# Supporting Information for:

## Phosphine-Catalyzed [4+2] Annulation: Synthesis of Cyclohexenes

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#### Contents

1.	General Information	S2
2.	General Procedure for the Formation of Cyclohexenes 3/4	S3
3.	Structural Assignment of Cyclohexenes <b>3a</b> and <b>4a</b> Through 1D and 2D NMR	
	Spectroscopic Analyses	S4
	A. 1D and 2D NMR Spectra of Cyclohexene <b>3a</b>	S4
	B. 1D and 2D NMR Spectra of Cyclohexene 4a	S8
4.	Characterization of Tetrasubstituted Cyclohexene Derivatives 3 and 4	S11
5.	Characterization of Pentasubstituted Cyclohexene Derivatives 3	S14
6.	Synthesis of Tetracycle 12	S21
7.	<sup>1</sup> H and <sup>13</sup> C NMR Spectra of Products	S22
8.	ORTEP Representations of the Solid State Structures of Compounds 3d, 4f, and 12	<b>2</b> S47
	A. Cyclohexene <b>3d</b>	S47
	B. Cyclohexene <b>4f</b>	S48
	C. Tetracycle <b>12</b>	S48

### **1. General Information**

All reactions were performed under an argon atmosphere with dry solvents and anhydrous conditions, unless otherwise noted. Benzene, toluene, and dichloromethane were distilled afresh from CaH<sub>2</sub>. All other reagents were used as received from commercial sources. All ethyl 2-substituted methylallenoates 1 were synthesized according to procedures reported previously.<sup>1</sup> The arylidenenemalononitriles **2** were obtained from commercially available sources or synthesized through phosphine-catalyzed Knoevenagel condensation of the pertinent aldehyde and malononitrile, according to the procedure reported by Yadav.<sup>2</sup> Reactions were monitored using thin layer chromatography (TLC) performed on 0.25-mm E. Merck silica gel plates (60F-254) and visualized under UV light or through permanganate staining. Flash column chromatography was performed using E. Merck silica gel 60 (230-400 mesh) and compressed air. IR spectra were recorded on a Perkin-Elmer pargon 1600 FT-IR spectrometer. NMR spectra were obtained on Bruker Avance-500, ARX-500, or Bruker Avance-300 instruments (as indicated), calibrated using residual undeuterated chloroform as an internal reference (7.26 and 77.0 ppm for <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra, respectively). <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectral data are reported as follows: chemical shift ( $\delta$ , ppm), multiplicity, coupling constant (Hz), and integration.  $^{13}C$ spectral data are reported in terms of the chemical shift. The following abbreviations are used to indicate multiplicities: s = singlet; d = doublet; t = triplet; q = quartet; m = multiplet; br = broad. High-resolution EI mass spectra were recorded after rapid thermal vaporization of samples deposited on a desorption ionization filament inserted directly into the electron ionization (EI, 70 eV, 200 °C) source of a triple-sector high-resolution instrument (VG/Micromass Autospec) tuned to 8000 static resolution (M/DM, 10% valley) using perfluorinated kerosene (formula

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Zhu, X.-F.; Lan, J.; Kwon, O. J. Am. Chem. Soc. 2003, 125, 4716.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Yadav, J. S.; Subba Reddy, B. V.; Basak, A. K.; Visali, B.; Narsaiah, A. V.; Nagaiah, K. *Eur. J. Org. Chem.* 2004, 546.

weight 705, Lancaster Synthesis, Inc., NH) as the internal calibrant. High-resolution electrospray ionization (HRESI) mass spectra were recorded after flow injection of chloroform solutions into an ESI source attached to a 7.5-tesla FTMS (Ion Spec Ultima, Irvine, CA) instrument. Data were analyzed using the instrument-supplied software. X-ray crystallographic data were collected using a Bruker SMART CCD-based diffractometer equipped with a low-temperature apparatus operated at 100 K. Melting points (m.p.) are uncorrected and were recorded on an Electrothermal capillary melting point apparatus.

#### 2. General Procedure for the Formation of Cyclohexenes 3/4

Ethyl 2-alkylallenoate 1 (1.2 mmol) in benzene (10 mL) was added slowly over 3 h via syringe under an argon atmosphere to a solution of arylidenemalononitrile 2 (1.0 mmol) and phosphine (0.2 mmol) in benzene (10 mL) at 80 °C. The mixture was heated under reflux and the progress of the reaction monitored using TLC. After 8 h, additional ethyl 2-alkylallenoate (0.2 mmol) in benzene (2 mL) was added over 5 min if it is necessary. After the reaction had reached completion [ca. 14 h, except for the reaction using (4-ClC<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>)<sub>3</sub>P, which required 120 h], the resulting mixture was concentrated and the regioisomeric ratio determined using <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy. The crude residue was purified through flash column chromatography on silica gel (gradient eluent: 5–20% ethyl acetate in hexanes) to provide the cyclohexene derivatives **3** or **4**.

