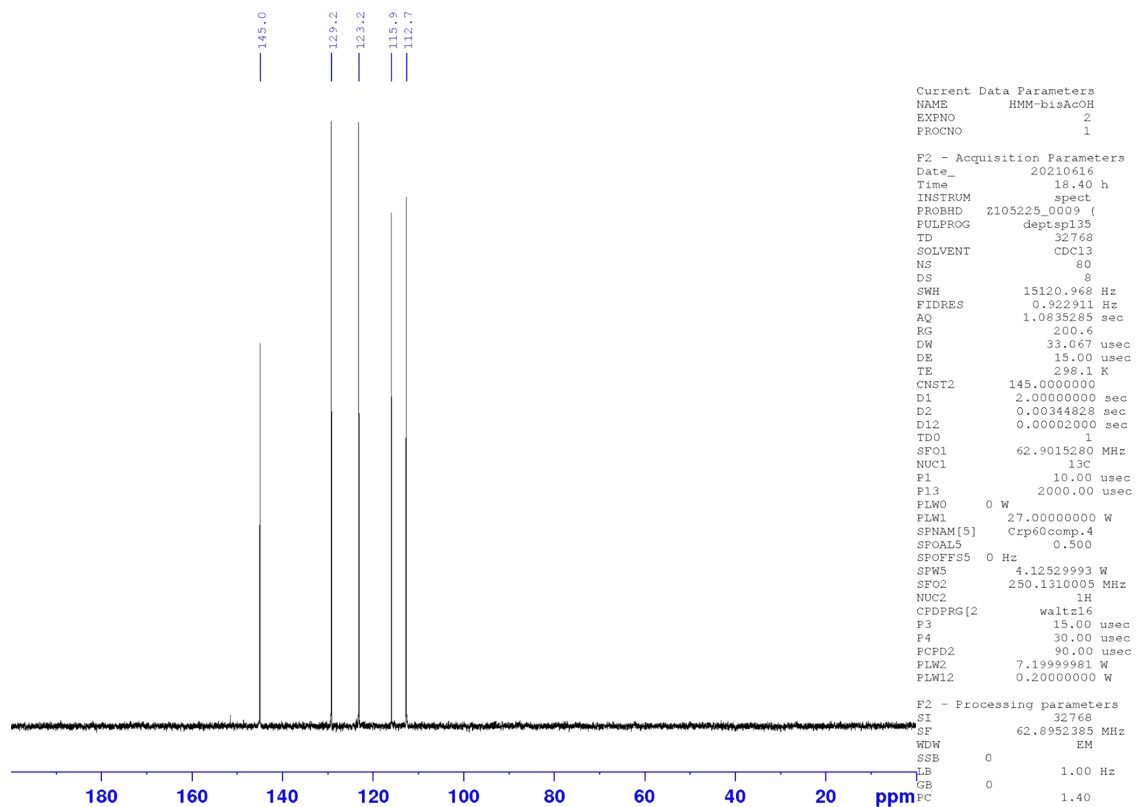


Figure S27. DEPT135 NMR spectrum (CDCl₃, 63 MHz) of compound 19.

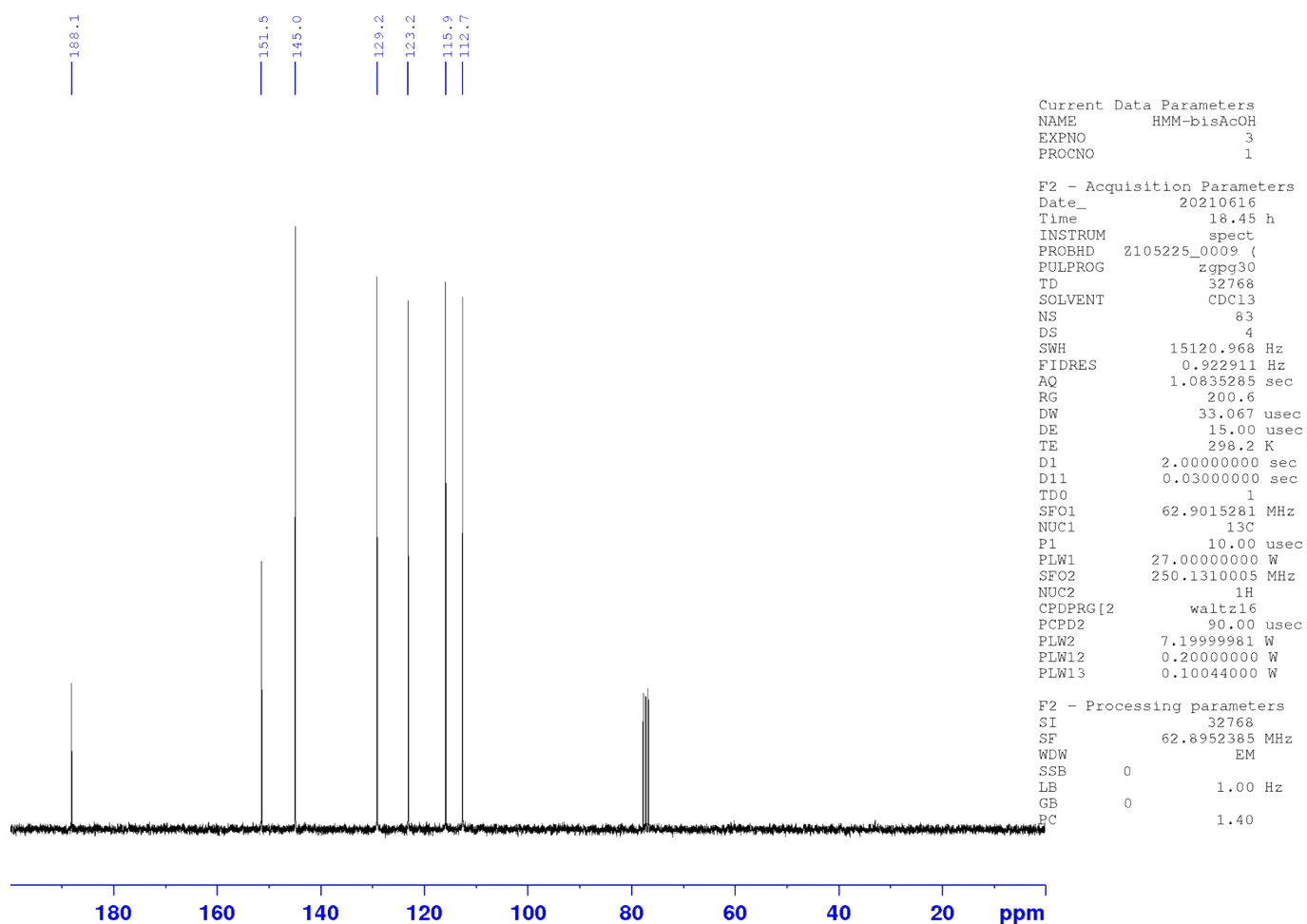


Figure S28. ^{13}C NMR spectrum (CDCl_3 , 63 MHz) of compound **19**.

References

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- 2 R. Galaverna, M. C. Breitzkreitz and J. C. Pastre, *ACS Sustainable Chem. Eng.*, 2018, **6**, 4220–4230.