Metal-free addition of aliphatic carboxylic acids to cyanopropargyl alcohols: an access to new families of functionalized dihydrofurans and 3(2H)-furanones

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Abstract

The metal-free Et₃N-mediated addition of cyanopropargyl alcohols to aliphatic carboxylic acids provides for straightforward efficient access to 4-cyano-[(Z)-3-cyanomethylene]-2,3-dihydrofurans and 4-cyano-3(2H)-furanones of pharmaceutical value. By comparison to analogous reactions using aromatic and heteroaromatic carboxylic acids, this synthesis is implemented under much milder conditions (room temperature vs. 100 °C and microwave assistance) to give essentially higher relative content of 2,3-dihydrofurans (2:1 assembly products).

Keywords: Tertiary cyanopropargyl alcohols, carboxylic acids, tandem reaction, cyclization, 2,3-dihydrofurans, 3(2H)-furanones

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Introduction

Functionalized derivatives of dihydrofurans are currently in focus of synthetic organic chemistry.1-3 These structures are closely related to the ribose fragment of nucleosides, consequently, DNA and other ribose-tailored life-sustaining structures including diverse dehydro and deoxy sugars.4-6 Dihydrofuran scaffold is frequently met in natural products and pharmaceuticals.7-9 As a typical illustration, 2,3-dihydrofuran ring is a fragment of diterpenoids (bicunningine A and B), isolated from a tree of traditional Chinese medicine used for the treatment of hernia, arthritis and strangury.10 Dihydrofuran derivatives are widely employed as versatile building blocks in synthetic organic chemistry.11 2,3-Dihydrofurans are recognized as precursors for the asymmetric synthesis of tetrahydrofurans.12-16 Synthetic approaches to 2,3-dihydrofurans involve the [4+1] cycloaddition of enones with diazo compounds,17,18 the [3+2] cyclization of aldehydes with β-ketosulfides/β-ketosulfones.11,19-21 For this purpose, the ring closing reaction of 1,3-dicarbonyl compounds with alkenes is efficient as well.22-25 Cyclization of the but-3-yn-1-ols is also a method of choice for the synthesis of 2,3-dihydrofurans.26-29 Recently, a method for the preparation of functionalized 2,3-dihydrofurans by Sc(OTf)3-catalyzed cyclization of α-allylated 1,3-dicarbonyl compounds has been reported.11 The palladium-catalyzed reaction of aryl and heteroaryl bromides, chlorides, and nonaflates with α-allyl-β-ketoesters provides a ready access to functionalized 2,3-dihydrofurans.30 Until now only a few examples of the reaction of carboxylic acids with acetylenes are known to finish at the addition step to give the functionalized 1,3-dienes and vinyl esters.31-35 These processes are usually catalyzed by transition-metal salts or complexes, e.g. silver31 and palladium32 acetate, (arene)(phosphine)ruthenium,33,34 polynuclear transition-metal-sulfur complexes {palladium cuboidal cluster [PdMo6S4(tacn)3Cl][PF6]3}.35 To our knowledge, no basic catalysts have been successfully employed for the addition of carboxylic acids to acetylenes (except for the our works36-42). Recently, naphthylcarboxylic acids36 and a number of heterocyclic (thiophene,37 furan,38 pyrrole39-40) carboxylic acids have been shown to be also efficient in this synthesis, for the heterocyclic carboxylic acids a microwave assistance and a higher temperature (100 °C) being required. The synthesis proves to be appropriate for some functionalized aromatic carboxylic acids (3-amino-41 and 3-hydroxybenzoic42 acids).

Results and Discussion

The aim of this work is to essentially extend the substrate scope of the above assembly and to increase structural diversity of the functionalized dihydrofurans thus found by involving aliphatic acids, yet another vast class of organic acids, into the reaction. Also, differences of this reaction as compared to the previous specific examples are intended to be examined. To reach this aim, available tertiary cyanopropargyl alcohol43 1 has been allowed to react with 2a-e in the presence of Et3N (Scheme 1, Tables 1, 2).

