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Graphical Abstract





Tetrahedron Letters

Synthesis of novel 2*H*,8*H*-pyrano[2,3*-f*]chromene-2,8-diones from 8-formyl-7hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin

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1. Introduction^{*}

Heterocyclisation

Coumarins and pyran-2-ones form an exceptional class of oxygen containing heterocyclic compounds playing a key role in the medicinal area due to their structural diversity and pharmaceutical properties. They are exemplified in a large number of natural products displaying a broad spectrum of medicinal benefits. Various synthetic coumarin derivatives constitute one of the most widely used groups of anti-HIV,1 anti-inflammatory2-4 and antioxidant^{5,6} agents. They have been extensively investigated for decades to exert other valuable biological effects such as the anticancer,⁷⁻¹⁰ and the antiviral activities.¹¹ In light of these potential biological findings, a huge amount of researches on coumarin derivatives have been conducted to develop a plethora of synthetic procedures mostly by using Perkin or Knoevenagel reactions.¹²⁻¹⁸ However, further scientific efforts are still on demand to seek for more adequate and flexible synthetic methodologies of novel coumarin based scaffolds. Taking into consideration the referred biological outcome due to pyran-2-ones, our interest is particularly focused on the chemical transformations related to triacetic lactone (4-hydroxy-6-methylpyran-2-one,

ABSTRACT

We report the synthesis of novel 2*H*,8*H*-pyrano[2,3-*f*]chromene-2,8-dione based scaffolds by the reaction of 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin with various active methylene compounds. A mechanism of a tandem Knoevenagel condensation and cyclisation reaction is proposed. The structure of all compounds was established on the basis of ¹H and ¹³C NMR data, high resolution mass spectrometry and elemental analysis.

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TAL) **3a** (Scheme 2).¹⁹⁻²¹ Herein, we report an efficient synthetic procedure of 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin **2** in view of investigating its reactivity towards the above mentioned pyran-2one **3a** and other active methylene compounds such as, ethyl acetoacetate **3b**, malononitrile **3c** and ethyl cyanoacetate **3d**. The use of the key starting material **2** in the current study provides a facile access to a novel series of $2H_{,8}H$ -pyrano[2,3-f]chromene-2,8-dione based scaffolds **4a-d** via a Knoevenagel condensation / cyclisation tandem process. Synthetic pyranobenzopyranone derivatives have recently been described as photoreagents towards DNA and present some antimicrobial activity in the dark.²²

2. Results and discussion

A large number of investigations have been carried out on the formylation of 7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin **1** which usually proceeds in the presence of hexamine in refluxing acetic acid lasting for more than 6 hours of reaction time. Nevertheless, the reported strategies have not escaped criticism since this reaction is mostly offering 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin **2** in very low yields,²³⁻²⁷ and many difficulties are faced in the purification of this product **2**. However, successful attempts have been described by Panel *et al*²⁸ and Wei *et al*²⁹ affording up to 60% yield of **2**. The synthesis of **2** was repeated by us following exactly the reported operating conditions,^{28,29} but only 25 % yield is reached after 8 hours of reaction time.³⁰ Moreover, the final product requires further steps of purification. These operative problems drive us to study the formylation reaction of 7-

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hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin 1 under the same conditions but using microwave irradiation as an alternative source of heating. By applying a power of 300 W for 7 min and 200 W after addition of HCl (20%) for 4 min, compound 2 was obtained in 40% yield.³¹ The structure of 2 was confirmed on the basis of physicochemical and literature data (Scheme 1).^{28,29}



Scheme 1. Synthesis of compound 2: (i) AcOH, MW, reflux, (ii) HCl (20%), MW, 80 $^{\circ}$ C.

In our previous work, we reported that the condensation of triacetic lactone (TAL) **3a** with salicylaldehydes produces 3-acetoacetylcoumarin compounds following a successive Knoevenagel condensation and an intramolecular translactonisation.¹⁹⁻²² In this undertaken study, a similar approach was used to selectively synthesize 4-methyl-9-(3-oxobutanoyl)-2H,8H-pyrano[2,3-f]chromene-2,8-dione **4a** through the reaction of TAL **3a** with 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin **2**. The reaction proceeds at room temperature in a mixture of ethanol:toluene as solvent using a catalytic amount of triethylamine as base (Scheme 2).