Ethyl 5,5-Dicyano-4-phenylcyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (3a). 98% yield as a white solid: m.p. 99–101 °C; IR (film)  $v_{max}$  2982, 2924, 2251, 2229, 1710, 1658, 1277, 1260, 1235, 1103, 700 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.43 (s, 5H), 7.23 (m, 1H), 4.27 (q, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 3.34 (dm, J = 17.7 Hz, 1H), 3.26 (dd, J = 10.4, 5.5 Hz, 1H), 3.06 (ddt, J = 17.7, 3.7, 2.1 Hz, 1H), 2.96 (dddt, J = 20.3, 10.4, 3.5, 2.6 Hz, 1H), 2.78 (dm, J = 20.3 Hz, 1H), 1.34 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  164.7, 138.4, 136.0, 129.3, 129.2, 128.0, 124.9, 114.8, 113.9, 61.3, 45.2, 37.1, 34.8, 29.2, 14.1; MS (MALDI) calcd for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>16</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Na [M + Na]<sup>+</sup> 303.111, found 303.115.

Ethyl 4,4-Dicyano-5-phenylcyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (4a). 93% yield as a foam: IR (film)  $v_{max}$  3065, 3035, 2984, 2252, 1714, 1660, 1550 1431, 1273, 1255, 1103, 732 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.40–7.48 (m, 5H), 6.93 (m, 1H), 4.25 (qd, J = 7.1, 10 Hz, 2H), 3.24 (dd, J = 8.2, 8.2 Hz, 1H), 3.17 (ddt, J =18.9, 5.1, 1.5 Hz, 1H), 3.07 (dq, J = 18.9, 3.0 Hz, 1H), 2.92–2.97 (m, 2H), 1.31 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  165.0, 136.3, 131.4, 130.3, 129.2, 129.1, 128.0, 114.8, 113.9, 61.2, 45.8, 36.6, 36.3, 27.7, 14.1; MS (MALDI) calcd for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>16</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Na [M + Na]<sup>+</sup> 303.111, found 303.132.

# 3. Structural Assignment of Cyclohexenes 3a and 4a Through 1D and 2D NMR Spectroscopic Analyses

### A. 1D and 2D NMR Spectra of Cyclohexene 3a

The structure of cyclohexene **3a** was assigned based on MS (MALDI) and <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C, <sup>13</sup>C-DEPT, 2D-COSY, HMQC, and HMBC NMR spectroscopy experiments and further confirmed through single-crystal X-ray crystallographic analysis of cyclohexene **3d**. MS (MALDI) of cyclohexene **3a** gave a molecular ion at m/z 303.115 (M + Na), in accordance with the molecular formula C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>16</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> with sodium incorporated. The <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum indicated a total of sixteen protons: five aromatic protons (7.3–7.5 ppm) belonging to the phenyl ring, one vinylic proton (7.23 ppm) for the  $\alpha$ , $\beta$ -unsaturated carboxylic ester, five protons for the ethyl carboxylic ester [4.3 (q) and 1.3 (t) ppm], and five aliphatic protons between 2 and 3 ppm for the five ring protons. <sup>13</sup>C NMR and <sup>13</sup>C DEPT experiments suggested 15 carbon atoms, including three methylene units (two in the cyclohexene ring and one for the ethyl ester). A 2D COSY experiment validated the cross-coupling of the ring protons for cyclohexene **3a**. Couplings were observed for the C<sup>2</sup>H–C<sup>3</sup>H, C<sup>3</sup>H–C<sup>3</sup>H', C<sup>3</sup>H+C<sup>3</sup>H'–C<sup>4</sup>H, and C<sup>6</sup>H–C<sup>6</sup>H' units, consistent with the assigned structure **3a**. A 2D HMQC (<sup>1</sup>H–<sup>13</sup>C correlation) experiment indicated that C<sup>3</sup>H–C<sup>3</sup>H' coupling belonged to the C<sup>3</sup> atom and C<sup>6</sup>H–C<sup>6</sup>H' coupling belonged to the C<sup>6</sup> atom of the cyclohexene **3a**.