![Scheme 1](image-url)

**Scheme 1.** A competing cyclization of tertiary cyanopropargyl alcohol 1 with aliphatic carboxylic acids 2a-e.
The reaction was carried out both in solvent (MeCN) and without solvent at a various reactants ratio. The better results were attained at room temperature and 1 equivalent of Et₃N relative to carboxylic acids. At a cyanopropargyl alcohol 1/aliphatic carboxylic acids 2 ratio of 1.2:1 in MeCN, the yields of 3(2H)-furanones 4a-e ranged 21-87%. The yields of 2,3-dihydrofurans 3a-e were 8-18% and those of intermediates 5b-e spanned 14-47% (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Acid 2</th>
<th>Products, isolated yield (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2a</td>
<td>4a, 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3a, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5b, 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2b</td>
<td>4b, 61</td>
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<td>3b, 18</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5b, 17</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>3c, 9</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5c, 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2d</td>
<td>4d, 46</td>
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<td>3d, 8</td>
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<td>4e, 21</td>
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<td>3e, 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5e, 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2e</td>
<td>4e, 57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Products of the reaction between cyanopropargyl alcohol 1 and aliphatic carboxylic acids 2a-e at reactant ratio of 1.2:1 correspondingly (Et₃N, MeCN, 20-25 °C, 48 h)

When the reaction of pentanoic acid 2c and cyanopropargyl alcohol 1 was conducted with the excess Et₃N (MeCN, 48 h), ratio and yields of products 3c, 4c and 5c were insignificantly varied (Table 1, entry 4). A higher temperature improved the chemoselectivity of product 4. At heating (~80 °C) the reaction of 3-methylbutanoic acid 2e and cyanopropargyl alcohol 1 proceeded faster (4 h) but the content of product 5e in the reaction mixture was ~40% (¹H NMR data). Further heating (~80 °C) for 5.5 h afforded 3(2H)-furanone 4e in 57% preparative yield (Table 1, entry 7). Yield of keto ester 5e decreased to 4%. 2,3-Dihydrofuran 3e was not isolated.

As seen from Table 2, when the two-fold molar excess of cyanopropargyl alcohol 1 relative to carboxylic acids 2a-e was used, the product ratio changed in favor of 2,3-dihydrofurans 3a-e (27-59%), 3(2H)-furanones
4a-e and intermediates 5b,c,e being minor products (6-20% and 6-19%, correspondingly). Unlike the reaction intended to obtain excessive amounts of 3(2H)-furanones 4a-e (Table 1), these syntheses were implemented without solvent.

Table 2. Products of the reaction of cyanopropargyl alcohol 1 with aliphatic carboxylic acids 2a-e at the reactant ratio of 2:1, respectively (Et₃N, without solvent, 20-25 °C, 48 h)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Acid 2</th>
<th>Products, isolated yield (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2a</td>
<td>3a, 38, 4a, 20</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2b</td>
<td>3b, 59, 4b, 15, 5b, 17°</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2c</td>
<td>3c, 40, 4c, 15, 5c, 6°</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2d</td>
<td>3d, 27, 4d, 6°, 5e, 19°</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2e</td>
<td>3e, 44, 4e, 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aBy °H NMR.

In fact, at greater excess of cyanopropargyl alcohol, the chemoselectivity of the assembly relative to 2,3-dihydrofurans increases. For example, with three-fold molar excess of 1 to acetic acid 2a, the yield of the corresponding 2,3-dihydrofuran 3a reaches 42% and that of 3(2H)-furanone 4a decreases to 9% (cf. Table 2, entry 1). A remarkable feature of 2:1 assembly leading to 2,3-dihydrofurans 3a-e is the predominant Z-configuration of their cyanoethenyl moiety, i.e. this process is stereoselective.

The differences of the assembly studied as compared to analogous syntheses with heteroaromatic carboxylic acids are much milder conditions (room temperature vs. 100 °C and microwave irradiation) and essentially higher contents of 2,3-dihydrofurans in the reaction products.

In all the cases, the reaction course was monitored using the IR spectroscopy by the disappearance of the bands at 2297 cm⁻¹ (C≡C−C≡N) and appearance of the bands at 2229–2211 cm⁻¹ (=C−C≡N) assigned to the starting and target compounds, correspondingly. All the products were easily separated and purified by column chromatography on silica gel.