Scheme 2. Synthesis of compounds 4a: (i) NEt₃, toluene/EtOH, r.t.

The analytical data of the obtained product $4a^{32}$ indicates that a stoichiometric condensation reaction of TAL 3a with 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin 2 has taken place followed by water elimination as revealed by the mass spectrum resulting the molecular ion [M+Na]⁺ at m/z 335. This fact was further supported by elemental analysis of 4a to identify its exact molecular formula C₁₇H₁₂O₆. The ¹H NMR spectrum of compound 4a presents two signals as singlets at 2.29 and 2.50 ppm assigned to the protons of the two methyl groups. Two doublet signals are observed at 7.29 and 7.83 ppm which are attributed to adjacent aromatic protons H-6 and H-5, respectively. Further characteristic singlets appearing at 6.36, 6.98 and 9.20 ppm are due to proton resonances of H-3 and H-10 related to both pyran-2-one rings and the enolic proton H-12, respectively. Finally, the appearance of a hydroxyl proton at 15.73 ppm suggests the predominance of the enolic form in the acetoacetyl moiety (in CDCl₃ solution) and this high frequency value thereof explains the strong intramolecular hydrogen bond with the oxygen of the C-11 carbonyl group. The ¹³C NMR spectrum presents two signals at 170.6 and 200.2 ppm which are respectively attributed

to the carbonyl groups C-11 and C-13 of the acetoacetyl enolic form. It is also possible to observe both signals of the carbonyl groups C-8 and C-2 of the pyran-2-one rings appearing at 158.9 and 156.9 ppm. A careful analysis of the HSQC spectrum helped us to assign all the protonated carbons, while the connectivities encountered in the HMBC spectrum confirm without ambiguity the structure of compound **4a** allowing the assignment of all carbonyl groups and quaternary carbons (Figure 1).



Figure 1. HMBC connectivities of compound 4a.

The structure of 4a is undoubtedly showing that the reaction of 2 with TAL 3a involves a first Knoevenagel condensation affording the intermediate 5 which is ready for a subsequent intramolecular translactonisation causing the pyran-2-one ring opening of the attached TAL unit (Scheme 2).

Following our interest on the behaviour of pyran-2-one as a cyclic active methylene, we attempt the reaction of 8-formyl-7hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin 2 with an equivalent amount of ethyl acetoacetate 3b at room temperature in the presence of catalytic amount of piperidine (Scheme 3). The reaction was monitored by TLC which shows the formation of a unique product **4b** in very good yield (80%) after 2 hours of reaction time. The structure of this product was confirmed by mass spectrometry, elemental analysis and precisely elucidated by NMR as 9-acetyl-4-methyl-2H,8H-pyrano[2,3-f]chromene-2,8-dione 4b.³³ In this case, the 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-Knoevenagel condensation of methylcoumarin 2 on ethyl acetoacetate 3b can give rise to both isomeric (E and Z)-forms of the intermediate olefin **6**. However, the occurring intramolecular transesterification reaction which led to the final product 4b occurred via the (Z)-configured intermediate (Z)-6 (Scheme 3).

In contrast, the reaction of **2** with malononitrile **3c** has led, after a Knoevenagel reaction, to a spontaneous heterocyclisation of the 7-hydroxy group on the cyano function in the intermediate **7** delivering 8-imino-4-methyl-2-oxo-2*H*,8*H*-pyrano[2,3-*f*] chromene-9-carbonitrile **4c** in 80% yield.³⁴ The hydrolysis of **4c** with hydrochloric acid (4 N) under microwave irradiation (at 300 W for 4 min) affords the mono-hydrolysed product **9**.³⁵ Using a longer reaction time (9 min) in a more concentrated hydrochloric acid (12 N), the 9-cyano group was also hydrolysed to a carboxylic acid function in the product **10**³⁶ (85%, Scheme 3).