## B. 1D and 2D NMR Spectra of Cyclohexene 4a

The structure of cyclohexene **4a** was also assigned based on MS (MALDI) and <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C, <sup>13</sup>C-DEPT, 2D-COSY, HMQC, and HMBC NMR spectroscopy experiments and further confirmed through single-crystal X-ray crystallographic analysis of cyclohexene **4f**. Similar to compound **3a**, the MALDI mass spectrum of cyclohexene **4a** gave a molecular ion at m/z303.132 (M + Na), in accordance with the molecular formula C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>16</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> with sodium incorporation. The number of protons and carbons suggested by the <sup>1</sup>H NMR, <sup>13</sup>C NMR, and <sup>13</sup>C DEPT spectra of **4a** were similar to those of compound **3a**, although the <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of **4a** exhibited (a) the C<sup>2</sup>H vinylic proton at 6.93 ppm (vs. 7.23 ppm) for the  $\alpha$ , $\beta$ -unsaturated carboxylic ester and (b) very different coupling patterns of the five aliphatic protons (between 2 and 3 ppm) belonging to the cyclohexene **fa**. Couplings were observed for the C<sup>2</sup>H–C<sup>3</sup>H, C<sup>3</sup>H–C<sup>3</sup>H', C<sup>5</sup>H–C<sup>6</sup>H+C<sup>6</sup>H', and C<sup>6</sup>H–C<sup>6</sup>H' units. A 2D HMQC (<sup>1</sup>H–<sup>13</sup>C correlation) experiment indicated that the C<sup>3</sup>H and C<sup>3</sup>H' protons belong to C<sup>3</sup> and the C<sup>6</sup>H and C<sup>6</sup>H' protons to C<sup>6</sup>.







gradient selected double quantum filtered phase sensitive COSY



4. Characterization of Tetrasubstituted Cyclohexene Derivatives 3 and 4

MeO CN CO<sub>2</sub>Et Ethyl 5,5-Dicyano-4-(4-methoxyphenyl)cyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (3b). 94% yield: IR (film)  $v_{max}$  2955, 2923, 2850, 2250, 2219, 1710, 1658, 1612, 1515, 1282, 1258, 1101, 1030 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz,

CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.35 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.22 (m, 1H), 6.94 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 4.26 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 3.82 (s, 3H), 3.31 (d, *J* = 17.7 Hz, 1H), 3.22 (dd, *J* = 10.4, 5.4 Hz, 1H), 3.07 (dq, *J* = 18.9, 3.0 Hz, 1H), 2.92–2.97 (m, 2H), 1.31 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  165.0, 160.3, 136.3, 131.4, 130.3, 129.2, 129.1, 128.0, 114.8, 113.9, 61.2, 45.8, 36.6, 36.3, 27.7, 14.1; MS (MALDI) calcd for C<sub>18</sub>H<sub>18</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>Na [M + Na] 333.122, found 333.126.



Ethyl 4-(4-Bromophenyl)-5,5-dicyanocyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (3c). 86% yield: IR (film)  $v_{max}$  2980, 2918, 2850, 2250, 2224, 1711, 1660, 1263, 1235, 1103, 1075, 1012 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz,

CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.56 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 7.31 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 7.20 (m, 1H), 4.26 (q, J = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 3.34 (d, J = 17.7 Hz, 1H), 3.23 (dd, J = 10.2, 5.7 Hz, 1H), 3.04 (ddt, J = 17.7, 3.5, 2.3 Hz, 1H), 2.91 (ddm, J = 20.0, 10.2 Hz, 1H), 2.75 (dtm, J = 20.0, 5.0 Hz, 1H), 1.28 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  164.4, 137.8, 135.0, 132.2, 129.6, 124.8, 123.3, 114.5, 113.5, 61.2, 44.4, 34.8, 34.4, 28.8, 14.0; MS (EI) calcd for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>15</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Br [M]<sup>+</sup> 358.0, found 358.0.

OMeEthyl 4,4-Dicyano-5-(4-methoxyphenyl)cyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (4b).90% yield; IR (film)  $v_{max}$  3061, 2964, 2841, 2251, 1713, 1660, 1611, 1516,NC1257, 1101, 1031, 833, 801, 737 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.38CO2Et(d, J = 8.7 Hz, 2H), 6.95 (d, J = 8.7 Hz, 2H), 6.92 (m, 1H), 4.25 (qd, J = 7.1,1.3 Hz, 2H), 3.83 (s, 3H), 3.20 (t, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 3.15 (ddt, J = 18.9, 5.1, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 3.0 (dq, J = 18.8, 3.0 Hz, 1H), 2.90 (ddt, J = 8.1, 2.9, 1.4 Hz, 2H), 1.31 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  165.1, 160.2, 131.5, 130.2, 129.2, 128.3, 115.0, 114.5, 114.0, 61.2, 55.3, 45.2,37.0, 36.2, 27.8, 14.1; MS (MALDI) calcd for C<sub>18</sub>H<sub>18</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>Na [M + Na]<sup>+</sup> 333.122, found333.124.