The configurational assignment and the substituent location for the compounds 3a-e are based on 2D (NOESY, °H-¹³C HSQC, °H-¹³C HMBC) NMR spectroscopy data. The NMR (°H, ¹³C) and IR data of 2,3-
dihydrofurans 3a-e as well as 3(2H)-furanones 4a-e are consistent with their structure. In the $^1$H NMR spectra of 3a-e, signals of the olefin protons are observed (5.09-5.10 ppm). In the $^{13}$C NMR spectra of 3a-e, characteristic signals of the carbons of the carbonyl (171.7-175.7) and cyano (111.6-116.2 ppm) groups are present. The IR spectra of 2,3-dihydrofurans 3a-e show two bands at 2223–2217 and 2212–2211 cm$^{-1}$ assigned to two cyano groups, the band of the conjugated carbonyl function C=O appears at 1741–1713 cm$^{-1}$. The absorption bands of the double bond N–C=C and the C=CN groups are observed at 1645–1623 and 1593–1563 cm$^{-1}$, correspondingly. In the $^1$H NMR spectra of 4a-e, signals of the alkyl protons are present. In the $^{13}$C NMR spectra of compounds 4a-e the carbonyl carbons resonate in the region of 198.9-201.6 ppm, the signal of the cyano group carbon appears at 111.1-111.9 ppm. In the IR spectra of the products 4a-e, the C≡N and C=O absorption bands are observed at 2229–2221 and 1724–1714 cm$^{-1}$, respectively. The valence vibrations of the double bond in the 3(2H)-furanone alkenonitrile fragment are in the region of 1646-1552 cm$^{-1}$.

The assembly of the both functionalized 2,3-dihydrofurans 3 and 3(2H)-furanones 4 involves the intermediate keto esters 5 that results from the following cascade: nucleophilic addition of carboxylic acids 2 to the triple bond of cyanopropargyl alcohol 1 and intramolecular transesterification in the adducts A to give keto esters 5 (Scheme 2). Then two competitive reactions take place: (i) intramolecular cyclization of intermediates 5 to 3(2H)-furanones 4 or (ii) the nucleophilic attack of carbanions B at the triple bond of the second molecule of cyanopropargyl alcohol 1 and the carbanions C finally cyclize to 2,3-dihydrofurans 3 (Scheme 2).

Scheme 2. Possible mechanism of 2,3-dihydrofurans 3 and 3(2H)-furanones 4 formation.

The milder conditions of the assembly of cyanopropargyl alcohol with aliphatic acids in contrast to analogous reactions with heteroaromatic carboxylic acids$^{37-40}$ can be understood in terms of a higher nucleophilicity of the anions of aliphatic carboxylic acids that should make the first stage of the cascade faster. On the other hand, the aliphatic substituents in the carboxylic group decrease the electrophilicity of the carbanion moiety and hence should slow down the intramolecular cyclization of the intermediates 5 (i). This likely allows the intermolecular transformation of the carbanions B (ii) to be more competitive and therefore to increase the relative content of 2,3-dihydrofurans 3 in the reaction mixture. The observed stereoselectivity of 2:1 assembly of 4-cyano-[(Z)-3-cyanomethylene]-2,3-dihydrofurans 3 is due to preference for the trans-
configuration of the carbanions C resulted from the nucleophilic attack at the triple bond of cyanopropargyl alcohol 1.

**Conclusions**

In conclusion, aliphatic carboxylic acids have been successfully involved under mild conditions into one-pot metal-free cascade assembly with available tertiary cyanopropargyl alcohol to afford functionalized 2,3-dihydrofurans and 3(2H)-furanones in good total yields. The observed differences of the synthesis are due to a higher nucleophilicity of aliphatic carboxylate anions and a lower electrophilicity of the carbonyl group of the aliphatic acids participating in intramolecular 1:1 assembly of 3(2H)-furanone scaffold. These effects and their competition favor the intermolecular 2:1 assembly to 2,3-dihydrofurans and hinder 1:1 assembly to 3(2H)-furanones. The intermediate cyano substituted keto esters, common for the both directions, have been shown to be easily isolable in synthetically acceptable yields thus representing a new highly reactive family of synthetic building blocks. The results substantially extend the substrate scope of the synthesis and broaden structural diversity of the functionalized dihydrofurans, particularly having in mind availability and abundance of aliphatic carboxylic acids as the fundamental class of organic compounds.

**Experimental Section**

**General.** 1H and 13C NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker DPX-400 spectrometer (400.1 and 100.6 MHz, respectively) in CDCl3 using hexamethyldisiloxane as internal references at 20-25 °C. For labeling of NMR assignments, see Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Labeling of hydrogen and carbon atoms in compounds 3b-e, 4b-e, 5b-e.](image)

