

Supporting information:

a) Spectral data for **5c,d**, **6c,d** and **3e**.

5c: 15% with a purity of 70%. Selected signals: ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 1.31 (t, $J = 7.0$ Hz, 3H), 2.87 (m, 1H), 3.21 (m, 1H), 4.33 (q, $J = 7.0$ Hz, 2H), 4.65 (m, 1H), 5.00 (m, 1H), 7.30-7.60 (m, 5H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 13.9 (q), 51.3 (t), 62.7 (t), 70.5 (t), 113.0 (s), 160.8 (s), 187.0 (s).

6c: 30%; oil; IR (CHCl_3) 1737 (s), 1699 (s), 1071 (s) cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 1.21 (t, $J = 7.0$ Hz, 3H), 3.10-3.40 (m, 2H), 4.25 (q, $J = 7.0$ Hz, 2H), 4.87 (m, 1H), 5.00 (m, 1H), 7.40-8.10 (m, 5H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 13.8 (q), 52.1 (t), 63.5 (t), 72.4 (t), 112.2 (s), 128.5 (d), 129.6 (d), 133.9 (d), 135.5 (s), 165.4 (s), 189.1 (s); MS (EI) m/z 283 (MH^+), 209 ($\text{M}^+ - \text{CO}_2\text{Et}$), 177 ($\text{M}^+ - \text{PhCO}$), 105 (PhCO^+).

5d + 6d: 85% with a purity of 90%; (* refers to minor **6d**) ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 1.86 (s, 3H), 2.26* (s, 3H), 2.36 (s) and 2.39* (s) (together 6H), 2.75-3.35 (m, 4H), 4.45-5.05 (m, 4H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 20.8 (q), 24.2 (q), 27.0* (q), 28.8* (q), 52.9 (t), 53.0* (t), 69.6 (t), 71.8* (t), 108.7 (s), 116.1* (s), 193.1 (s), 195.2 (s), 199.3* (s), 199.8* (s).

3e: 90%; oil; IR (CHCl_3) 1718 (s), 1696 (s) cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 2.36 (s, 3H), 3.29 (t, $J = 6.5$ Hz, 2H), 4.43 (t, $J = 6.5$ Hz, 2H), 7.40-8.10 (m, 5H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 28.0 (t), 30.5 (q), 63.2 (t), 128.4 (d), 129.7 (d), 129.9 (s), 133.1 (d), 166.2 (s), 194.8 (s); MS (EI) m/z 225 (MH^+), 182 ($\text{M}^+ - \text{CH}_2\text{CO}$), 105 (PhCO^+). Although the product is known, the spectral data are unreported (Chapman, J. H.; Owen, L. N. *J. Chem. Soc.* **1950**, 579).

b) Experimental procedure for hydrazone 7:

This was obtained by the treatment of **6b** (0.4 mmol) in refluxing benzene (20 ml) with an equimolecular amount of 2,4-dinitrophenylhydrazine followed by silica gel chromatography (light petroleum/diethyl ether 7:3): 45%, mp 164-165 °C (from CH₂Cl₂/hexane); IR (CHCl₃) 3323 (m), 1738 (s), 1618 (s), 1598 (s), 1341 (s), 1083 (s) cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 2.24 (s, 3H), 3.20-3.40 (m, 2H), 3.87 (s, 3H), 4.57 (ddd, *J* = 3.9, 7.8, 11.7 Hz, 1H), 4.97 (m, 1H), 7.89 (d, *J* = 9.7 Hz, 1H), 8.36 (dd, *J* = 2.4, 9.7 Hz, 1H), 9.13 (d, *J* = 2.4 Hz, 1H), 11.21 (brs, 1H).