7.58 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 7.34 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 6.93 (m, 1H), 4.25 (q, J = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 3.21 (dd, J = 9.8, 6.4 Hz, 1H), 3.14 (dt, J = 5.0, 1.63 Hz, 1H), 3.06 (dq, J = 18.9, 2.9 Hz, 1H), 2.85–2.95 (m, 2H), 1.31 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  164.8, 135.3, 132.3, 131.1, 130.2, 129.7, 123.4, 114.6, 113.6, 61.2, 45.2, 36.4, 36.1, 27.5, 14.1; MS (EI) calcd for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>15</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Br [M]<sup>+</sup> 358.0, found 358.0.

Ethyl 4,4-Dicyano-5-(pyridin-3-yl)cyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (4e). 80% NC NC NC CO<sub>2</sub>Et Ethyl 4,4-Dicyano-5-(pyridin-3-yl)cyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (4e). 80% yield; IR (film)  $v_{max}$  3036, 2983, 2915, 2251, 1712, 1660, 1592, 1429, 1259, 1104, 1027, 737, 714 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  8.67 (s, 2H), 7.84 (dt, *J* = 8.0, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.14 (td, *J* = 8.7, 2.1 Hz, 1H), 6.90–6.96 (m, 1H), 4.23 (qd, *J* = 7.1, 0.8 Hz, 2H), 3.28 (dd, *J* = 9.6, 6.8 Hz, 1H), 3.17 (ddt, *J* = 18.9, 5.1, 1.4 Hz, 1H), 3.08 (dq, *J* = 18.9, 2.9 Hz, 1H), 2.88–2.95 (m, 2H), 1.29 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125) MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 164.7, 150.6, 150.0, 135.0, 132.1, 131.0, 130.2, 123.8, 114.4, 113.4, 61.3, 43.5, 36.3, 36.0, 27.5, 14.0; MS (MALDI) calcd for C<sub>16</sub>H<sub>16</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub> [M + H]<sup>+</sup>282.124, found 282.129.



s, 1H), 6.80 (s, 1H), 4.27 (q, J = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 3.80 (s, 3H), 3.63 (dd, J = 10.2, 5.4 Hz, 1H), 3.22 (br dd, J = 18.8, 4.4 Hz, 1H), 2.90–3.15 (m, 3H), 1.33 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  164.8, 137.5, 135.0, 131.2, 130.3, 127.2, 122.5, 120.9, 120.2, 114.9, 113.7, 109.6, 101.3, 61.3, 37.2, 36.3, 35.8, 30.1, 28.9, 14.1; MS (EI) calcd for C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub> [M]<sup>+</sup> 333.1, found 333.1.

#### 5. Characterization of Pentasubstituted Cyclohexene Derivatives 3



*cis*-Ethyl 5,5-Dicyano-4,6-diphenylcyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (3d). 93% yield as a 82:18 mixture of cis and trans isomers: IR (film)  $v_{max}$  3032, 2960, 2924, 2853, 2247, 2215, 1719, 1656, 1603, 1495, 1455, 1371, 1257, 1103, 1021, 800, 733, 701 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.35–7.52 (m, 10H), 7.22 (ddd, J = 6.1, 2.2, 2.0 Hz, 1H), 4.5 (dt, J = 4.1, 2.0 Hz, 1H), 4.00

(dq, *J* = 10.8, 7.1 Hz, 1H), 3.90 (dq, *J* = 10.8, 7.1 Hz, 1H), 3.45 (dd, *J* = 12.2, 4.4 Hz, 1H), 3.18 (dddd, *J* = 19.5, 12.2, 4.1, 2.2 Hz, 1H), 2.74 (dddd, *J* = 19.5, 6.2, 4.4, 2.0 Hz, 1H), 0.89 (t, *J* = 7.1

Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  165.4, 138.3, 136.0, 135.7, 130.5, 129.4, 129.2, 128.9, 128.82, 128.83, 128.3, 114.2, 112.5, 60.8, 51.6, 47.2, 47.1, 28.8, 13.6; MS (MALDI) calcd for C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>20</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Na [M + Na]<sup>+</sup> 379.142, found 379.145.



*cis*-Ethyl 6-(4-Bromophenyl)-5,5-dicyano-4-phenylcyclohex-1enecarboxylate (3e). 95% yield as a white solid, an 89:11 mixture of cis and trans isomers: m.p. 160–161 °C (cis isomer): IR (film)  $v_{max}$ 

3033, 2982, 2253, 2217, 1716, 1655, 1489, 1267, 1253, 1012, 909, 731, 701 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.27–7.57 (m, 9H), 7.25 (ddd, J = 6.2, 2.1, 2.1 Hz, 1H), 4.45–4.52 (m, 1H), 4.92–4.15 (m, 2H), 3.44 (dd, J = 12.2, 4.4Hz, 1H), 3.17 (dddd, J = 19.6, 12.2, 4.1, 2.1 Hz, 1H), 2.75 (dddd, J = 19.6, 6.2, 4.5, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 0.98 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  165.0, 139.0, 135.7, 134.9, 132.0, 129.8, 129.4, 129.2, 129.1, 128.2, 123.0, 114.0, 112.3, 61.0, 50.9, 47.0, 46.9, 28.7, 13.7; MS (EI) calcd for C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Br [M]<sup>+</sup> 434, found 434.