IR spectra were measured on a Bruker Vertex-70 instrument in thin films or KBr pellets. Microanalyses were performed on a Flash 2000 elemental analyzer. Melting points were determined using a Kofler micro hot stage. Mass spectra were recorded on a GCMS-QP5050A spectrometer made by Shimadzu Company. Chromatographic column parameters were as follows: SPB-TM-5, length 60 m, internal diameter 0.25 mm, thickness of stationary phase film 0.25 μm; injector temperature 250 °C, gas carrier – helium, flow rate 0.7 mL/min; detector temperature 250 °C; mass analyzer: quadrupole, electron ionization, electron energy: 70 eV, ion source temperature 200 °C; mass range 34-650 Da. The solvent was MeCN (spectroscopic grade) from Scientific Production Company "Cryochrom" (St. Petersburg, Russia). Column chromatography was performed on silica gel 60 (70-230 mesh, particle size 0.063-0.200 nm, Merck). Acetic, butyric, pentanoic, 2-methylpropanoic and 3-methylbutanoic acids 2a-e are commercial reagents. Cyanopropargyl alcohol 1 were prepared according to a published method.43 Commercially available starting materials were used without further purification.
Reaction of 4-hydroxy-4-methyl-2-pentynenitrile (1) with aliphatic carboxylic acids 2.
(a) Triethylamine (101 mg, 1 mmol) was added dropwise over 1 min to a stirred solution of 4-hydroxy-4-methylpent-2-ynenitrile (1; 109 mg, 1 mmol) and acetic acid (2a; 60 mg, 1 mmol) in MeCN (5 mL). The reaction mixture was stirred at 20-25 °C for 48 h, then concentrated and the obtained residue was passed through silica gel (3 cm³, Et₂O) to give (Z)-2-[3-cyano-4-(cyanomethylene)-5,5-dimethyl-4,5-dihydrofuran-2-yl]propan-2-yl acetate (3a; 14 mg, 11%; colorless oil) and 2,5,5-trimethyl-4-oxo-4,5-dihydro-3-furancarbonitrile (4a; 131 mg, 87%; colorless crystals; mp 78–80 °C). Analysis data for 3a and 4a were published in literature.⁴⁰
(b) Triethylamine (101 mg, 1 mmol) was added dropwise over 1 min to a stirred solution of 1 (218 mg, 2 mmol) and 2a (60 mg, 1 mmol). The reaction mixture was stirred at 20-25 °C for 48 h, then concentrated and the obtained residue was purified by column chromatography (1.0 × 50 cm, SiO₂, Et₂O–C₆H₁₄, 1:1) to give 2,3-dihydrofuran 3a (98 mg, 38%) and 3(2H)-furanone 4a (30 mg, 20%).
(c) Triethylamine (101 mg, 1 mmol) was added dropwise over 1 min to a stirred solution of 1 (327 mg, 3 mmol) and 2a (60 mg, 1 mmol). The reaction mixture was stirred at 20-25 °C for 48 h, then concentrated and the obtained residue was purified by column chromatography (1.0 × 50 cm, SiO₂, Et₂O–C₆H₁₄, 1:1) to give mixture (178 mg) of the 2,3-dihydrofuran 3a and 4-hydroxy-4-methyl-2-pentynenitrile (1), and 3(2H)-furanone 4a (11 mg, 9%). The mixture of the 3a and 1 was additionally purified by column chromatography (1.0 × 50 cm, SiO₂, CHCl₃–C₆H₁₄–Et₂O, 20:10:1) to give the desired product 3a (109 mg, 42%) and initial 4-hydroxy-4-methylpent-2-ynenitrile (1; 69 mg, conversion 79%).
(d) Triethylamine (202 mg, 2 mmol) was added dropwise over 1 min to a stirred solution of 4-hydroxy-4-methylpent-2-ynenitrile (1; 131 mg, 1.2 mmol) and pentanoic acid (2c; 102 mg, 1 mmol) in MeCN (5 mL). The reaction mixture was stirred at 20-25 °C for 48 h, then concentrated and the obtained residue was purified by column chromatography (1.0 × 50 cm, SiO₂, Et₂O–C₆H₁₄, 1:1) to give 2,3-dihydrofuran 3c (14 mg, 9%), 3(2H)-furanone 4c (193 mg, 63%) and keto ester 5c (29 mg, 90% pure as determined by ¹H NMR, 12% yield).
(e) Triethylamine (53 mg, 0.5 mmol) was added dropwise over 1 min to a stirred solution of 4-hydroxy-4-methylpent-2-ynenitrile (1; 56 mg, 0.5 mmol) and 3-methylbutanoic acid (2e; 52 mg, 0.5 mmol) in MeCN (2.5 mL). The reaction mixture was stirred at ~80 °C for 9.5 h, then concentrated and the obtained residue was purified by column chromatography (1.0 × 30 cm, SiO₂, Et₂O–C₆H₁₄, 1:1) to give 3(2H)-furanone 4e (55 mg, 57%) and keto ester 5e (6 mg, 70% pure as determined by ¹H NMR, 4% yield).