In order to study and compare the orientation of the transesterification versus the iminocoumarin heterocyclisation arising from both of the ethyl acetoacetate $\mathbf{3b}$ and malononitrile $\mathbf{3c}$ action on 2, respectively, we treated 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin 2 with ethyl cyanoacetate 3d under similar conditions to those described above. The active methylene 3d is also expected to provide the Knoevenagel adduct as an intermediate of two possible isometric configuration (E)-8 and (Z)-8. According to NMR and other analytical data, the iminocoumarin $4d^{37}$ was the major isolated compound, which was formed through the (E)configured Knoevenagel adduct (E)-8. This result is completely different from those obtained by Moskvina and Khilya³⁸ in the reaction of 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-phenylcoumarin (similar to our starting material 2) with ethyl cyanoacetate 3d. We have used organocatalytic conditions while they used an inorganic base (NaHCO₃) in the condensation of 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4phenylcoumarin with 3d, followed by acidic transesterification to

selectively produce 2*H*,8*H*-pyrano[2,3-f]chromen-4-phenyl-9-carbonitriles after acidic hydrolysis.

The hydrolysis of **4d** in hydrochloric acid 4 N under microwave irradiation (at 100 W for 4 min) yields the product **11**.³⁹ When the reaction time was extended to 15 min in the presence hydrochloric acid 12 N, the product **10**³⁶ was again obtained in a different manner (Scheme 3).



Scheme 3. Synthesis of 4-methyl-2,8-dioxo-2*H*,8*H*-pyrano[2,3*f*]chromenes: (i) piperidine, EtOH, r.t.; (ii) HCl 4 N, MW; (iii) HCl 12 N, MW.

3. Conclusion

This paper has given an account on different chemical transformations of 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin upon treatment with the cyclic triacetic lactone or several acyclic active methylene compounds. These organic reactions have led to the production of a novel series of functionalized 2*H*,8*H*pyrano[2,3-*f*]chromene-2,8-dione scaffolds through a tandem process of a Knoevenagel condensation and stereoselective intramolecular translactonisation, transesterification or heterocyclisation. In this synthetic work, we have also presented an experimental improvement in the formylation reaction of 7-hydroxy-4methylcoumarin by using microwave irradiation in a short reaction time.

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- 30. 8-Formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin 2: Under classical heating conditions, a solution of 7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin 1 (5 g, 0.03 mol) and hexamethylenetetramine (10 g, 0.09 mol) in glacial acetic acid (40 mL) was refluxed for 8 h. The hexamine adduct so formed was hydrolysed with 20% HCl (75 mL) and the solution was heated for another 30 min at 70-80 °C. After cooling, the reaction solution was extracted with diethyl ether. The ether layer was evaporated and the pale yellow coloured solution was poured to crushed ice to get

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the pale yellow solid of 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin **2** which was recrystallized from a mixture of ethanol and 1,4-dioxane. This compound was obtained as pale yellow small crystal **2**. Yield: 25%; mp.174-176 °C (mp 174-176 °C).^{28,29}