*trans*-Ethyl 5,5-Dicyano-6-(3-methoxyphenyl)-4phenylcyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (3f). 92% yield as a 78:22

CO<sub>2</sub>Et mixture of cis and trans isomers: IR (film)  $v_{max}$  3061, 3034, 2981, 2934, 2840, 2247, 2226, 1713, 1658, 1602, 1491, 1457, 1273, 1248, 1158, 1100, 103 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.45 (dd, J = 4.5, 2.8 Hz, 1H), 7.30–7.40 (m, 6H), 6.92–6.97 (m, 2H), 6.89–6.92 (m, 1H), 4.68 (s, 1H), 4.05–4.20 (m, 2H), 3.84 (s, 3H), 3.37 (dd, J = 11.4, 5.6 Hz, 1H), 3.05 (ddt, J = 20.5, 11.5, 2.1 Hz, 1H), 2.88 (dt, J = 20.5, 5.2 Hz, 1H), 1.18 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  165.3, 159.7, 139.1, 136.0, 135.9, 129.7, 129.2, 129.0, 128.4, 127.8, 122.2, 116.3, 114.6, 114.2, 113.3, 61.2, 55.3, 48.6, 43.6, 40.2, 29.8, 13.9; MS (MALDI) calcd for  $C_{24}H_{22}N_2O_3$  [M]<sup>+</sup> 409.1528, found 409.1525.



cis-Ethyl 5,5-Dicyano-6-(2-methoxyphenyl)-4-phenylcyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (3g). 91% yield as a 64:36 mixture of cis and trans

isomers: m.p. 179–180 °C; IR (film) v<sub>max</sub> 3065, 3030, 2981, 2931, 2250,

1718, 1655, 1493, 1456, 1370, 1283, 1253, 1216, 1112, 1051, 1020, 7612, 742, 724, 698 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.18–7.58 (m, 9H), 7.14 (ddd, J = 6.1, 2.3, 2.3 Hz, 1H), 4.90 (ddd, J = 4.1, 2.0, 2.0 Hz, 1H), 3.82–3.98 (m, 2H), 3.51 (dd, J = 12.2, 4.4 Hz, 1H), 3.22 (dddd, J = 19.5, 12.3, 4.2, 2.3 Hz, 1H), 2.74 (dddd, J = 19.5, 6.2, 4.4, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 2.62 (s, 3H), 0.88 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  165.3, 137.3, 137.2, 135.9, 134.2, 131.8, 131.1, 128.4, 129.1, 128.6, 128.4, 127.3, 126.4, 114.4, 112.9, 40.8, 47.7, 46.0, 45.9, 28.9, 19.9, 13.5; MS (EI) calcd for C<sub>24</sub>H<sub>22</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> [M]<sup>+</sup> 370, found 370.



*trans*-Ethyl 5,5-Dicyano-6-(2-methoxyphenyl)-4-phenylcyclohex-1enecarboxylate (3g). IR (film)  $v_{max}$  3066, 3025, 2983, 2935, 2247, 1714,

CO<sub>2</sub>Et 1660, 1489, 1456, 1420, 1276, 1249, 1224, 1101, 1084, 1027, 757, 731, 667 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.44 (dd, *J* = 7.4, 2.7 Hz, 1H), 7.06–7.4 (m, 9H), 5.05 (s, 1H), 4.02–4.15 (m, 2H), 3.53 (dd, *J* = 11.7, 5.6 Hz, 1H), 3.08 (dddd, *J* = 20.4, 11.7, 2.3, 2.3 Hz, 1H), 2.91 (ddd, *J* = 20.4, 5.3, 5.3 Hz, 1H), 2.65 (s, 3H), 1.16 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  164.3, 138.6, 138.4, 135.8, 133.6, 131.6, 129.2, 129.01, 129.00, 128.9, 128.5, 128.5, 126.0, 114.8, 113.0, 61.2, 44.1, 42.6, 40.0, 29.3, 20.3, 13.8; MS (EI) calcd for C<sub>24</sub>H<sub>22</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> [M]<sup>+</sup> 370, found 370.