Reaction of 4-hydroxy-4-methyl-2-pentynenitrile (1) with butyric acid (2b). Following the procedure (a) using 1 (131 mg, 1.2 mmol), 2b (88 mg, 1 mmol), and Et₃N (101 mg, 1 mmol) in MeCN (5 mL) a mixture of products 3b, 4b and 5b was obtained. Purification: column chromatography (1.0 × 40 cm, SiO₂, Et₂O–C₆H₁₄, 1:1); this gave 3b (51 mg, 18%), 4b (110 mg, 61%) and 5b (38 mg, 90% pure as determined by ¹H NMR, 17% yield).
Following the procedure (b) using 1 (218 mg, 2 mmol), 2b (88 mg, 1 mmol), and Et₃N (101 mg, 1 mmol) a mixture of products 3b, 4b and 5b was obtained. Subsequent purification gave 3b (169 mg, 59%), 4b (26 mg, 15%) and 5b (40 mg, 85% pure as determined by ¹H NMR, 17% yield).

(Z)-2-[3-Cyano-4-(cyanomethylene)-5,5-dimethyl-4,5-dihydrofuran-2-yl]propan-2-yl butyrate (3b). Colorless oil. Z/E ~ 85/15; IR [film]: 3094, 3066 (C=CH), 2994, 2976, 2937 (CH), 2223 and 2211 (C=O, 7.4 Hz); ¹H NMR (400.1 MHz, CDCl₃): Z-isomer δ = 5.09 (s, 1 H, =CHCN), 2.35 (m, 2 H, CH₃CH₂CH₂), 1.71 [s, 6 H, (CH₃)₂C-1], 1.68 [s, 6 H, (CH₃)₂C-S], 1.63 (m, 1 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂), 0.94 (t, 3 H, CH₃CH₂CH₂, J 7.4 Hz); E-isomer δ = 5.05 (s, 1 H, =CHCN), 2.55 (m, 2 H, CH₃CH₂CH₂), 1.71 [s, 6 H, (CH₃)₂C-1], 1.68 [s, 6 H, (CH₃)₂C-S], 1.63 (m, 1 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂), 0.99 (t, 3 H, CH₃CH₂CH₂, J 7.4 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃): Z-isomer δ = 182.5 (C-2), 172.3 (C=O), 166.6 (C-4), 116.1 (=CCN), 111.6 (=CHCN), 94.4 (C-5), 86.7 (C-3), 80.1 (=CHCN), 75.9 (C-1), 35.7 (CH₃CH₂CH₂), 25.1 [((CH₃)₂C-2], 24.5 [(CH₃)₂C-S], 18.1 (CH₃CH₂CH₂), 13.4 (CH₃CH₂CH₂); E-isomer
δ = 183.0 (C-2), 172.2 (C=O), 166.3 (C-4), 116.3 (=C≡N), 111.5 (=C≡N), 94.1 (C-5), 89.7 (C-3), 79.3 (=CHCN), 77.2 (C-1), 30.8 (CH₂CH₂CH₂), 25.1 ([CH₃]₂C-1), 24.7 ([CH₃]₂C-5), 19.7 (CH₂CH₂CH₂), 13.3 (CH₃CH₂CH₂); MS (EI): m/z (%) = 288 (21) [M⁺], 201 (11), 175 (27), 71 (100), 43 (93), 41 (27); Anal. Calcd for C₁₆H₂₀N₂O₃ (288.34): C 66.65; H 6.99; N 9.72. Found: C, 66.91; H, 6.72; N, 9.50.

5,5-Dimethyl-4-oxo-2-propyl-4,5-dihydro-3-furancarbonitrile (4b). White powder; mp 84-86 °C; IR (KBr): 3092, 3068 (C=CH), 2995, 2973, 2934 (CH), 2221 (C≡N), 1714 (C=O), 1644, 1595, 1562 (C=C) cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (400.1 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 2.34 (m, 2 H, CH₃CH₂CH₂), 1.80 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂), 1.45 (s, 6 H, 2CH₃), 1.02 (t, 3 H, CH₃CH₂, J 7.3 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 198.9 (C=O), 197.6 (C-2), 111.9 (CN), 94.0 (C-5), 91.7 (C-3), 32.5 (CH₂CH₂CH₂), 24.7 (2CH₃), 19.6 (CH₂CH₂), 13.6 (CH₃CH₂CH₂); MS (EI): m/z (%) = 179 (17), 177 (12) [M-H]+, 71 (100), 43 (36), 41 (16); Anal. Calcd for C₁₅H₁₅N₂O (179.22): C 76.02; H 7.31; N 8.62. Found: C 76.27; H 7.24; N 8.01.