- 31. 8-Formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin 2: Under microwave irradiation, a solution of 7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin 1 (5 g, 0.03 mol) and hexamethylenetetramine (10 g, 0.09 mol) in glacial acctic acid (40 mL) was heated on MW irradiation at 300 W for 7 min. The hexamine adduct so formed was hydrolysed with 20% HCl (75 mL) and the solution was heated for another 4 min on MW irradiation at 200 W. After cooling, the reaction solution was extracted with diethyl ether. The ether layer was evaporated and the pale yellow solid of 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin 2 which was recrystallized from a mixture of ethanol and 1,4-dioxane. This compound was obtained as pale yellow small crystal 2. Yield: 40%; mp.174-176 °C (mp 174-176 C°).^{28,29}
- 32. 4-Methyl-9-(3-oxobutanoyl)-2H,8H-pyrano[2,3-f]chromene-2,8dione 4a. A solution of 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin-2one 2 (2.04 g, 0.01 mol) in toluene (10 mL) and 4-hydroxy-6methyl-2H-pyran-2-one 3a (1.26 g, 0.01 mol) in ethanol (10 mL) with some drops of NEt3 as a catalyst was stirred at room temperature for 2 h. After reaction completion the precipitate was filtrated and recrystallized from DMF. This compound was obtained as yellow powder 4a. Yield: 70%; mp. 252 °C; UV (λ): 360 cm⁻¹; IR , cm⁻¹): 3433, 3057, 2923, 1739, 1618, 1091; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃): δ 2.29 (s, 3H, H-14), 2.50 (s, 3H, 4-CH₃), 6.36 (s, 1H, H-3), 6.98 (s, H, H-12, enol), 7.30 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-6), 7.84 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-5), 9.20 (s, H, H-10), 15.70 (s, 1H, 13-OH); ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃): δ 18.9 (4-CH₃), 27.7 (C-14), 101.8 (C-12), 108.4 (C-10a), 112.5 (C-6), 114.4 (C-3), 115.9 (C-4a), 120.9 (C-9), 129.1 (C-5), 138.8 (C-10), 150.8 (C-10b), 152.0 (C-4), 155.8 (C-6a), 156.9 (C-8), 158.9 (C-2), 170.6 (C-11), 200.2 (C-13). HRMS (ESI⁺): m/z calcd for [C₁₇H₁₂O₆+Na]⁺ 335.0532, found: 335.0535. Anal. Calcd. for C17H12O6: C 65.39, H 3.87. Found: C 65.43, H 4.02%
- 33. 9-Acetyl-4-methyl-2H,8H-pyrano[2,3-f]chromene-2,8-dione 4b. A solution of 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4-methylcoumarin-2-one 2 (2.04 g, 0.01 mol) and ethyl acetoacetate 3b (1.3 g, 0.01 mol) in ethanol (10 mL) with piperidine (0.25 mL) as a catalyst was stirred for about 2 h at room temperature. After reaction completion the obtained solid was filtrated and then crystallized from ethanol to afford pure product, as a white solid **4b**. Yield: 80%; mp. 249 °C; UV (λ): 308 cm⁻¹; IR (, cm⁻¹): 3086, 1748, 1721, 1681, 1628, 1390, 1293, 1107, 1023; ¹H NMR (DMSO-d₆): δ 2.48 (s, 3H, CH₃), 2.50 (s, 3H, 4-CH₃), 6.47 (s, 1H, H-3), 7.46 (d, 1H J = 9.0 Hz, H-6), 8.10 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-5), 8.69 (s, 1H, H-10), ¹³C NMR (DMSO-d₆): δ 18.9 (4-CH₃), 30.6 (CH₃), 107.8 (C-10a), 113.9 (C-6), 114.4 (C-3), 116.2 (C-4a), 124.8 (C-9), 131.5 (C-5), 139.8 (C-10), 151.2 (C-10b), 154.0 (C-4), 156.7 (C-6a), 158.2 (C-8), 159.1 (C-2), 195.0 (9-COCH₃). HRMS (ESI⁺): m/z calcd for $[C_{15}H_{10}O_5+Na]^+$ 293.0426, found: 293.0449. Anal. Calcd. for $C_{15}H_{10}O_5$: C 66.67, H 3.73. Found: C 66.80, H 3.83%.
- 8-Imino-4-methyl-2-oxo-2H,8H-pyrano[2,3-f]chromene-9-34 carbonitrile 4c: A solution of 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4methylcoumarin-2-one 2 (2.04 g, 0.01 mol) and malononitrile 3c (0.66 g, 0.01 mol) in ethanol (10 mL) with piperidine (0.25 mL) as a catalyst was stirred for about 2 h at room temperature. After reaction completion the obtained precipitate was filtrated and crystallized from ethanol to afford a pure pink product 4c. Yield: 80%; mp. 229 °C; UV, λ . 310 cm⁻¹, IR (, cm⁻¹): 3357, 2943, 2191, 1739, 1618, 1381, 1274; ¹H NMR (DMSO-d₆): δ 2.58 (s, 3H, 4-CH₃), 6.32 (s, 1H, H-3), 6.95 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-6), 7.77 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-5), 8.10 (s, 1H, NH), 8.37 (s, 1H, H-10); ¹³C NMR (DMSO-d₆): δ 18.9 (4-CH₃), 103.0 (CN), 107.1 (C-10a), 113.1 (C-6), 114.4 (C-3 and C-4a), 116.0 (C-9), 132.0 (C-5), 146.0 (C-10), 150.0 (C-10b), 153.0 (C-4), 156.3 (C-6a), 158.0 (C-8 and C-2). HRMS (ESI+): m/z calcd for [C14H8N2O3+Na]+ 275.0433, found: 275.0399. Anal. Calcd. for C14H8N2O3: C 66.67, H 3.20, N 11.11. Found: C 66.44, H 3.07, N 11.20%
- 35 $\label{eq:constraint} 4-Methyl-2, 8-dioxo-2H, 8H-pyrano \cite{2,3-f} chromene-9-carbonitrile~~9:$ solution of 8-imino-4-methyl-2-oxo-2H,8H-pyrano[2,3-The f]chromene-9-carbonitrile 4c (2.52 g, 0.01 mol) with acid HCl 4 N (10 mL) was stirred under MW irradiation at 300 W for 9 min. After reaction completion the precipitate was filtrated and washed with water to afford a pure yellow product 9 (85%); mp. 272 °C; UV (λ): 310 cm⁻¹; IR (, cm⁻¹): 3380, 2915, 2236, 1739, 1627, 1579, 1381, 1274, ¹H NMR (DMSO-d₆): δ 2.50 (s, 3H, 4-CH₃), 6.51 (s, 1H, H-3), 8.166 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-5), 7.44 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-6), 9.15 (s, 1H, H-10); ¹³C NMR (DMSO-d₆): δ 18.3 (4-CH₃), 102.7 (CN), 107.0 (C-10a), 112.7 (C-6), 113.7 (C-3), 114.1 (C-4a), 116.1 (C-9), 131.8 (C-10), 146.5 (C-5), 149.9 (C-10b), 153.3 (C-4), 155.5 (C-6a), 156.2 (C-8), 158.3 (C-2). MS (ESI⁺): m/z found for [C₁₄H₇NO₄]⁺ 253.00. Anal. Calcd. for C14H7NO4: C 66.41, H 2.79, N 5.53. Found: C 66.50, H 2.81, N 5.66%.