NC CN trans-Diethyl 6,6-Dicyano-5-phenylcyclohex-2-ene-1,2-dicarboxylate (3h). IR (film)  $v_{max}$  2984, 2934, 2252, 17412, 1712, 1423, 1303, 1259, 1187, CO<sub>2</sub>Et (3h). IR (film)  $v_{max}$  2984, 2934, 2252, 17412, 1712, 1423, 1303, 1259, 1187, 1127 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.37–7.50 (m, 5H), 7.35 (dd, J = 4.7, 2.4 Hz, 1H), 4.15–4.4 (m, 5H), 3.80 (dd, J = 11.2, 5.3 Hz, 1H), 2.94 (ddm, J = 20.6, 11.5 Hz, 1H), 2.8 (dt, J = 20.4, 5.2 Hz, 1H), 1.33 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H), 1.29 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  167.9, 164.0, 141.0, 135.5, 129.2, 129.0, 128.2, 124.2, 112.8, 112.4, 62.7, 61.4, 47.9, 41.0, 39.7, 29.1, 13.8, 13.8; MS (MALDI) calcd for C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>20</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Na [M + Na]<sup>+</sup> 375.132, found 375.137.

NC CN  $CO_2Et$  cis-Ethyl 5,5-Dicyano-6-methyl-4-phenylcyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (3i). 95% yield as an 80:20 mixture of cis and trans isomers: m.p. 92–93 °C; IR (film)  $v_{max}$  3062, 3033, 2976, 2935, 2229, 1728, 1640, 1583, 1453,

1372, 1247, 1185, 1105, 1025, 766, 738, 701 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.40–7.50 (m,

5H), 7.01 (ddd, J = 6.0, 2.1, 2.1 Hz, 1H), 4.20–4.30 (m, 2H), 3.32–3.40 (m, 1H), 3.22 (dd, J = 12.1, 4.6 Hz, 1H), 2.99 (dddd, J = 19.5, 12.2, 3.8, 2.3 Hz, 1H), 2.62 (dddd, J = 19.5, 6.1, 4.5, 1.7 Hz, 1H), 1.62 (d, J = 7.0 Hz, 3H), 1.34 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  165.4, 136.8, 136.3, 131.0, 129.2, 129.1, 128.2, 114.9, 112.6, 61.1, 46.3, 46.0, 40.5, 28.8, 16.2, 14.1; MS (EI) calcd for C<sub>18</sub>H<sub>18</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> [M]<sup>+</sup>294 found 294.



*cis*-Ethyl 5,5-Dicyano-6-ethyl-4-phenylcyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (3j). 98% yield as a 92:8 mixture of cis and trans isomers: IR (film)  $v_{max}$  2973, 2936, 2877, 2248, 2228, 1715, 1456, 1374, 1246, 766, 735, 701

cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.40–7.50 (m, 5H), 7.00 (ddd, J = 6.4, 2.0, 2.0 Hz, 1H), 4.26 (q, J = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 3.26–3.34 (m, 1H), 3.20 (dd, J = 12.0, 4.2 Hz, 1H), 3.00 (dddd, J =19.0, 12.0, 3.6, 2.2 Hz, 1H), 2.59 (dddd, J = 19.0, 6.3, 4.3, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 2.12 (dqd, J = 15.0, 7.6, 3.1 Hz, 1H), 1.91 (dqd, J = 15.0, 7.6, 1.3 Hz, 1H), 1.35 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H), 1.25 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  165.9, 136.7, 136.0, 131.5, 129.3, 128.0, 128.5, 115.5, 113, 61.2, 46.8, 46.2, 44.0, 28.3, 25.3, 14.1, 12.3; MS (EI) calcd for C<sub>19</sub>H<sub>20</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> [M]<sup>+</sup> 308, found 308.



*cis*-Ethyl 5,5-Dicyano-6-isopropyl-4-phenylcyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (3k). 77% yield as a 34:66 mixture of cis and trans isomers: IR (film)  $v_{max}$  3035, 2973, 2935, 2248, 1714, 1641, 1459, 1370, 1245, 1097, 1048, 738,

700 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.4–7.5 (m, 5H), 6.97 (ddd, J = 6.5, 2.0, 2.0 Hz, 1H), 4.2–4.35 (m, 2H), 3.38–3.44 (m, 1H), 3.20 (dd, J = 11.8, 4.2 Hz, 1H), 3.02 (dddd, J = 19.0, 11.9, 3.7, 2.3 Hz, 1H), 2.58 (dddd, J = 19.0, 6.4, 4.4, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 2.46 (dqd, J = 7.1, 7.1, 2.7 Hz, 1H), 1.35 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H), 1.30 (d, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H), 1.12 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz,

CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  166.9, 136.8, 136.0, 131.3, 129.2, 129.0, 128.5, 115.6, 113.8, 61.2, 50.2, 46.8, 44.6, 31.4, 28.1, 22.3, 18.8, 14.1; MS (MALDI) calcd for C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>22</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Na [M + Na]<sup>+</sup> 345.1579, found 345.1589.