3-Cyano-1,1-dimethyl-2-oxopropyl butyrate (5b). ¹H NMR (400.1 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 3.54 (s, 2 H, CH₂CN), 2.33 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂), 1.65 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂), 1.51 (s, 6 H, 2CH₃), 0.96 (t, 3 H, CH₃CH₂CH₂, J 7.4 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 196.4 (C=O), 173.5 (CO₂), 113.6 (CN), 82.9 (C-1), 35.9 (CH₂CH₂CH₂), 26.6 (CH₂CN), 23.2 (2CH₃), 18.2 (CH₂CH₂CH₂), 13.5 (CH₃CH₂CH₂); MS (EI): m/z (%) = 195 (16) [M-2H]+, 138 (21), 137 (19), 124 (10), 110 (11), 70 (35), 69 (13), 66 (16), 59 (100), 43 (92), 42 (14), 41 (26), 39 (17).

Reaction of 4-hydroxy-4-methyl-2-pentynenitrile (1) with pentanoic acid (2c). Following the procedure (a) using 1 (131 mg, 1.2 mmol), 2c (102 mg, 1 mmol), and Et₃N (101 mg, 1 mmol) in MeCN (5 mL) a mixture of products 3c, 4c and 5c was obtained. Purification: column chromatography (1.0 × 40 cm, SiO₂, Et₂O–C₆H₄a, 1:1); this gave 3c (15 mg, 10%), 4c (115 mg, 60%) and 5c (36 mg, 80% pure as determined by ¹H NMR, 14% yield).

Following the procedure (b) using 1 (218 mg, 2 mmol), 2c (102 mg, 1 mmol), and Et₃N (101 mg, 1 mmol) a mixture of products 3c, 4c and 5c was obtained. Subsequent purification gave 3c (120 mg, 40%), 4c (29, mg 15%) and 5c (16 mg, 75% pure as determined by ¹H NMR, 6% yield).

(Z)-2-[3-Cyano-4-(cyanomethylene)-5,5-dimethyl-4,5-dihydrofur-2-yl]propan-2-yl pentanoate (3c). Light yellow oil. Z/E ~ 90/10; IR (film): 3047 (C=C), 2986, 2960, 2938, 2872 (CH), 2218 (CN), 1741 (CO), 1623, 1584 (C=O) cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (400.1 MHz, CDCl₃): Z- isomer δ = 5.09 (s, 1 H, =C≡CHN), 2.36 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 1.71 (s, 6 H, (CH₃)₂C-1), 1.68 [s, 6 H, (CH₃)₂C-5], 1.59 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 1.35 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 0.92 (t, 3 H, CH₃CH₂CH₂CH₂, J 7.3 Hz); E- isomer δ = 5.04 (s, 1 H, =C≡CHN), 2.57 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 1.71 [s, 6 H, (CH₃)₂C-1], 1.68 [s, 6 H, (CH₃)₂C-5], 1.59 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 1.35 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 0.94 (t, 3 H, CH₃CH₂CH₂CH₂, J 7.3 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃): Z- isomer δ = 182.6 (C-2), 172.5 (C=O), 166.6 (C-4), 116.2 (=CCN), 111.6 (=CHCN), 94.4 (C-5), 86.6 (C-3), 80.1 (=CHCN), 75.8 (C-1), 33.6 (CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 26.7 (CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 25.1 [(CH₃)₂C-1], 24.5 [(CH₃)₂C-5], 22.0 (CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 13.6 (CH₃CH₂CH₂CH₂); E- isomer δ = 183.3 (C-2), 172.5 (C=O), 166.3 (C-4), 116.4 (=CCN), 112.1 (=CHCN), 94.2 (C-5), 86.6 (C-3), 79.2 (=CHCN), 75.8 (C-1), 28.7 (CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 28.1 (CH₃CH₂CH₂CH₂), 24.7 [(CH₃)₂C-1], 24.5 [(CH₃)₂C-5], 22.0 (CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 13.5 (CH₃CH₂CH₂CH₂); MS (EI): m/z (%) = 302 (54) [M⁺], 203 (12), 202 (27), 201 (26), 200 (15), 175 (34), 85 (100), 69 (11), 57 (92), 43 (35), 41 (51), 39 (11); Anal. Calcd for C₁₇H₂₂N₂O₃ (302.37): C, 67.53; H, 7.33; N, 9.26. Found: C, 67.91; H, 7.72; N, 9.50.