- 36. 4-Methyl-2,8-dioxo-2H,8H-pyrano[2,3-f]chromene-9-carboxylic acid 10: The solution of 4-methyl-2,8-dioxo-2H,8H-pyrano[2,3f]chromene-9-carbonitrile 9 (2.53 g, 0.01 mol) with acid HCl 12 N (10 mL) was stirred about 15 min under MW irradiation at 300 W. After reaction completion the precipitate was filtrated and washed with water to afford a pure white product 10 (80%), mp. 287 °C; UV (λ): 310 cm⁻¹; IR (, cm⁻¹): 3150, 3086, 1785, 1715, 1621, 1376, 1291, 1117; ¹H NMR (DMSO-d₆): δ 2.48 (s, 3H, 4-CH₃), 6.49 (s, 1H, H-3), 8.12 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-5), 7.44 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-6), 8.78 (s, 1H, H-10); ¹³C NMR (DMSO-d₆): δ 18.9 (4-CH₃), 107.6 (C-10a), 112.8 (C-6), 113.8 (C-3), 116.1 (C-4a), 118.9 (C-9), 131.3 (C-5), 141.0 (C-10), 150.9 (C-10b), 154.0 (C-4), 156.0 (C-6a), 156.8 (C-8), 159.2 (C-2), 164.0 (9-COOH). MS (ESI⁺): m/z found for [C14H8O6]+ 272. Anal. Calcd. for C14H8O6: C 61.77, H 2.96. Found: C 61.90, H 3.12%.
- 8-Imino-4-methyl-2-oxo-2H,8H-pyrano[2,3-f]chromene-9-37. 8-formyl-7-hydroxy-4carboxvlate 4d. A solution of methylcoumarin-2-one 2 (2.04 g, 0.01 mol) and ethyl cyanoacetate 3d (1.131 g, 0.01 mol) in ethanol (10 mL) with piperidine (0.25 mL) as a catalyst was stirred for about 2 h at room temperature. After reaction completion the precipitate was filtrated and recrystallized from ethanol to afford a pure pink product 4d. Yield: 80%; mp. 190 °C; UV (λ): 310 cm⁻¹; IR (, cm⁻¹); 3321, 1740, 1628, 1391, 1274, 1121, 1021; ¹H NMR (DMSO-d₆): δ 1.38 (t, 3H, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 3H, CH₂CH₃), 2.50 (s, 3H, 4-CH₃), 4.41 (q, 2H, J =7.2 Hz, CH₂CH₃), 6.40 (s, 1H, 3-H), 7.36 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-6), 7.90 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-5), 8.90 (s, 1H, H-10), 9.60 (s, 1H, NH); ¹³C NMR (DMSOd₆): 14.2 (CH₂CH₃), 18.9 (4-CH₃), 62.2 (CH₂CH₃), 107.2 (C-10a), 112.5 (C-6), 113.4 (C-3), 115.2 (C-4a and C-9), 129.4 (C-5), 134.6 (C-10), 150.6 (C-10b), 152.5 (C-4), 156.4 (C-6a), 158.1 (C-8), 159.5 (C-2), 163.6 (CO₂Et). HRMS (ESI⁺): m/z calcd for [C₁₆H₁₃NO₅+H]⁺ 300.0872, found: 300.0851. Anal. Calcd. for C16H13NO5: C 64.21, H 4.38, N 4.68. Found: C 64.41, H 4.44, N 4.85%. 38.
 - Moskvina, V. S.; Khilya, V. P. Chem. Nat. Compd. 2008, 44, 16-23. Ethyl 4-methyl-2,8-dioxo-2H,8H-pyrano[2,3-f]chromene-9carboxylate 11. A solution of ethyl 8-imino-4-methyl-2-oxo-2H,8Hpyrano[2,3-f]chromene-9-carboxylate 4d (2.99 g, 0.01 mol) with acid HCl 4 N (10 mL) was stirred about 9 min under MW irradiation at 300 W. After reaction completion the precipitate was filtrated and washed with water to afford pure product 11. Yield: 88%; mp. 255 °C; UV (λ): 305 cm⁻¹; IR (, cm⁻¹): 3086, 1781, 1741, 1621, 1390, 1121, 1027; ¹H NMR (DMSO-d₆): δ 1.36 (t, 3H, *J* = 7.3 Hz, CH₂CH₃), 2.48 (s, 3H, 4-CH₃), 4. 35(q, 2H, J = 7.3 Hz, CH₂CH₃), 6.49 (s, 1H, H-3), 8.11 (d, 1H, J = 9.0 Hz, H-5), 7.44 (d, 1H J = 9.0Hz, H-6), 8.77 (s, 1H, H-10); ¹³C NMR (DMSO-d₆): δ 14.0 (CH₂CH₃), 18.3 (4-CH₃), 61.6 (CH₂CH₃), 106.8 (C-10a), 112.3 (C-6), 113.3 (C-3), 115.6 (C-4a), 117.6 (C-9), 131.0 (C-5), 141.0 (C-10), 150.3 (C-10b), 153.4 (C-4), 155.0 (C-6a), 156.1 (C-8), 158.5 (C-2), 161.9 (CO₂Et). HRMS (ESI⁺): m/z calcd for $[C_{16}H_{12}O_6+Na]^+$ 323.0532, found: 323.0543. Anal. Calcd. for C16H12O6: C 64.00, H 4.03. Found: C 64.20, H 4.12%.

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