1371, 1256, 1109, 1050, 733, 701 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.38–7.5 (m, 5H), 7.10 (ddd, *J* = 6.0, 2.2, 2.2 Hz, 1H), 5.86 (ddd, *J* = 17.0, 8.9, 10.1 Hz, 1H), 5.58 (d, *J* = 17.0 Hz, 1H), 5.52 (d, *J* = 10.1 Hz, 1H), 4.16–4.28 (m, 2H), 3.82–3.90 (m, 1H), 3.27 (dd, *J* = 12.0, 4.6 Hz, 1H), 3.03 (dddd, *J* = 19.6, 12.0, 3.9, 2.2 Hz, 1H), 2.67 (dddd, *J* = 19.6, 6.1, 4.5, 1.7 Hz, 1H), 1.29 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  165.1, 137.9, 136.0, 132.2, 129.3, 129.1, 129.0, 128.2, 122.8, 114.3, 112.4, 61.1, 49.2, 45.9, 45.7, 28.8, 14.0; MS (MALDI) calcd for C<sub>19</sub>H<sub>18</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Na [M + Na]<sup>+</sup> 329.127, found 329.106.



NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  7.38–7.48 (m, 5H), 7.32 (dd, J = 4.7, 2.8 Hz, 1H), 6.10 (ddd, J = 17.0, 10.3, 6.5 Hz, 1H), 5.60 (d, J = 10.3 Hz, 1H), 5.33 (d, J = 17.0 Hz, 1H), 4.20–4.31 (m 2H), 4.19 (d, J = 6.7 Hz, 1H), 3.26 (dd, J = 11.6, 5.6 Hz, 1H), 2.95 (dddd, J = 20.4, 11.6, 2.6, 1.7 Hz, 1H), 2.74 (ddd, J = 20.4, 5.2, 5.2 Hz, 1H), 1.31 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)

δ 164.5, 139.4, 136.0, 132.4, 129.3, 129.2, 128.3, 127.1, 123.6, 114.2, 113.3, 61.4, 45.6, 41.9, 40.7, 29.9, 14.1; MS (MALDI) calcd for  $C_{19}H_{19}N_2O_2$  [M + H]<sup>+</sup> 307.145 found 307.145.

NC CN Ph CO<sub>2</sub>Et

cis-Ethyl

(3m). 93% yield as a 91:9 mixture of cis and trans isomers: IR (film)  $v_{max}$ 3061, 3032, 2982, 2926, 2249, 1716, 1650, 1451, 1371, 1255, 1108, 1052, 1022, 967, 737, 697 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.27–7.55 (m, 10H), 7.13–7.20 (m. 1H), 6.90 (d, J = 15.7 Hz, 1H), 6.19 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 4.10–4.30 (m, 2H), 4.06 (d, J = 15.7 Hz, 1H), 6.19 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 4.10–4.30 (m, 2H), 4.06 (d, J = 15.7 Hz, 1H), 6.19 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 4.10–4.30 (m, 2H), 4.06 (d, J = 15.7 Hz, 1H), 6.19 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 4.10–4.30 (m, 2H), 4.06 (d, J = 15.7 Hz, 1H), 6.19 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 4.10–4.30 (m, 2H), 4.06 (d, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 4.10–4.30 (m, 2H), 4.06 (d, J = 15.7 Hz, 1H), 6.19 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 4.10–4.30 (m, 2H), 4.06 (d, J = 15.7 Hz, 1H), 6.19 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 4.10–4.30 (m, 2H), 4.06 (d, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 4.10–4.30 (m, 2H), 4.06 (d, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 6.19 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 6.10 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 7.10 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 7.10 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 7.10 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 9.10 (dd, J = 15.6, 9.10 (dd, J = 15.= 8.6 Hz, 1H), 3.35 (dd, J = 11.8, 4.4 Hz, 1H), 3.0–3.2 (m, 1H), 2.7 (ddd, J = 19.5, 4.3, 4.3 Hz, 1H), 1.24 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  165.1, 137.8, 137.4, 135.9, 135.7, 129.2, 129.1, 129.0, 128.5, 128.2, 128.1, 126.7, 122.8, 114.3, 112.4, 60.9, 48.6, 45.8, 45.7, 28.7, 14.0; MS (EI) calcd for  $C_{25}H_{22}N_2O_2[M]^+$  382.2, found 382.2.