2-Butyl-5,5-dimethyl-4-oxo-4,5-dihydro-3-furancarbonitrile (4c). Light yellow oil; IR (film): 2963, 2937, 2873 (CH), 2229 (CN), 1723 (C=O), 1587 (C=C) cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (400.1 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 2.76 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 1.73 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 1.44 (s, 6 H, 2CH₃), 1.41 (m, 2 H, CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 0.96 (t, 3 H, CH₃CH₂CH₂CH₂, J 7.3 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 199.0 (C=O), 197.9 (C-2), 111.3 (CN), 91.8 (C-5), 91.1 (C-3), 30.6 (CH₃CH₂CH₂CH₂), 27.8 (CH₂CH₂CH₂CH₂), 22.6 (2CH₃), 22.1 (CH₃CH₂CH₂CH₂), 13.5 (CH₃CH₂CH₂CH₂); MS (EI): m/z
3-Cyano-1,1-dimethyl-2-oxopropyl pentanoate (5c). \(^1\)H NMR (400.1 MHz, CDCl\(_3\)): \(\delta = 3.54\) (s, 2 H, CH\(_2\)CN), 2.35 (m, 2 H, CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)), 1.60 (m, 2 H, CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)), 1.51 (s, 6 H, 2CH\(_3\)), 1.34 (m, 2 H, CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)), 0.92 (t, 3 H, CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\), \(J = 7.3\) Hz); \(^1^3\)C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl\(_3\)): \(\delta = 196.4\) (C=O), 173.8 (CO\(_2\)), 113.6 (CN), 82.8 (C-1), 33.8 (CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)), 26.7 (CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)), 26.6 (CH\(_2\)CN), 23.1 (2CH\(_3\)), 22.1 (CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)), 13.6 (CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)); MS (EI): \(m/z\) (%) = 193 (10) [M–H\(_2\)O]\(^+\), 136 (12), 123 (25), 93 (15), 59 (17), 58 (19), 43 (100), 42 (12), 41 (43), 39 (26).

**Reaction of 4-hydroxy-4-methyl-2-pentenenitrile (1) with 2-methylpropanoic acid (2d)**

Following the procedure (a) using 1 (131 mg, 1.2 mmol), 2d (88 mg, 1 mmol), and Et\(_3\)N (101 mg, 1 mmol) in MeCN (5 mL) a mixture of products 3d, 4d and 5d was obtained. Purification: column chromatography (1.0 \(\times\) 40 cm, SiO\(_2\), Et\(_2\)O–C\(_6\)H\(_{14}\), 1:1); this gave 3d (12 mg, 8%), 4d (82 mg, 46%) and 5d (77 mg, 95% pure as determined by \(^1\)H NMR, 37% yield).

Following the procedure (b) using 1 (218 mg, 2 mmol), 2d (88 mg, 1 mmol), and Et\(_3\)N (101 mg, 1 mmol) a mixture of products 3d and 4d was obtained. Subsequent purification gave 3d (79 mg, 27%) and 4d (10 mg, 6% by \(^1\)H NMR).

**3-Cyano-1,1-dimethyl-2-oxopropyl 2-methylpropanoate (5d).** Light yellow oil; IR (film): 3086, 2924, 2857, 1750, 1655, 1492, 1446, 1401, 1292, 1152, 1041, 971, 832, 720, 602. \(^1\)H NMR (400.1 MHz, CDCl\(_3\)): \(\delta = 3.60\) (s, 2 H, CH\(_2\)CN), 2.79 (m, 2 H, CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)), 1.70 (m, 2 H, CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)), 1.60 (m, 2 H, CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)), 1.18 (s, 6 H, 2CH\(_3\)), 0.88 (t, 3 H, CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\), \(J = 7.0\) Hz); \(^1^3\)C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl\(_3\)): \(\delta = 196.4\) (C=O), 173.8 (CO\(_2\)), 113.6 (CN), 33.8 (CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)), 26.7 (CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)CH\(_2\)), 26.6 (CH\(_2\)CN), 18.5 (CH\(_3\)CH\(_2\)), MS (EI): \(m/z\) (%) = 127 (100) [M–H\(_2\)O]\(^+\), 179 (28), 178 (28), 164 (12), 136 (70), 136 (47), 108 (17), 94 (11), 93 (19), 92 (17), 71 (15), 69 (25), 67 (13), 66 (72), 59 (11), 58 (33), 43 (100), 42 (14), 41 (47), 39 (33); Anal. Calcd for C\(_{10}\)H\(_{15}\)NO\(_2\) (179.22): C, 67.02; H, 7.31; N, 7.82. Found: C, 67.23; H, 7.37; N, 8.20.
Following the procedure (b) using 1 (218 mg, 2 mmol), 2e (102 mg, 1 mmol), and Et₃N (101 mg, 1 mmol) a mixture of products 3e, 4e and 5e was obtained. Subsequent purification gave 3e (132 mg, 44%), 4e (27 mg, 14%) and 5e (45 mg, 90% pure as determined by ¹H NMR, 19% yield).

(Z)-2-[3-Cyano-4-(cyanomethylene)-5,5-dimethyl-4,5-dihydrofururan-2-yl]propan-2-yl 3-methylbutanoate (3e). Light yellow oil; IR (film): 3047 (C=CH), 2984, 2964, 2935 (CH), 2876 (CH), 2217 (CN), 1740 (C=O), 1621 (CN), 1732 (C=O, COO) cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (400.1 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 5.10 (s, 1 H, =CHCN), 2.23 (m, 2 H, CH₂), 2.07 (m, 1 H, CH), 1.71 [s, 6 H, (CH₃)₂C-1], 1.68 [s, 6 H, (CH₃)₂C-5], 0.95 [d, 6 H, (CH₃)₂2CH, J 6.6 Hz]; ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 182.5 (C-2), 171.7 (C=O), 166.7 (C-4), 116.2 (=CHCN), 111.6 (=CHCN), 94.4 (C-5), 86.7 (C-3), 80.1 (=CHCN), 75.8 (C-1), 42.8 (CH₂), 25.5 (CH), 25.1 [(CH₃)₂C-1], 24.5 [(CH₃)₂C-5], 22.2 [(CH₃)₂CH]; MS (EI): m/z (%) = 302 (47) [M⁺], 203 (13), 202 (26), 201 (30), 200 (11), 175 (20), 85 (93), 69 (12), 57 (100), 43 (41), 41 (44), 39 (11); Anal. Calcd for C₁₁H₂₂N₂O₃ (302.37): C, 67.53; H, 7.33; N, 9.25. Found: C, 67.72; H, 7.71; N, 9.42.

2-Isobutyl-5,5-dimethyl-4-oxo-4,5-dihydro-3-furancarbonitrile (4e). Light yellow oil; IR (film): 2967, 2937, 2877, 2229 (CN), 1724 (C=O), 1646, 1587 (C=C) cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (400.1 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 2.64 (m, 2 H, CH₂), 2.21 (m, 1 H, CH), 1.45 (s, 6 H, 2CH₃), 1.04 [d, 6 H, (CH₃)₂2CH, J 6.6 Hz]; ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 199.0 (C=O), 197.1 (C-2), 111.3 (CN), 91.9 (C-3,5), 39.4 (CH₂), 22.2 [(CH₃)₂CH], 27.2 (CH), 22.6 (2CH₃); MS (EI): m/z (%) = 193 (53) [M⁺], 151 (48), 150 (14), 136 (70), 123 (17), 108 (11), 93 (12), 69 (12), 65 (15), 64 (12), 59 (19), 58 (11), 43 (100), 41 (45), 39 (25); Anal. Calcd for C₁₁H₁₂NO₂ (193.24): C, 68.37; H, 7.82; N, 7.25. Found: C, 68.25; H, 7.47; N, 7.50.

3-Cyano-1,1-dimethyl-2-oxopropyl 3-methylbutanoate (5e). Light yellow oil; IR (film): 2963, 2933, 2879 (CH), 2261 (CN), 1732 (C=O, COO) cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (400.1 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 3.55 (s, 2 H, CH₂CN), 2.22 (m, 2 H, CH₂), 2.21 (m, 1 H, CH), 1.51 (s, 6 H, 2CH₃), 0.96 [d, 6 H, (CH₃)₂2CH, J 6.6 Hz]; ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 196.4 (C=O), 172.9 (CO₂), 113.6 (CN), 82.7 (C-1), 42.9 (CH₂), 26.6 (CH), 26.3 (CH₂CN), 23.1 [(CH₃)₂CH], 22.2 (2CH₃); MS (EI): m/z (%) = 143 (13) [M–C(O)CH₂CN⁺], 85 (100), 59 (17), 57 (86), 43 (13), 41 (34), 39 (12); Anal. Calcd for C₁₁H₁₇NO₃ (211.26): C, 62.54; H, 8.11; N, 6.63. Found: C 62.84; H 8.18; N 6.63.

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