trans-Ethyl 5,5-Dicyano-4-phenyl-6-styrylcyclohex-1-enecarboxylate (3m). IR (film) v<sub>max</sub> 3060, 3031, 2981, 2925, 2853, 2247, 1713, 1653,

5,5-Dicyano-4-phenyl-6-styrylcyclohex-1-enecarboxylate

1494, 1450, 1374, 1276, 1248, 1097, 1026, 969, 757, 699 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR  $(500 \text{ MHz}, \text{CDCl}_3) \delta 7.30-7.50 \text{ (m, 11H)}, 6.60 \text{ (d, } J = 15.8 \text{ Hz}, 1\text{H)}, 6.39 \text{ (dd, } J = 15.8, 6.9 \text{ Hz}, 10.00 \text{ Hz},$ 1H), 4.36 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 1H), 4.17–4.30 (m, 2H), 3.33 (dd, J = 11.7, 5.6 Hz, 1H), 2.99 (dddd, J =20.5, 11.6, 2.5, 1.5 Hz, 1H), 2.80 (dt, J = 20.5, 5.2 Hz, 1H), 1.30 (d, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 164.5, 139.4, 138.0, 136.0, 135.4, 129.3, 129.2, 128.74, 128.72, 128.3, 127.4, 126.9, 122.9, 114.2, 113.4, 61.4, 45.3, 42.4, 40.8, 29.9, 14.1; MS (EI) calcd for  $C_{25}H_{22}N_2O_2[M]^+$  382.2, found 382.2.

#### 6. Synthesis of Tetracycle 12



Aqueous hydrochloric acid (37%, 20 mL) was added over 2 min to a solution of the cyclohexene **4f** (1.00

mmol) in ethyl acetate (2 mL) at 0 °C, followed by the slow addition of sulfuric acid (1 mL). The solution was warmed slowly to room temperature and then heated under reflux. After the reaction had reached completion (ca. 2 h), the resulting mixture was cooled to 0 °C and diluted with water (10 mL). Aqueous sodium hydroxide (2 N) was added slowly until the pH of the solution reached 5. The combined mixture was extracted with ethyl acetate ( $2 \times 100$  mL). The combined organic phases were washed sequentially with water (20 mL) and brine (20 mL) and then dried (Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>). After evaporation of the solvents, the crude product was identified as the hydrolysis/monodecarboxylation product of the malononitrile, i.e., the corresponding monocarboxylic acid. The crude mixture was dissolved in ethanol (40 mL) and then sulfuric acid (1 mL) was added slowly at 0 °C. The solution was heated under reflux until the reaction reached completion. After cooling the mixture to ambient temperature, the solvent was evaporated. The crude product was dissolved in ethyl acetate (30 mL), washed sequentially with water (10 mL), aqueous sodium hydroxide (10 mL, 0.2 N), saturated aqueous sodium bicarbonate ( $2 \times 20$  mL), and brine (10 mL), and then dried (Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>). After evaporation of the solvents, the crude product was purified through flash column chromatography (silica gel, 70% ethyl acetate in hexane) to afford the fused tetracycle 12 (262 mg, 85%). IR (film)  $v_{max}$  2924, 2854, 1704, 1682, 1532, 1480, 1453, 1272, 1249, 1096 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.65 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.24-7.35 (m, 3H), 7.16 (ddd, J = 6.2, 4.8, 1.4 Hz, 1H), 4.02-4.18 (m, 2H), 1.4 Hz, 13.86 (s, 3H), 3.75 (td, J = 6.9, 4.9 Hz, 1H), 3.28 (td, J = 7.4, 4.7 Hz, 1H), 2.87 (dd, J = 15.2, 4.9

Hz, 1H), 2.69–2.82 (m, 2H), 2.51 (dddd, J = 15.9, 7.8, 4.7, 1.5 Hz, 1H), 1.23 (t, J = 7.0 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  195.7, 168.0, 165.9, 143.4, 140.4, 130.5, 123.6, 122.4, 121.2, 121.1, 120.1, 110.1, 60.6, 51.0, 33.7, 31.0, 26.1, 25.2, 14.1; MS (MALDI) calcd for C<sub>19</sub>H<sub>20</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub> [M + H]<sup>+</sup> 310.144, found 310.148.

# 7. <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR Spectra of Products

















































# 8. ORTEP Representations of the Solid State Structures of Compounds 3d, 4f, and 12

Crystallographic data for **3d**, **4f**, and **12** have been deposited with the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre as supplementary numbers CCDC-653533, -653534, and -653535. These data can be obtained online free of charge [or from the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Center, 12, Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, UK; fax: (+44) 1223-336-033; or deposit@ccdc.cam.ac.uk].

# A. Cyclohexene 3d



# B. Cyclohexene 4f



C. Tetracycle 12

